



"OMG"

#overused

# WHAT DID YOU SAY?

BY JOHN ANNANDALE

“Oh my God!” (OMG) is a common exclamation—an everyday expression. Ironically, many who use it claim no belief in a god of any kind. Yet, from moments of minor disbelief to times of great wonder to times of crisis, there it is—“Oh my God!”

Author Randy Kilgore observed in his book *Made to Matter* that people appeal instinctively to a God, “somewhere up there”, or as Kilgore suggests, “to someone whom they think may know Him.” This religious inclination and searching comes especially during times of crisis: a personal loss, a financial crunch, a problem in their marriage, or with their children.

## AN INSTINCT?

But why should times of stress and crisis elicit such a response? Is there something wired into our DNA that suggests that there is something—or someone—more? Someone bigger, deeper, and wider than the life we struggle through?

French mathematician and physicist Blaise Pascal once commented, “There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator.” We may try to hide from it or ignore it, but it’s there and we are reminded of it from time to time.

This God awareness, revealed in a variety of ways, is reflected in the many religions that have been created to explain the unexplainable. In our modern age, the awareness persists and we can see increasing expressions of spirituality. People the world over are seeking something beyond themselves.



**EXPLAIN**

**THE**

**UN-**

**EXPLAIN-**

**ABLE**

Religion is our attempt to explain the unexplainable. It is easy to understand why early humanity, bewildered by lightning, invented a Zeus. Indeed, for every need—from fertility to winning a war—an appropriate deity has been imagined.

# MORTALS TRYING TO TOUCH GOD



Could the expression, “Oh my God!” actually hint at this quest for understanding and significance? Perhaps we instinctively realize that there is a God. If so, perhaps we intuitively know that there is certainly a huge gulf between Him and ourselves.

In the Bible, we find confirmation that there is indeed a separation between God and man—a separation caused by our sins. Words like “sin” sound judgmental and make us want to run a mile. But what does “sin” actually mean?

# THAT STRANGE CHURCHY WORD-SIN

THE ISSUE IS OUR NATURE  
IT IS LESS ABOUT WHAT WE  
DO AND **MORE ABOUT**  
**WHO WE ARE.**

Think for a moment about the things that unsettle a home. I'd suggest that the most disrupting thing is selfishness. Nothing destabilises family relationships more than a child or an adult who is so self-absorbed that the wants and needs of the rest of the family are ignored and go unmet. What creates more family squabbles than one member whose every action is geared to personal pleasure or advantage, regardless of the consequences for the rest of the family? That's the basic meaning of the word *sin*. It's that self-absorption that undermines relationships. The many activities we label as sins are the expression of a self-absorbed life. The problem is essentially our natural inclination to be the centre of our universe.

Our desire to find purpose and meaning by being the masters of our own destiny has an essential flaw: I cannot even control tomorrow. I could be diagnosed with cancer or paralysed in an accident. The stock market could collapse and with it my retirement plans. Despite these possibilities, we remain insistent that we walk our own path—we are the captains of our own ship. It seems that rebellion against most forms of authority is in our nature; it even makes us think we can control things far beyond us.

What does this have to do with God? If we are open to the possibility that God made us, we may wonder why. Could it be that a God-shaped vacuum in us—expressed in spiritual pursuits and a desire to command our own destinies—might actually reflect divine desire for relationship, Creator to creation?



Why would God, creator of the universe, want a relationship with a skin and bone man who cannot even guarantee his tomorrow? And even if that were true and possible, where would we possibly find common ground?

I once read the story of a king who regularly dressed in rags and tatters and visited the slums to experience the misery of poverty and to interact one-on-one with his people. They were his people, his responsibility. He walked among them looking for ways to lift them out of their poverty.

What if the Creator reached out to us by becoming one of us? What if the Creator experienced life like we do—the good, the bad and the ugly? The child of unmarried parents, forced to listen to the snigger of schoolmates, and ridiculed by his brothers and sisters.



Suppose this young man lost his father at an early age—his mentor, the one who daily taught him the family trade, the faith of his ancestors, and the customs of his people.

As this young man grows, he becomes aware that there is a greater call on his life, greater than the family business—a religious teacher. But he finds no acceptance in his own town and is forced to go elsewhere. Yet while he touches the lives of many, national leadership, feeling threatened by his popularity, plot to get rid of him.

Eventually these leaders convince one of his closest friends to renounce and betray him. Trumping up claims that he has subversive plans to topple the ruling government and declare himself a political leader, he is arrested and beaten. Finally, in a trial of biased and twisted charges, is convicted and sentenced to death.

# UNDERSTANDING THE STRUGGLES OF HUMANITY

Would such a person have an understanding of our struggles? If Creator God became a man and experienced the struggles of life, that would be amazing common ground for a relationship!

The Bible claims that is exactly what happened. Jesus, Creator God in the flesh, was conceived out of wedlock. He was rejected by his siblings and his community; betrayed, illegally tried, condemned and murdered. History confirms this strange story.

Stranger still, the Gospel accounts of Jesus' life tell us that despite eyewitness testimony confirming his death, Jesus was seen alive and well three days later. He was seen by his close circle of friends and later by 500 people. Early manuscripts indicate that of his closest followers, 11 went on to proclaim Jesus as God among us, who died and rose again.

So convinced were these men that rather than stop sharing their experience, 10 were themselves rejected and killed. Who would die for a lie?

Based on such eyewitness accounts, the early church was born. Despite huge opposition to the new followers, 2000 years later, many millions have embraced the belief that God became man, lived among us, was killed, but came to life again. No event in ancient history is as well supported as the account of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.



# HUMILIATING HUMANITY AND

# DEATH



But why die? Why not simply invade (in proper “War of the Worlds” fashion), establish supremacy, and force compliance? Why subject himself to the struggles of humanity and a humiliating death?

Earlier we asked about the relationship that was severed by humanity’s insistence on being the captains of our own destinies—we resist and reject having life directed by anyone else. Consequently, even though it is possible, a relationship between Creator and creation is unlikely. That fairly demands the question: What would it take to re-establish that relationship? Let’s look closer to home, into our own circumstances for an insight into restoring relationship.

**BUT WHY DIE?**

# THE PRICE OF RESTORATION

What does restoration require? First, we have to recognize that the relationship has been broken. Second, we need to acknowledge that the cause of the rift lies with our selfishness—the resistance to relinquish control of our own destiny. Finally, the issues that caused the rift in the first place need to be addressed and corrected. There is always a price to pay for restoration.



# RISEN



# THE FORGIVER PAYS!

I once heard the (supposedly true) story of a judge who received a docket sheet for a young lady charged with a serious crime. If convicted, the penalty would be a heavy fine or imprisonment. The judge was deeply distressed as he read the charges. He recognized the defendant—his daughter. She had devastated the family and broken his heart with her youthful rebellion. She had left home, cutting all ties with the family.

His heart broke as he examined the evidence; she was guilty. He issued his verdict and announced the sentence: a fine or a prison term. As the gavel struck the bench, reality dawned on the young lady. She had been condemned (quite justly) by her own father!



After the sentencing, the judge stood up, took off his robe and walked towards the defendant. In front of the entire courtroom, he said, “As your judge, I have found you guilty.” Then, he took out his checkbook and wrote a check for the full amount of the fine. Looking into his daughter’s eyes he said, “Young lady, you have two options: You can reject this check and either attempt to pay the fine yourself or serve out your sentence; alternatively, you can accept this gift and allow me to pay the penalty for you, and walk away a free woman.” She couldn’t pay, imprisonment and humiliation were her only alternative. But the price of her freedom would be paid by one whose love had never faltered, even though she had shunned him. They embraced and wept in the uncomfortable silence of an amazed courtroom.

# THAT'S ME THAT'S JESÜS...

If (for once) I can be honest with myself, I'm that young woman. I've missed the mark, and I know it. And the despair isn't skin deep, it's soul deep and my loneliness is beyond description.

There's a severed connection deep down, the result of my wilful insistence that we rule our own lives—rebellion against love. Despite our rebellion, “Love” has wrapped himself around us, taking upon himself the penalty for our selfishness.

Do you see the link between our emptiness and inadequacy and a Creator who is both loving and spotless (the Bible uses the word “holy”)? Our inner turmoil stems from our rejection of him and his love, a rejection that deserves punishment. But he becomes our substitute to win us back—he paid the price.

That's Jesus. Two thousand years ago, in love he became our substitute and died for us, bridging the gulf between God and man.

The next step in filling our “God-shaped” vacuum is what we may term “a leap of faith.” Our self-sufficiency and rebellion against our Creator not only robs us of a full life but also deserves punishment. Our next step, like the young woman in the courtroom, is to decide what to do with the offer of the payment on our behalf and to embrace the one who makes the offer.

There's one more step, the first in a long journey—cutting ties with our rebellion. We need to “die to who we were, to become what we were intended to be.” This is the law of nature. A seed dies before it produces a plant.



HERE

FROM

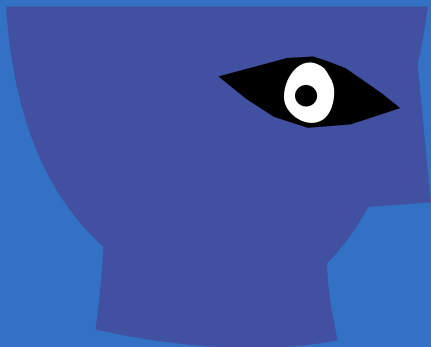
GO

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