

## The Big Questions (part 1 of 3): Who Made Us?

**Description:** Islamic answers to the first of some of the "Big Questions" in Life all humans inevitably ask, Who Made Us?

By Laurence B. Brown, MD

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At some point in our lives, everybody asks the big questions: "Who made us," and "Why are we here?"



So who *did* make us? Most of us have been brought up more on science than religion, and to believe in the Big Bang and evolution more than God. But which makes more sense? And is there any reason why the theories of science and creationism cannot coexist?

The Big Bang may explain the origin of the universe, but it doesn't explain the origin of the primordial dust cloud. This dust cloud (which, according to the theory, drew together, compacted and then exploded) had to come from somewhere. After all, it contained enough matter to form not just our galaxy, but the billion other galaxies in the known universe. So where did *that* come from? Who, or what, created the primordial dust cloud?

Similarly, evolution may explain the fossil record, but it falls far short of explaining the quintessential essence of human life—the soul. We all have one. We feel its presence, we speak of its existence and at times pray for its salvation. But only the religious can explain where it came from. The theory of natural selection can explain many of the material aspects of living things, but it fails to explain the human soul.

Furthermore, anyone who studies the complexities of life and the universe cannot help but witness the signature of the Creator.<sup>[1]</sup> Whether or not people recognize these signs is another matter—as the old saying goes, denial isn't just a river in Egypt. (Get it? Denial, spelled "de Nile" ... the river Ni ... oh, never mind.) The point is that if we see a painting, we know there is a painter. If we see a sculpture, we know there's a sculptor; a pot, a potter. So when we view creation, shouldn't we know there's a Creator?

The concept that the universe exploded and then developed in balanced perfection through random events and natural selection is little different from the proposal that, by dropping bombs into a junkyard, sooner or later one of them will blow everything together into a perfect Mercedes.

If there is one thing we know for certain, it is that without a controlling influence, all systems degenerate into chaos. The theories of the Big Bang and evolution propose the exact opposite, however—that chaos fostered perfection. Would it not be more reasonable to conclude that the Big Bang and evolution were controlled events? Controlled, that is, by the Creator?

The Bedouin of Arabia tell the tale of a nomad finding an exquisite palace at an oasis in the middle of an otherwise barren desert. When he asks how it was built, the owner tells him it was formed by the forces of nature. The wind shaped the rocks and blew them to the edge of this oasis, and then tumbled them together into the shape of the palace. Then it blew sand and rain into the cracks to cement them together. Next, it blew strands of sheep's wool together into rugs and tapestries, stray wood together into furniture, doors, windowsills and trim, and positioned them in the palace at just the right locations. Lightning strikes melted sand into sheets of glass and blasted them into the window-frames, and smelted black sand into steel and shaped it into the fence and gate with perfect alignment and symmetry. The process took billions of years and only happened at this one place on earth—purely through coincidence.

When we finish rolling our eyes, we get the point. Obviously, the palace was built by design, not by happenstance. To what (or more to the point, to Whom), then, should we attribute the origin of items of infinitely greater complexity, such as our universe and ourselves?

Another argument to dismiss the concept of Creationism focuses upon what people perceive to be the imperfections of creation. These are the "How can there be a God if such-and-such happened?" arguments. The issue under discussion could be anything from a natural disaster to birth defects, from genocide to grandma's cancer. That's not the point. The point is that denying God based upon what we perceive to be injustices of life presumes that a divine being would not have designed our lives to be anything other than perfect, and would have established justice on Earth.

Hmm ... is there no other option?

We can just as easily propose that God did not design life on Earth to be paradise, but rather a test, the punishment or rewards of which are to be had in the next life, which is where God establishes His ultimate justice. In support of this concept we can well ask who suffered more injustices in their worldly lives than God's favorites, which is to say the prophets? And who do we expect to occupy the highest stations in paradise, if not those who maintain true faith in the face of worldly adversity? So suffering in this worldly life does not necessarily translate into God's disfavor, and a blissful worldly life does not necessarily translate into beatitude in the hereafter.

I would hope that, by this line of reasoning, we can agree upon the answer to the first

"big question." Who made us? Can we agree that if we are creation, God is the Creator?

If we can't agree on this point, there probably isn't much point in continuing. However, for those who *do* agree, let's move on to "big question" number two—why are we here? What, in other words, is the purpose of life?

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Dr. Brown is the author of *The Eighth Scroll*, described by North Carolina State Senator Larry Shaw as, "*Indiana Jones meets The Da Vinci Code*. *The Eighth Scroll* is a breath-holding, white-knuckled, can't-put-down thriller that challenges Western views of humanity, history and religion. Bar none, the best book in its class!" Dr. Brown is also the author of three scholastic books of comparative religion, *MisGod'ed*, *God'ed*, and *Bearing True Witness* (Dar-us-Salam). His books and articles can be found on his websites, [www.EighthScroll.com](http://www.EighthScroll.com) and [www.LevelTruth.com](http://www.LevelTruth.com), and are available for purchase through [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com).

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Endnotes:

[1] To this end, and leaving all of the author's religious inclinations aside, I heartily recommend reading *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, by Bill Bryson.

## The Big Questions (part 2 of 3): The Purpose of Life

**Description:** Islamic answers to the second of some of the "Big Questions" in Life all humans inevitably ask, Why are We Here?

By Laurence B. Brown, MD

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The first of the two big questions in life is, "Who made us?" We addressed that question in the previous article and (hopefully) settled upon "God" as the answer. As we are creation, God is the Creator.



Now, let us turn to the second "big question," which is, "Why are we here?"

Well, why *are* we here? To amass fame and fortune? To make music and babies? To be the richest man or woman in the graveyard for, as we are jokingly told, "He who dies with the most toys wins?"

No, there must be more to life than that, so let's think about this. To begin with, look around you. Unless you live in a cave, you are surrounded by things we humans have made with our own hands. Now, why did we make those things? The answer, of course, is that we make things to perform some specific function for us. In short, we make things to serve us. So by extension, why did God make us, if not to serve Him?

If we acknowledge our Creator, and that He created humankind to serve Him, the next question is, "How? How do we serve Him?" No doubt, this question is best answered by the One who made us. If He created us to serve Him, then He expects us to function in a particular manner, if we are to achieve our purpose. But how can we know what that manner is? How can we know what God expects from us?

Well, consider this: God gave us light, by which we can find our way. Even at night, we have the moon for light and the stars for navigation. God gave other animals guidance systems best suited for their conditions and needs. Migrating birds can navigate, even on overcast days, by how light is polarized as it passes through the clouds. Whales migrate by "reading" the Earth's magnetic fields. Salmon return from the open ocean to spawn at the exact spot of their birth by *smell*, if that can be imagined. Fish sense distant movements through pressure receptors that line their bodies. Bats and blind river dolphins "see" by sonar. Certain marine organisms (the electric eel being a high-voltage example) generate and "read" magnetic fields, allowing them to "see" in muddy waters, or in the blackness of ocean depths. Insects communicate by pheromones. Plants sense sunlight and grow towards it (phototropism); their roots sense gravity and grow into the earth (geotropism). In short, God has gifted every element of His creation with guidance. Can we seriously believe he would not give us guidance on the one most important aspect of our existence, namely our *raison d'etre*—our reason for being? That he would not give us the tools by which to achieve salvation?

And would this guidance not be . . . revelation?

Think of it this way: Every product has specifications and rules. For more complex products, whose specifications and rules are not intuitive, we rely upon owner's manuals. These manuals are written by the one who knows the product best, which is to say the manufacturer. A typical owner's manual begins with warnings about improper use and the hazardous consequences thereof, moves on to a description of how to use the product properly and the benefits to be gained thereby, and provides product specifications and a troubleshooting guide whereby we can correct product malfunctions.

Now, how is that different from revelation?

Revelation tells us what to do, what not to do and why, tells us what God expects of us, and shows us how to correct our deficiencies. Revelation is the ultimate user's manual, provided as guidance to the one who will use us—ourselves.

In the world we know, products that meet or exceed specifications are considered successes whereas those that don't are ... hmm ... let's think about this. Any product that fails to meet factory specifications is either repaired or, if hopeless, recycled. In other words, destroyed. Ouch. Suddenly this discussion turns scary-serious. Because in this discussion, we are the product—the product of creation.

But let's pause for a moment and consider how we interact with the various items that fill our lives. As long as they do what we want, we're happy with them. But when they fail us, we get rid of them. Some are returned to the store, some donated to charity, but eventually they all end up in the garbage, which gets ... buried or *burned*. Similarly, an underperforming employee gets ... fired. Now, stop for a minute and think about that word. Where did *that* euphemism for the punishment due to an underperformer come from? Hmm ... the person who believes the lessons of this life translate into lessons about religion could have a field day with this.

But that doesn't mean these analogies are invalid. Just the opposite, we should remember that both Old and New Testaments are filled with analogies, and Jesus Christ taught using parables.

So perhaps we had better take this seriously.

No, I stand corrected. Most *definitely* we should take this seriously. Nobody ever considered the difference between heavenly delights and the tortures of hellfire a laughing matter.

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## The Big Questions (part 3 of 3): The Need for Revelation

**Description:** Islamic answers to the second of some of the "Big Questions" in Life all humans inevitably ask, How do we serve Our Creator?

By Laurence B. Brown, MD

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In the previous two parts of this series, we answered the two "big questions." Who made us? God. Why are we here? To serve and worship Him. A third question naturally arose: "If our Creator made us to serve and worship Him, how do we do that?" In the previous article I suggested that the only way we can serve our Creator is through obeying His mandates, as conveyed through revelation.



But many people would question my assertion: Why does mankind need revelation? Isn't it enough just to be good? Isn't it enough for each of us to worship God in our own way?

Regarding the need for revelation, I would make the following points: In the first article of this series I pointed out that life is full of injustices, but our Creator is fair and just and He establishes justice not in this life, but in the afterlife. However, justice cannot be established without four things—a court (i.e., the Day of Judgment); a judge (i.e., the Creator); witnesses (i.e., men and women, angels, elements of creation); and *a book of laws upon which to judge* (i.e., revelation). Now, how can our Creator establish justice if He did not hold humankind to certain laws during their lifetimes? It's not possible. In that scenario, instead of justice, God would be dealing out *injustice*, for He would be punishing people for transgressions they had no way of knowing were crimes.

Why else do we need revelation? To begin with, without guidance mankind cannot even agree on social and economic issues, politics, laws, etc. So how can we ever agree on God? Secondly, nobody writes the user manual better than the one who made the product. God is the Creator, we are creation, and nobody knows the overall scheme of creation better than the Creator. Are employees allowed to design their own job descriptions, duties and compensation packages as they see fit? Are we citizens allowed

to write our own laws? No? Well then, why should we be allowed to write our own religions? If history has taught us anything, it is the tragedies that result when mankind follows its caprice. How many who have claimed to banner of free thought have designed religions that committed themselves and their followers to nightmares on Earth and damnation in the hereafter?

So why isn't it enough just to be good? And why isn't it enough for each of us to worship God in our own way? To begin with, peoples' definitions of "good" differ. For some it is high morals and clean living, for others it is madness and mayhem. Similarly, concepts of how to serve and worship our Creator differ as well. More importantly and to the point, nobody can walk into a store or a restaurant and pay with a different currency than the merchant accepts. So it is with religion. If people want God to accept their servitude and worship, they have to pay in the currency God demands. And that currency is obedience to His revelation.

Imagine raising children in a home in which you have established "house rules." Then, one day, one of your children tells you he or she has changed the rules, and is going to do things differently. How would you respond? More than likely, with the words, "You can take your new rules and go to Hell!" Well, think about it. We are God's creation, living in His universe under His rules, and "go to Hell" is very likely what God will say to any who presume to override His laws with their own.

Sincerity becomes an issue at this point. We should recognize that all pleasure is a gift from our Creator, and deserving of thanks. If given a gift, who uses the gift before giving thanks? And yet, many of us enjoy God's gifts for a lifetime and *never* give thanks. Or give it late. The English poet, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, spoke of the irony of the distressed human appeal in *The Cry of the Human*:

And lips say "God be pitiful,"

Who ne'er said, "God be praised."

Should we not show good manners and thank our Creator for His gifts *now*, and subsequently for the rest of our lives? Don't we owe Him that?

You answered "Yes." You must have. Nobody will have read this far without being in agreement, but here's the problem: Many of you answered "Yes," knowing full well that your heart and mind does not wholly agree with the religions of your exposure. You agree we were created by a Creator. You struggle to understand Him. And you yearn to serve and worship Him in the manner He prescribes. But you don't know how, and you don't know where to look for the answers. And that, unfortunately, is not a subject that can be answered in an article. Unfortunately, that has to be addressed in a book, or maybe even in a series of books.

The good news is that I have written these books. I invite you to start with *The Eighth Scroll*. If you've liked what I've written here, you'll love what I've written there.

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