

## Некультурный

When I took Russian in college, we learned that it was an insult was to call someone некультурный (ne kulturny) or un-cultured. (Forgive my poor pronunciation). It means more in Russian than just un-cultured, but, it doesn't take well to translation. It has a flavor of being unpleasant. I usually try not to be некультурный. I try not to be offensive.

Trigger warning. I am going to be некультурный. I am going to say some of the things I think, and that, I have bitten back over the years in an attempt not to offend. If you are easily offended, stop reading here.

## The Nones.

I am tired of people offering thoughts and prayers and thinking they are doing something. There is actual scientific evidence that it doesn't work. Worse still, by thinking that thoughts and prayers are effective we, as a society, don't try actions that might have effects. Try praying, rather than going to the ER for a broken bone. If you are a farmer, try praying rather than planting seeds. If you reply that god is in the hand of the ER doctor, where was god 10,000 years ago when bones were broken. Are your prayers somehow better? Were the prayers of plague victims in 1350 less worthy than those of a patient today, with access to antibiotics and surgery? How many people over the millennia prayed to be cured of smallpox, or that it would pass them by? It was not prayer that developed a vaccine. Now, no one needs to pray to be spared the curse of smallpox. Did everyone who died of CoVid, despite their prayers, deserve it? Or pray "wrong."

I am tired of people being so self-centered that they imagine an all-powerful creator, who, if it exists, is responsible for a universe over 14 billion years old, caring who wins a football game. Both teams are praying. Both sides in war pray. Does it matter to the outcome who prays better? I am tired of people thinking that their faith in a book written by bronze age goat herders, who didn't know where the sun went at night, trumps radio-isotopic dating or the red-shift measurement of the age of the universe. During an eclipse the sun is not being swallowed by a dragon, as envisioned in ancient China, or by a wolf as in Norse mythology (or even by a frog in Cherokee myths). We have learned what causes an eclipse.

The reasons you started, then stopped believing in the tooth fairy, easter bunny and Santa Claus, all apply to your god, and all the other gods, as well.

I am tired of people assuming that faith is a reason for doing something, and worse, for assuming that your faith should influence all of society.

I am tired of religious people acting as if they are always right, without evidence. Or worse, despite the evidence. I am tired of the hypocrisy of many religions and religious people. We have a political storm about drag queens reading to children. Are men in dresses a threat to

our children? Oh, wait, reality check-there is no evidence for grooming by drag queens. Grooming is only rarely done by strangers. Trust is required for grooming. As for men in dresses being a threat- priests in their cassocks, are a documented threat to our children. If any profession, outside of religion, had the track record of child abuse by the church, that profession's doors would be closed, and the entire profession shuttered. If as many teachers were guilty of child abuse as priests, who would send their children to school?

Religious grounds are accepted for various discriminatory practices that otherwise are against the law. Public health even takes a backseat to faith. Religion is legal grounds for refusing to vaccinate your children. This makes no sense at all. Would anyone accept the idea that religion excused you from stopping at red lights or wearing seatbelts? What about a restaurant not following health rules for religious reasons, would that be acceptable? Faith is when you believe without evidence or proof. Faith should be the last possible reason for doing something, since it is, on its face, the lack of reason. What would happen if I were to declare my faith in Baal and try to sacrifice babies? Hmmm.

As of 2022, the "nones"-that is people who do not identify with a religion were 30% of the US population. Almost half of those, 14%, are atheists or agnostics. The rest profess some spirituality, but, don't subscribe to an organized religion. In most of the developed world, the proportion is even higher. Yet, the one taboo in US politics is non-belief. I can imagine electing a woman president. Hillary Clinton got more votes in 2016 than Donald Trump, and Vice President Harris was a heartbeat away from the presidency. It is possible to imagine an LGBTQ+ president. Buttigieg didn't get the nomination, but, made a credible run for the Democratic nomination in 2020. Can you imagine a candidate, who seriously wanted to win the presidency, not saying "God Bless America" at the end of every speech? And again, I would think it is obvious, why would an entity that created the universe care about one country that represents only 5% of one tiny world in one corner of 1 galaxy out of billions of galaxies? Why would I want a leader who felt they could be pardoned for unspeakable acts by imaginary friend.

Merely because you can't explain something doesn't mean the cause is supernatural. For eons, human beings couldn't explain lightning, hurricanes, genetics, or disease. Now, we don't need to refer to a higher power to explain most of these. Why would you resort to god, believing that there is no rational explanation for the things we can't explain now? "I don't know," doesn't mean the answer is Thor, Odin, Zeus, Jesus, Jehovah, or Krishna. There may be things forever beyond human understanding. This speaks to human limitations not divinity.

Humanity's belief in a deity is not proof of that deity's existence. For thousands of years, the Egyptians believed in Ra, Osiris, Isis and Horus and a whole additional panoply of gods. Their belief was not proof. Their writings were not proof. Nor are your belief or writings proof.

Whether there are or aren't atheists in foxholes is irrelevant to the question of supernatural powers. Seeing a face in a cloud is human pattern seeking (jargon-the fancy term for pattern

seeking is apophenia). How is that different from the miracle of a face on a piece of toast? I can imagine being in a car wreck and crying out to my mother. If you have ever met my mother, you know she has great powers, and all who know her respect her, but realistically, I know she can't save me from a car crash, and my cry "Mommy save me" is as empty as any other prayer.

You don't need religion to be good. You just need to be good-and by good I mean compassionate, tolerant, forgiving, kind, welcoming and patient. Lots of religious people good, but, many are none of those things or are only that way to those that sit next to them in church, mosque, synagogue or ashram (and not always then either).

Spiritualists, mediums, faith healers, palm readers, and their ilk, ply their trades on vulnerable people. If faith healers worked, why aren't they staffing ERs? If your financial reversals were due to a curse, and for success all you needed was for a medium to cleanse your cash, why don't they open accounts at Fidelity and dominate the stock market. When large brokerage houses were looking to "up" their game, they hired computer modelers and physicists not psychics. (We also don't need prayer in classrooms. There is an old aphorism-"As long as there are pop quizzes in math, there will be prayer in school." If I were still teaching, and if the experiment wouldn't get me fired, I might design and carry out an experiment on prayer in class. Half the class is instructed to study for a test. Half the class to pray. I imagine you or I could predict the results without my having to fail anyone.)

The fundamental premise of my world view is that life, the universe and everything (according to Douglas Adams, the answer is 42) can be explained rationally and logically and without appealing to the supernatural. I know that not everything can be explained with today's understanding. My lack of understanding about something speaks more to humankind's limitations and my intellectual limitations than whether there is a supernatural cause. When I see a great magician perform, I don't assume he or she is accessing the supernatural. They are performing a trick, and I can enjoy the trick without knowing how it was done. I am, however, secure in the knowledge that while I may not know it, there is an explanation. Just ask Penn and Teller.

In addition to all the other issues related to religion, one that bothers me is the relationship of religion and truth. Those that believe in religion feel that "truth" can be determined by their belief. I believe it, so it is true. For thousands of years, maybe hundreds of thousands of years, humans believed the earth was at the center of the universe. That belief did not alter the reality that the sun is the center of our solar system, and neither is the center of the universe. Reality does not care what you, or anyone else, believes. Yet, once you accept the idea that belief -faith- can confer truth, it becomes acceptable to challenge reality based solely on belief. There have been billions of doses of mRNA vaccines administered in the last few years. No one's DNA has been altered. Yet in Florida, despite the evidence, the Florida Surgeon General is spreading debunked claims that the shots could contaminate a patient's DNA. This is not something that should be open to debate. The debate should be settled. There are

factually billions of counter examples. Yet, he is comfortable, for political reasons, spouting biological nonsense.

There is a common phrase “my truth” that suggests that truth is relative. It seems to me that thinking that truth is relative is one of the core problems of our modern internet era-and that phrase stems from religious thinking.

I could go on for hours (and I may some other day). This of course may be why I’m not a frequent guest at dinner parties 😊. Suffice it to say, I’m not a fan of the belief that where reality is concerned, belief matters.

As always, I can be reached at [drg.atm@gmail.com](mailto:drg.atm@gmail.com), through the feedback link on the web page <https://mdgottfried.net/Casts/DrGsCasts.html> or through the guestbook on that page. Just please, no death threats.