

## Goddidit

Kris King – February 13<sup>th</sup> 2012

<http://www.rantinaminor.co.uk/2012/02/goddidit/>

I have to be really careful what I say this week; not because I've offended someone and I suddenly feel all guilty about it (as if). No, the reason I should put on my comfy slippers and tread softly, rather than donning my beloved heavy-as-fuck New Rocks and stomp (as usual) through the subject with the kind of psychotic vigour that the hammer-happy god Thor would be flushed with when playing "Whack-A-Mole", is that the book I've been reading and mini-reviewing chapter by chapter on Twitter over the last few days was written by someone who had previously sued, for *libel*, the author of a scathing review (and general comment on the book's author) that had been posted on Amazon. Since I'd ideally like to avoid sharing that particular experience, I will be taking great pains to distinguish clearly between the things I state as opinion, and those I state as fact. With that consideration, and the first eight chapters of "The Attempted Murder Of God: Hidden Science You Really Need To Know" by Scrooby, freshly in mind, I'd like this week to talk in a light-hearted satirical fashion about scientific ignorance, specifically the kind that only ever seems to come from religious drivell-mongers [opinion].

A little background to the story ... I became aware of Scrooby's book when I stumbled across [The Faith Fruitcake](#), the blog (which you should visit) of Vaughan Jones, the rather unfortunate sod who was being sued over his Amazon comments. I read the entire account of his legal battle thus far, along with the rest of his blog, and everything that had been written by McG (the book's publisher) regarding the libel action against Mr Jones. While the ongoing case meant it was impossible to get all of the relevant facts I was, from what I *had* read, more than able to conclude safely that my sympathies should very much lie with Vaughan; he came across as a decent, upstanding guy who had become unfortunately, and potentially ruinously, embroiled in a legal tussle with someone who had written, self-published, and even reviewed his own book [fact], but was apparently unable to take negative criticism (however expressed) on the chin without turning into a bit of a strop, over-entitled teenager about it [opinion].

Feeling that Mr Scrooby (or, as McG informs us he will be more commonly known to his friends and family, Chris McGrath) did not come across in the comments made on the legal page of the McG website as particularly credible [opinion] and, in fact, positively hostile in some cases [opinion], I found myself exchanging the occasional email, tweet, and text message or two (especially during the court hearing) with Vaughan, offering whatever I could in the way of a few supportive words here and there [fact]. Although the judgement has yet to be given on whether there is a case to answer, I'm reasonably confident that it will be in Mr Jones' favour, if only because it is my fervent hope that the British Chiropractors Association case against Simon Singh has demonstrated that it's becoming increasingly easy in this country to get yourself sued into bankruptcy for simply having the cheek to criticise those with enough money to silence you [opinion].

Aside from the first chapter that had been made available for free, I wasn't able to read "The Attempted Murder Of God" for a while; neither my laughably pitiful supply of spare cash, nor the desire to spend any of it on a book with some hugely unfavourable reviews [fact] written by an author who felt the need to file positive reviews under false pretences [opinion], would permit me to purchase a copy and discover for myself whether the criticism was justified. That was until this past week, when Vaughan Jones tweeted the news that the entire book had been released as a free download on the McG website – naturally I grabbed a copy, put aside any prejudices that might have arisen as a result of the particular way I came to be aware of this book, and ignored how unimpressed I was when I read that first free chapter, I began reading the book as I would any other: with a dispassionate view, an unbiased eye, and an open mind – it is, after all, only fair. Although, at the time of writing, I have only read up to (and including) chapter 8, Mr Scrooby's book has already succeeded in confirming every prejudice that I had previously managed to put aside.

"The Attempted Murder Of God" is an impressive collection of logical fallacies, scientific ignorance (wilful or otherwise), poor research, and unsupported assertions masquerading as I'm not sure what

[opinion]. According to the author/publisher the book is a satire on the religion versus science debate [fact], but as of yet I've found no reason to be convinced by such a claim at all [opinion]. If it *is* satire, then it's **bad** satire, and not something that Peter Cook, or even the Oxford English Dictionary, would find familiar [opinion] – it's not funny [opinion], it lacks the essential irony [opinion], and is frustrating rather than thought-provoking [opinion]. If, on the other hand, it is an earnest attempt to contribute to the debate, it fails on that front too [opinion]; aside from being riddled with holes in its scientific knowledge that are big enough to shove a church through, it also carries an almost sneering contempt for science [opinion] while at the same time hypocritically using it both to prove ludicrous religious claims *and* to debunk solid scientific ones.

I totally understand how people can be generally ignorant of science; some of the underlying principles involved can be complex, frequently baffling, borderline incomprehensible even, and it is sometimes really hard to see how any of it relates to our day to day lives, even for those of us who aren't scientists but take a keen personal interest. Science can be tricky to wrap your head around, there's no doubt about it, and ignorance or confusion is absolutely to be expected. But there really is no excuse at all for deliberately choosing to remain in the dark about such things, especially when one is claiming to speak from a scientific viewpoint. Theists do this more than anyone because they want to have it both ways; they want to play science when they think it can support their childish bedtime stories, but they also want to bludgeon scientific achievements to death before hacking off their limbs, smashing out their teeth, and burying the blood-drenched remains under the garden shed, if ever one of those evil, world-benefiting achievements should ever dare to draw attention to the gaping fact holes in their retarded fairy-tales.

Without doubt the crime most frequently committed against science by theists and the wilfully ignorant (I apologise for repeating myself) is the atheist's favourite justification for randomly punching the religious, the "God Of The Gaps" argument (obviously I'm saying "argument" to be kind, and because I can't think of a better single word to use there; in truth it is about as much an argument as Mr Scribble's book is satire [opinion]). The argument is a classic example of the bifurcation fallacy (also known as the false dichotomy) in which the options are artificially, sometimes even dishonestly, limited – in this case, to two. Wherever there is a gap in scientific knowledge, if there is something science can't explain, God did it. Don't know what kicked off the big bang? God did it. Struggling to find out what gives everything in the universe mass? God did it. Don't know why your elderly relative's elbow cancer suddenly went into remission as if they'd never had it in the first place? God did it.

Assuming Mr Squabble's book isn't a parody (and it's a fair enough assumption given that the time I spent 2 hours in casualty after a partner landed her knee squarely in my testicles mid-coitus was infinitely funnier [opinion]), then it is woefully guilty of using this logical fallacy, almost to the point where the entire book hinges on it to make its case [opinion]. At no point does it allow for the possibility that a god does not exist; in fact, it begins with the assumption that one does but its existence is being kept a secret (presumably god is being held hostage in some scientist's dustbin somewhere). It then sets about working backwards to find whatever "evidence" (I use that word wrongly, as does Mr Scrappage) it can to support its predetermined conclusion that god has been chained to a radiator by Richard Dawkins (who beats him daily with a copy of "The God Delusion"). This is inductive reasoning, smothered in great big dollops of confirmation bias, and is a favourite of theists who have no problem disregarding solid facts in order to support their arguments [opinion].

In general, "Goddidit" is a deeply obnoxious way of shutting down debate and terminating enquiry in the theist's favour because it proposes an explanation which is utterly unfalsifiable. If your answer to a reasonable scientific question is that an omnipotent super-being was not only responsible, but also left absolutely no trace of his having been involved whatsoever, you are engaging in the kind of craven dishonesty that so often accompanies complete intellectual surrender. Too cowardly to admit the truth that you simply *don't know* the answer, you invent a cosmic cop-out, a way of falsely giving the impression that you *do* know whilst conveniently eliminating the need to answer any other questions and further expose your ignorance. It's no different than a parent who can't be bothered to explain to their child exactly *why* they want them to do (or not do) something, replying to the pertinent question "why?" with the classically lazy, "because I said so".

This is not, in any sense of the word, an answer – it's simply a way of avoiding the question that serves no purpose other to sideline critical thinking in favour of blind faith and mental obedience to an undeserving authority. How can one possibly afford any sort of meaningful respect to a being that demands mindless followers who are prepared to sacrifice their intellectual faculties and trust implicitly without evidence? What sort of parent would teach their child that believing the

unsupported assertions of an overbearing father figure who will punish them for challenging his self-appointed dominance is somehow a valid way of going through life? "Don't ask questions, do as you're told!" is a terrible lesson to impress upon anyone, let alone the vulnerable mind of one who looks to those apparently in possession of wisdom and experience to help guide them safely away from the danger of easily-exploitable gullibility.

Religion has always stood to gain from the credulity of its adherents; their continued ignorance is the source of its power, and so thinking outside the collection box must be discouraged at all costs. As science has advanced our knowledge, revealing the long-hidden mysteries of our world and reducing our superstitions to the status of quaint historical curiosity, resistance has always been strongest amongst the shepherds of the faithful because they have the most to lose. Every challenge to the orthodoxy must be quashed, every dissenting voice must be silenced; any attempt to poke holes in the fabric of the theological tapestry must be ruthlessly thwarted lest it unravel like a cheap woolly jumper at the playful paws of a gang of angry kittens. Under no circumstances can facts ever be allowed to explain anything; we don't need scientific theories, evidence, logic, or rationality ... we have ancient texts filled with stories about miracles that tell us everything we need to know.

It's interesting to note how the decline in the quality of miracles over the last few thousand years has been in absolute lock-step with the increase in our scientific understanding of the world. If you could plot a graph showing the miraculousness of miracles over time against "shit we've figured out" it would be a perfect inversely proportional relationship. The characters in the bible (and I use the word "characters" confrontationally to annoy theists) always seem to get first-hand, in-your-face proof of god's existence; a burning bush, booming voices from the sky, angels coming down to tell a young woman she's been raped in her sleep so she can give birth to a god who will kill himself as a sacrifice to himself to save everyone from the flaws he gave them etc. The blind get to see, the lame get to walk, and a long-haired, bearded surfer-dude gets to coast across the Sea of Galilee without a board to the gob-smacking amazement of 12 middle-eastern fishermen with suspiciously English-sounding names.

These days, of course, miracles aren't what they used to be. Minor physical ailments are alleviated, lost car keys are found, and pious, educationally lackadaisical students are able to pass exams after talking to themselves in their bedrooms the night before. This is what god is up to in the 21st century, it seems; a couple of millennia ago he raised Lazarus from the dead – in 2012 we have him intervening to help a christian secure the last two tickets to a Jonas Brothers gig. Ask a theist to explain the apparent significant drop-off in their deity's powers over the centuries, and they'll go straight into denial mode; "Incredible miracles still happen!" they insist, "what about those few people who were pulled alive from the rubble on 9/11?" What of them indeed? And what of the 3,000 formerly alive people who weren't the fortunate recipients of a miracle that day? Were they somehow less deserving of the additional godly attention required to save them?

Outside of Mr Scrubby's parody [opinion] there are plenty of examples of wilful scientific ignorance. Some of the more egregious instances stray far beyond ignorance and into full-blown abuses of the truth, degrading the endeavour and achievements of scientists in order to prolong the wheezing, worthless life of the terminal dinosaur of religious faith. One of the worst offenders is [Answers In Genesis](#), a website devoted to passing off the unmatched stupidity and contemptible nonsense in the bible as having anything remotely to do with science. Not content with using AiG as a means of distorting reality in order to give enough room to squeeze his disdain for undeniable factual evidence in, Ken Ham (the founder, president/CEO, and bullshitter-in-chief at "Appallingly Ignorant God-botherers") is also responsible for the [Creation Museum](#), a theme park-cum-museum devoted to both the propagation of theistic horse manure, and to the continued religious indoctrination and intellectual retardation of children.

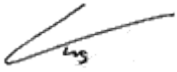
Ken Ham is not the only bright star in the dung-spattered firmament of irrationality and twaddle-mongering; there is also Kent Hovind, a creationist whose science credentials came from a unaccredited correspondence course [fact], and is currently serving 10 years for tax evasion [fact]. He took religious ass-hattery to new levels, firstly with his theory that all of the water on earth came from an ice shield that once encircled the planet, and then with his building of "Dinosaur Adventure Land", a creationist theme-park behind his house in which the prehistoric creatures are shown co-existing with humans during the last 4,000 or so years. Since his incarceration, his son Eric has dusted off his father's bankrupt arguments and is currently using them to spread the ill-informed, fucktarded, arse-brained word. I'm not even going to begin to talk about Ray Comfort and his vapid, grinning monkey-boy Kirk Cameron. There isn't enough storage capacity on my server to talk about how tragically fucking ignorant those two reality-dodging bell-ends are.

What baffles me most is how these idiots can possibly be *proud* of their refusal to learn anything. Acknowledging ignorance is vital to our progress as a species – without it, we wouldn't ever feel the need to figure things out, instead resorting to blissfully pretending that we know how everything works by deferring to an entity we've never seen and can only *imagine* exists. Religious belief **is** denial; it denies evidence, it denies the facts, it denies *truth*. It chooses to remain ignorant in the face of undeniable reality, burying its head in the sand of ancient fairy-tales concocted by desert nomads who at least had an excuse for their lack of knowledge. Those people invented god to fill the gaps in their knowledge; the modern day theists are simply the end product of a long line of scientific ignorants who couldn't bear to have their god turfed out of those gaps and replaced with cold, hard facts because they were afraid of looking stupid.

Learning to accept that you're wrong is hard; admitting there are things you don't know can be embarrassing, but not if you don't want it to be. We are only as smart as how quickly we realise that we're stupid – the sooner you accept your ignorance, the less of a tit you feel, and the more easy it is to move on and learn something new. Pretending you know something you don't always backfires because one day you may be called upon to prove it and, when that happens, your only options are fervent denial and making up more shit to cover for the shit you made up in the first place, both of which make you look like an even bigger tit than if you'd just admitted that you simply don't know the answer. You can *believe* you know the answer all you want, you are, after all, perfectly entitled to your own opinion; you're just not entitled to your own facts (as the saying goes), and you'll always look like a clueless jackass when you try.

And so we return to the subject of Mr Screwball Scramble's book which, to be honest, feels either like a piss-poor satire [opinion] or a symphony to scientific ignorance [opinion]. I've never professed to being any kind of literary critic – I am, at best, a sarcastic blogger with a passion for reason and free-thought who uses irony, satire, and rude words to make a point. I'm not telling you that you shouldn't read "The Attempted Murder Of God" – you should. I'm just saying that, in my *opinion*, it sucked fetid donkey balls.

Opinion – not fact. That's all it is ...

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'VJ' with a stylized flourish.

[With thanks to VJ]