

Faith, Belief, and Knowledge, and the Big Picture

By Ross A. Fillmore

In November 1966, in the sleepy river town of Point Pleasant, West Virginia, sightings of a frightening, winged, humanoid creature with glowing red eyes were being reported by the local residents. This would sound like a fanciful tale of “group hysteria” or “power of suggestion” if it weren’t for the fact that these sightings were so numerous and so persistent. Ranging in the hundreds, the sightings continued for over a year. The media dubbed the creature the “Mothman,” and the legend was born. Scientists wanted to dismiss the sightings as misidentified wildlife, but they overlooked one important factor: the residents of this community were primarily hunters and outdoorsmen and were quite knowledgeable of the wildlife in their area. The description of this creature fit no description of anything indigenous to which they were familiar. The sightings continued for a year and a month and seemed to culminate with the collapse of the Silver Bridge in December 1967, after which, the sightings of the Mothman virtually stopped. Some people felt that the creature was a demon out to torment the community as revenge for the wrongful slaying of an historic Native American Chief; others felt it was an harbinger of doom, a warning to the people that something disastrous was about to happen. The mystery continues today. What was it exactly, and were the two events related?

Today, the people of Point Pleasant have embraced their place in the paranormal arena by hosting an annual Mothman Festival. The survivors of the events submit themselves to the scrutiny of the history of facts and the claims of fantastical speculation. Firsthand witnesses hold fast to their claims while the friends and family of the witnesses give support the only way they know how. They neither believe the events of 1966-67 nor disbelieve them. They respond simply, “We believe *they* believe they saw something.”

Belief is a tricky thing. Belief comes about by observing certain behaviors and patterns and facts and coming up with what seems to us to be reasonable conclusions. Belief straddles the gap between Faith and Knowing. For most of us, we believe what we will until something else comes along to make us believe otherwise. For centuries, people believed the world was flat even though there were numerous ancient cultures who already suspected otherwise. Early Europeans believed Christopher Columbus discovered the “New World,” when in fact other cultures – many of them also European – already knew of the existence of the North American continent. And yet we still attribute these findings to a man who was just trying to find an easier way around to the other side of the world. Or so we are lead to believe...

Faith is trickier yet. Faith has with it the anchor of Hope and the confidence of Trust. However, Faith at its basic root is belief without proof. Belief has a certain amount of factoids associated with it that at least lead us to a reasonable foundation for that belief. You can have faith the sun will rise the next morning. The sun has always risen from the time you were born, and although it may be obscured by clouds or rain, you have a certain amount of confidence that the sun is still there warming the Earth from far above. Science has taught us that we are living on a spinning ball of rock and water zooming around the Sun at an alarming rate, and we have done so for billions of years. Personal experience has taught us that approximately at the same time every day, the planetary rotation has advanced as such to allow the visibility of the Sun's rays over the eastern horizon announcing the dawning of a new day. We have faith that tomorrow will be renewed again. That faith is a belief based on provable science and personal experience. However, science has also taught us that meteor strikes on the Earth have, do, and will happen, and there really isn't much we, as humans, can currently do to prevent them. Meteor strikes have been attributed to mass extinctions and fluctuations in the Earth's axis over billions of years. We, as humans, have never experienced this sort of calamity in our era on this planet, but the possibility that it could happen still exists.

On a lighter note, you can have faith in your teenager that he will adhere to his new curfew and come home at a reasonable hour. He gets good grades, is never in trouble, does as he's told, and you feel you've brought him up well. And that faith holds true because it is built on trust and a pattern of behavior associated with that teenager. That is until the time he comes home far late after his new curfew, and perhaps he has been drinking alcohol, and the next day the neighbors tell you stories about the wild night he was having because his antics are posted all over social media. Now your trust is broken because your faith in your teenager to do the right thing isn't as "true" as it used to be in the spotlight of new knowledge and new evidence. You no longer believe him to be the trustworthy person you raised. Everything he says and does is met with speculation and skepticism. Consequently, trust and faith need to be rebuilt.

Knowing comes with its own pitfalls. Knowing is experiential, but Knowing's biggest pitfall is understanding. Firsthand witnesses know what they experienced. They may not understand what they experienced, but they can at least give some kind of detailed report as to their best possible understanding of it. Their level of understanding is subject to their ability to perceive fully their experiences. A blind man cannot tell you what he "saw" any more than a deaf man can tell you what he "heard." Likewise, with no prior experience of a particular perception, it becomes hard to describe the experience in terms others would understand. Sleight of hand, illusion, and ruse are all means of tricking the mind into believing they perceived something they didn't. The witnesses of Point Pleasant know what they saw. Understanding what they

saw was a bit more perplexing. They saw something but had to describe it the best way they knew how. But they surely knew what it wasn't: it was nothing of the likes they had ever witnessed before.

So it is with any new encounters we have as experiential beings. We experience a thing, gather some reality on it, and file it away in our "knowing cabinet." When we encounter a similar situation, we riffle through our "knowing cabinet" and look for correlations and come up with conclusions we call beliefs. We believe it is this or that because it is similar to what we have already experienced. We have no reason to disbelieve it. Everything seems to be on the mark. The next time we see this similarity, we have faith – *with no other evidence of knowing* – that this similarity is the same thing as the original instance of experiential knowledge, of and only by the conclusions made during our correlations of belief. In other words, we jump to the conclusion that Knowing and Faith are interchangeable because we believe them to be true. However, Faith should not be construed as proof of anything if the experiential knowledge does not exist for that particular instance of Faith. This being said, one has to wonder why Faith exists at all? Remember, Faith is belief without proof.

Faith lifts us up. Faith gives us something to look forward to. Faith gives us a solid anchor of hope in a world filled with doubt and skepticism, but it should not be relied upon as proof of anything. Hope and Faith keep us grounded on the possibility that things will get better, things will *be* better, life will go on. The sun will rise the next morning. The world will be at peace. Our neighbors and friends and families and children will live safe and prosperous lives. But there are always those pitfalls that no matter how steady and heavy that Anchor of Hope may be, experiences of knowing will happen that shake our faith to the core. Now we don't know what to believe. Now we have doubt. Consequently, we may be forced into a servitude of behavior that is based on this doubt. A servitude of what? Fear! Although hope sounds like a cheery word, it brings with it its evil twin brother Despair. One has to ask, "If you have hope, then hope from what?" Hope from despair. Hope of something better. Hope that nothing bad will happen. Hope that nothing will change...

Hope is based on a contingent of variables of randomness that promise a glimmer of a chance of success from failure. Hope – like Faith -- is not conclusive evidence of knowing. We become enslaved by inconclusive notions, and therefore, enslaved by our beliefs.

Another aspect of this enslavement is worrying. And as everyone should know, worrying serves no purpose but to expend unnecessary energy on circumstances we can do very little, if anything, about. Is it any wonder that the common symbol of hope is an anchor? Not only does it keep you steady, but it keeps you from escaping. And yet, we go on hoping regardless. We have faith in the face of despair.

Faith also has the connotation of a belief in God or a higher power. Faith is often used synonymously with religion; faith and hope that what people are telling us is true with little to no proof. Any holy scripture should be subjected to the same scrutiny as the reports of the Mothman or any other fantastical encounter. There is little doubt the people in historic scripture experienced something. They took the time to write it down, and they attached a significance to it and created a religion around it, and the information has persisted all these millennia. But there, too, these witnesses were left to describe these experiences to the best of their capabilities and understanding with the knowledge they had at the time. Moses claimed God appeared to him as a burning bush. When God could take any form He wanted, why would He appear as a burning bush? Moses described what he saw the best way he could, as did any of the other Biblical figures and witnesses. We might understand these events differently in our day and age, knowing what we know now. But we are left to say as the people of Point Pleasant, West Virginia, "We believe *they* believe they saw something."

How does this fit in with "The Big Picture?" Why do people have the religious beliefs they do? The basic, most fundamental answer is simple: because someone told them to. At some point in a person's life, generally in childhood, someone said, "Here. Believe this. It's true," and *without regard to experiential considerations*, that child did just that!... without even questioning why. In fact, the child was further taught *not* to question; just *believe!* History tells us those who did question it were deemed blasphemers and were ridiculed, and tortured, and in some cases, put to death, only because they dared to question something of which they had no experiential knowledge. "God doesn't want somebody poking around asking questions! God just wants you to accept it and go on!" And yet, these "truths" persisted just as people at one time believed the world was flat or that Columbus discovered America.

The child who is raised with these beliefs has faith and trust in his parents that they are telling him the truth. Why would his parents lie? Of course, he would believe them. And his teachers? And his preachers? These are people in authority who vehemently do sound like they know what they're talking about! Surely they wouldn't lie! But do any of these people themselves have experiential knowledge of which they espouse? Trust is the conviction to believe one is right even when in error.

Why does a Christian believe the Bible to be true? Because his parents did, most likely. Why does a Jew believe the Torah to be true? Why does a Muslim believe the Quran to be true? Why does a Hindu believe in the teachings of The Vedas? Or the Native Americans or Australian aborigine or the African bushmen or Amazonian tribes believe the oral histories of their peoples? Again: simply because somebody said, "Here. Believe this. It's true," and subsequently they were raised in that Faith. For most people, they have no other experiential reality on what they believe aside from sitting in a church or temple or around a campfire and listening to the experiences of

“witnesses” who have been long dead for thousands of years. One can come to the conclusion then that if the only criteria for religious beliefs are faith and upbringing, then *everyone* everywhere -- *regardless of their religion* -- must be right! Myth becomes fact! Superstition becomes proverb! The collective experiences of ALL people of ALL races become witness and testimony of God!

In light of this revelation, if everyone is right, then why aren't *all* religions taught as a basis of Belief? As illustration, focusing on one piece of teaching as the sole basis of belief or knowledge of God and the workings of the Universe -- *without the consideration of the other religions* -- is like claiming to know what the Big Picture looks like without looking at all the other pieces of the puzzle.

Archeologically, there is so much that is dismissed by the Devout because it does not fit into their paradigms of belief. There are incongruities. Inconsistencies. Genesis 1:26, “Let us create man in our image.” What does this mean exactly if God is the all-powerful omnipotent singularity? There are the pantheons of the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Norse, the Celts, the Hindu, the Native Americans of both the North and South continents, just to point out a few. The Bible itself talks about other “gods.” What if all these other “gods” had the same agenda as the God of the Old Testament, to guide and influence the Devout? But because they themselves were not the true Universal Spirit Infinite Intelligence, they were prone to the same petty bickering and conflicts and hang-ups so many in the physical world are thereby inflicted? There is a saying in metaphysical philosophy, “As above, so below.” What happens in Heaven, happens on Earth, and vice versa. So as Man has conflicts with his neighbor, and wars are fought over borders, it is not implausible that these same types of conflicts did not also happen in the spiritual realms. And when God said, “I am the Lord thy God. There shall be no other gods before me,” can it not also be fair to speculate that all the other gods in all the other belief systems said basically the same thing to their followers? Why wouldn't they if they wanted their people to follow them exclusively? This idea of the “chosen people” sounds very much like third-dimensional thinking considering we as the human race are all God's creation. A god of pure unconditional love and light would not play such human games. Why would there be favoritism if there weren't third-dimensional “gods” playing favorites?

According to science, the tale of the evolution of hominids on this planet is slow and tedious. Millions of years would pass with barely a hint of intellectual and physical development, and yet sprinkled throughout this timeline are certain leaps in evolution that defy explanation. In a relatively short period of time, humankind went from living in caves to building massive structures the magnitude of which still baffle modern engineers. What could account for these sudden bursts of development? The answers could lie in *The Book of Enoch* which talks about the Fallen Angels. According to Enoch, the indiscretions of these Fallen Angels were teaching humans how to be

human: metal craft, war craft, woodworking, agriculture, remedies, geology and gemology, astrology and astronomy, and the phases of the moon. They also taught “sorcery” and “incantations” which could easily be explained as the mechanics of physics and chemistry, mathematics and writing. Could these “Fallen Angels” be responsible for the evolution and guidance of humanity and the sudden leaps in technology? Could these ancient gods and angels be nothing more than terraformers with their own agendas of seeding and guiding the Universe with intelligent life? To early man, they could certainly be viewed as gods.

Ancient texts abound the world over, whether written on cave walls, papyrus scrolls, or carved in stone stele. The earliest texts were by the Sumerians in the form of cuneiform tablets. These tablets not only consisted of the ruling edict of the day, but also included everyday mundane writings such as grocery lists and cargo manifests. Point is, there was much more being written down back then than just “holy scripture.” All over the world, forms of writing cropped up through the different civilizations as a way to record the events of their days and their experiential knowledge. And through these prominent writings, one theme occurred over and over: Amazing events were being recorded of God or Gods coming down and influencing the people of the world. But how else are we to approach the validity of such “facts” other than, “We believe *they* believe they saw something?” History is written by the victors as they say, and with it “truth.” We were not witness to the events we read in the history books, but we have faith that the authors are telling the truth. So much has been lost to time either through natural disaster or the arrogance and ignorance of conquerors. All over the ancient world, vast libraries were plundered or destroyed by marauding madmen who cared little for truth and more for self-importance and conquering. History was rewritten and with it, the truth. As the dust settled, well-intentioned holy men spared what little texts they could for the good of the people. But for all the good intentions, the lure of control created an agenda of oppression that kept intellectual development quashed for centuries until a renaissance of free and expressive thinking broke the shackles of tyrannical control and allowed a new age of thinking to begin.

But how much was lost? How much was destroyed that we will never claim again? What secrets did our past hold of how and what really took place back hundreds or thousands of years ago that we might possibly never know or rediscover because of the iron-clad will of good intentions wrapped in control? We may never know the *real* truth of our origins, the origins of God, or who we are as a species, and certainly not if we remain enslaved by a belief system that does not allow us to think and reason for ourselves.

In my experiences of the metaphysical practices, there are various things I have read about the nature of God and the Universe and the Spirit world. I have had a few firsthand experiences that have convinced me beyond a shadow of a doubt that this

stuff is real. I would like to believe that the One True God is that of a Universal Spirit and Infinite Intelligence that consists of the purest form of unconditional love as opposed to the vengeful, punishing, merciful God of the Old Testament. I would like to believe that the Heavenly Host is made up of Ascended Masters and Angels and Light Beings who are all here to help us on our journey through the 3D experience so we may, too, ascend to our places in the Heavenly realm. I would like to believe that the Soul as we know it continues to live long after the body has not. But this belief should come from knowing, and knowing is experiential. At this time my cognizant memories of the Spiritual realm are still shut down. Perhaps – through Faith and Hope -- my Soul knows and remembers.

A number of years ago, I attended a lecture by a psychic-medium in Cincinnati who told a story that explained the difference between Belief and Knowing. He told how when he decided to be a professional medium, he went to the local copy store to get some signage and literature printed up and some business cards. When he was ready to pick up his order, the clerk asked him if he really believed in this stuff. The medium answered, “No. I don’t believe it; I *know* it.” His knowing comes from experiential knowledge.

I have witnessed the phenomenon of psychic communication and experienced it myself through means that I have no other explanation for than the energetic and spiritual connection within the quantum realm. I have had psychic/medium readings, group readings, past life readings, energy healings, and so forth, and although these things are fun and fascinating, very little of the information can be corroborated. And yet, even fewer of the “hits” can be easily explained by conventional means. I put very little stock in the *faith* of my readings but more *belief* depending on how closely the information rings true. The *knowing* of my readings comes from those unexpected tidbits of complete and pleasant surprise, fragments of knowledge undisclosed to the reader except by means of psychic spiritual connection.

There are wild, weird, and wonderful things happening all around us. Miracles do happen every day; we just don’t recognize them as such because they are not as flashy as the tales of the scriptures, and modern man has become too cynical and too jaded and too egocentric to care.

There is a much bigger picture going on than we had ever imagined, and we lose sight of how small we really are in the Universe. Just because somebody says, “Here. Believe this. It’s true,” doesn’t mean we shouldn’t take it with a grain of salt. Hope has the power to lift us up, but it also has the power to make us hunger for more. There’s a lot more going on than we are aware, and we need to be ever vigilant and ever wary and ever curious as to the mysteries and secrets around us.

To fully appreciate the Big Picture, the next time you are walking a beach on a starry night, stop and pick up a grain of sand, hold it in your hand and contemplate its existence. Imagine that that singular grain of sand is the whole of knowledge we know about the Universe. Then look up at the stars and imagine all the grains of sand on other beaches on alien worlds undiscovered and yet to be explored, and then contemplate all of what we don't know and have yet to learn. How can we possibly fit "all we know" into the context of a grain of sand and arrogantly proclaim we know all we need to know about the nature of everything? God? The Universe? Existence? Without the imagination to do even this, how can anyone even justify telling some else they are wrong?

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