

I photographed this little toadflax on a wall in Ely, after a lively MNDA meeting. The whole plant is tiny, 2.5 cm wide, an inch.

When people ask me an obvious question, 'how do you, as a scientist, come to believe in the God of the Bible?' it is to the very small and the very large that my mind immediately turns.

We can explore the very smallest components of matter and energy, and also the very largest scales of the universe out there in deep space. As we develop ideas we test them by making predictions.

Isaac Newton, and then Albert Einstein, produced good mathematical descriptions of the behaviour of the universe at a large scale, so, for example, we can predict very precisely when the Sun, Earth and Moon will line up to cause an eclipse, centuries into the future.

When we try to use that maths on atoms and subatomic particles it all goes horribly wrong, the prediction is incorrect.

A completely different mathematical approach, quantum mechanics, is needed to predict anything about tiny particles, and it works well. In 1964, a physicist called Higgs predicted using quantum mechanics, the necessity for a particle to carry a tiny part of the mass of atoms. In 2012 the particle, now named the Higgs boson, was shown to exist, so the prediction worked.

Try and apply quantum mechanics to a planet, or a solar system or a galaxy and it all goes horribly wrong. The prediction is incorrect.

And, none of this explains anything. To explain something means to be able to give the reasons why it is as it is.

We cannot use science to explain **why** anything exists, **why** there is time, **why** there is gravity, **why** there is energy and **why** there is mass.

We can come up with lovely theories for the origin and evolution of species like my little toadflax, but take one step back from those theories and we are into an inexplicable universe. Why is there anything? We don't know.

And then there are the puzzles. We can predict very precisely how fast a galaxy should rotate. But if we do the sums, 80% of the mass of every single galaxy is completely undetectable, except by its mass. **80% of the matter in the universe is invisible**. Scientists, rather glumly, call it 'dark matter'. What is it and why is it there? No human being has the slightest idea.

So what about my beautiful little flower? It exists and so do I. But I cannot explain **why** it exists using clever science and neither can anyone else.

The Old Testament of the Bible describes a God who loves people and created everything.

The Old Testament makes a whole bunch of predictions about a messiah, a saviour of the Jewish nation, an anointed one who would be king. Those prophecies make it very clear that the messiah is the saviour and king of the Jewish people and the saviour and king of all the non-Jewish people as well.

In Jesus' life, death and resurrection those predictions came true, occurred, happened, and were described. They were written down in the books and letters that form the New Testament. They were also described by other writers at the time, who were documenting history as they saw it happen, such as Josephus.

When I became a Christian, it was a step into the unknown, an acceptance that Jesus was what people had been telling me that he was. Immediately I set about proving them wrong. For the last 35 years or so I have been trying very hard to prove that Jesus did not fulfill the prophecies of the Old Testament. I have to, because if they were right and if the step of faith, of belief that I had made,

was correct, then it became extremely important to try and offer the same step to as many other people as possible.

Well, I have tried, and I'm still trying, but I cannot find anything that proves that Jesus did not fulfil those prophecies.

Jesus is, through his prophesied life, death and resurrection, the anointed one, the prophesied Saviour and King of the Jewish nation and Saviour and King of every person.

Jesus, a man of flesh and blood, entered the locked room full of disciples, without unlocking and opening the door. It was after his resurrection, and Thomas put his hands on Jesus' wounds and in the slash in his side, feeling the warm, living human flesh. He understood then that Jesus was fully a man, and fully God which is why he said, 'My Lord and My God'.

The Bible says that Jesus was fully man, a real human person, with all the frailties that come with being human, such as temptation to do things which you know to be wrong. The bible says that he did not yield to those temptations. The Bible also says that, at one and the same time, Jesus was also fully God. Thomas understood that, because he was there in that locked room. I was not there and I still find it hard to understand that Jesus of Nazareth was fully human and fully God.

And that brings me to the heart of my ponderings for today. There are many things in the universe that I do not understand. Once upon a time, I was one of the cleverest biologists I knew, but even then, there were a great number of things in the universe that I did not understand. I came to be a Christian by taking a step into the unknown, by believing something that I did not understand. I made that first step of faith because of two things.

One was the gradual realisation, over a period of 25 or so years, that as a scientist I could not explain **why** there is anything. As a scientist what I could understand was bits of a complex item, the universe. Science cannot, has not and will not successfully explain **why** the universe exists.

The second was my first tiny test of what is in the Bible. I knew very little of what was in the Bible. So, when I was asked, by a vicar in Runcorn, to give one reason why I could not accept that Jesus was a saviour, I came up with the best question I could think of. "I don't believe that enough people saw Jesus alive after the resurrection." I thought it was a pretty good question and that he would be stumped. Instead he showed me these words, in the New International Version of the Bible.

"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep..." (1 Corinthians 15:3-6)

So, my first ever serious attempt to prove the Bible wrong failed. A few days later, I prayed for Jesus to let me be a Christian, and set about my attempt to prove that I was wrong to have faith in Jesus. I am still trying but there is an important difference now. Now, I have been trying to prove that Jesus did not fulfill the Old Testament prophecies for 35 years and I have not succeeded, not once, not even in the smallest detail.

That is why I still believe that Jesus is the anointed Saviour of everyone including me. And that is why I keep painting the paintings and writing my ponderings. Love from Rick