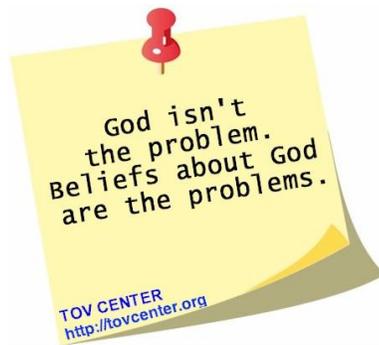


A Preacher and a Rabbi Discuss Their BS

Almost thirty years ago I (Jim Myers) met a rabbi (Jeffrey Leynor) and we began discussing our BS (Belief Systems). You can learn what took us years to discover much quicker by going to the “*We Are All Humans Series*” on the TOV Center website. In order to clearly understand the story below, you need to first read the unit on “*Personal Empowerment Through Transparency*.”

I was a preacher and pastor of a *nondenomination Charismatic church*, while Jeffrey was a rabbi of a *Conservative synagogue*. Our *Religious Belief Systems* both contained an *institutional truth* called “*monotheism*” – “*the belief that only one God exists*.” It is extremely important to recognize that “*monotheism is an institutional truth; it is not a fact!*”



We had to remind ourselves that “*institutional truths about God*” and “*facts about God*” are two very different things. Discussions about “*God*” are not like discussions about a “*mountain*” that multiple people with different Belief Systems sensory perceive together. We also couldn’t “*perceive the memes*” in each other’s brains. However, we learned how to identify belief memes in the words of our conversations, but we first had to *give each other permission to examine and question our Belief Systems*. We quickly discovered the following:

- *We believed that only one God exists, but we had very different beliefs about that God.*
- *We believed our religions had been monotheistic from before our Scriptures were written.*

Institutional truths are created by “*institution*,” so we must identify who those institutions are and when they were created – *my institution was part of Protestant Christianity (began in 16th century CE) and Jeffrey’s was part of Rabbinic Judaism (began around 6th century CE).*

Throughout the history of Christianity there have been a number of *institutional truths* about God – *and how Jesus fits into them* -- over the past 1,900 years. Some believed “*the Christian God is a completely different from the Jewish God*,” while others “*believed they are the same God*.” Some believed that “*Jesus was just a man*,” while others believed “*Jesus is God*.” And some also believe “*the Jewish God and Jesus, along with the Holy Spirit*” -- are part of the “*Trinity*.” In Rabbinic Judaism “*Yahweh*” has always been the “*only God*” from its very beginning.

But our religions are “*book-based*,” so tracing almost any *institutional truth* ultimately ends up in *Jewish or Christian Scriptures*. We have the advantage of having the *Jewish Scriptures* as part of our Bible. So that’s where we went and soon discovered that in the *Jewish Scriptures* (our *Old Testament*) there are stories about many gods, some were even worshipped in the First Temple! *That discovery changed how we both viewed and discussed “monotheism.”*