

The Meaning of My Neighbor's Faith

**Reflections on the Geohistory of Faith along the Silk Road:
Human Origins, Genetics and the Illusion of Otherness**

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The interdisciplinary investigations in science and theology draw our attention to the illusion of otherness. Behind the geohistorical veil just 5500 years ago, we find a planet of 20 million humans with no known writing. This places our current preoccupation with textual authority in perspective. Before 12,000 years ago there is no evidence of buildings dedicated to worship among the 4 million people on earth. Around 30,000 years ago, there were at least three species of humans co-existing. At least 65,000 years ago we created the earliest known artwork. 100,000 years ago the most primitive mathematical art can be found. And 300,000 years ago, the first of 20 human species emerged. They would all come to be known as humans – there were neighbors sharing a home called Earth.

The existence of every human alive today relies on the survival of every ancestor to sexual maturity. Interbreeding makes the notion of a genetic other an illusion. In the past decade, modern full genomic mapping of ancient human DNA offers new tools to better understand how mass human migrations created the diversity of communities which developed localized religious revelation. Following the discovery that most non-Africans carry 2% of Neanderthal genome, the identification of Homo sapiens has collapsed.

What does this mean for the Judeo-Christian-Islamic theology of the imago Dei? Which is the biblical Adam? Paleoanthropology exposes tribalistic, religious and scientific prejudices that demonize 'the other' without examining what it means to be the "non-other".

All our neighbors' faiths derive from the common human cognitive experience of an evolving species. All human populations interbreed so we are all hybrids. We are all the "other".

We shall begin with that most traveled of migratory landmass – the Silk Road.

Otherness among Religions along the Silk Road

This paper will focus on how **the science of human origins and genetics is redefining the doctrine of revelation** of religions along the Silk Road with reference to my neighbors' faiths.

Every theological doctrine evolves in response to developments in science, technology and medicine. Such advances in human knowledge are expressions of divine revelation. With the great number of religious faiths today, tribalism and racism have seeped deep into many faith traditions.

A genomic paleoanthropological investigation¹ into the biology of humans, their cognitive responses to existential anxieties and the resultant creation of religious ideas to meet the psychological demands of uncertainty may pave the way for a fruitful conversation with the other faiths of our neighbors.

Why the Silk Road?

My testbed is the religious geohistory of Eurasia, the network of routes called the Silk Road. They run between Venice to Xian and down to Karachi, forming a 2000-year old crucible of religious events fueled by politics but shaped by economics. From 300 BCE until the 17th century discovery of longitude, when maritime trade routes surpassed terrestrial roads, India, China, Europe and Persia, contributed the faith traditions of Buddhism, Christianity and Islam that dominated over half of the world's population. My travels from Venice to Xian and down to Taxila in Pakistan raised more questions than I could answer. But at each Silk Road city, from Khiva, Samarqand, Bukhara, Merv, Kuqa, Kashgar to Xian, drew my attention to the diversity of sub-traditions from all three faiths. Local interpretations and practices overruled the dictates of distant formal authorities. The Silk Road is the only geographical location that spans Europe and Asia, in which no single religion had political or economic patronage because of its origins.

From 2004 to 2018, I traced Marco Polo's 13th century route across the Silk Road. I observed the result of five religions which encountered each other in geohistories where none were privileged with home bases. Unlike Persia's Zoroastrianism, India's Hinduism, Europe's Christianity or Arabia's Islam, the five faith traditions along the Silk Road had little long-term political patronage. They relied and responded instead to economic pressures and currents. Thus, Central Asian Zoroastrianism, Gandharan Buddhism, Nestorian Christianity, Turkestan Manichaeism² and Turkic Islam had to fend

¹ David Reich's enormous contributions to analyzing ancient DNA has transformed paleoanthropology. See David Reich, *Who We Are and How We Got Here: Ancient DNA and the New Science of the Human Past*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 2018).

² During its early life from the third through the ninth centuries, the once-great tradition of Manichaeism enjoyed massive appeal throughout the Mediterranean and Western Asia, to the extent that defenders of Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Islam all saw it as the single greatest threat to the very survival of their own faiths. Manichaeism was rooted out and eradicated by force in the West, and all remnants of its existence destroyed by the end of the 6th century. By the 10th century few Manichaeans survived in the Muslim heartlands. Further east along the Silk Road, however, the religion survived another 700 years. For many centuries Manichaeism was known only through the polemics of its enemies (such as St. Augustine, himself a former Manichaean), and it was not until the beginning of the 20th century that actual Manichaean written works were found to have survived, locked up in forgotten vaults and buried beneath the deserts of East Turkestan, modern Xinjiang. A few decades later, further Manichaean texts would turn up in Egypt. These writings, along with architectural ruins and fragments of wall paintings, were the relics of a Manichaean kingdom of the ninth and tenth centuries after the religion had briefly served as the official faith of the Uighur Turkish Empire. The religious texts and paintings found in East Turkestan (or Xinjiang, as it is now called in Chinese), together with archaeological and written evidence from elsewhere in Central Asia, attest to a bizarre amalgamation of religious ideas drawn from "Christianity and Judaism, Buddhism, and

for themselves as traders brought their gods and rituals with them for protection and solace. Buddhism was born in Bharata (India) and enjoyed Ashokan patronage, Christianity emerged as a distinct religion and enjoyed the patronage of European kings, Islam enjoyed the patronage of Muslim lands in the Middle East. However, from the Central Asia to the Mongolian Steppes, each of these religions survived, thrived or collapsed according to the shifting winds of military fortune which fueled economic resources. They did not enjoy the assumptions of authority. Their doctrines in these regions underwent severe testing, and without long-term geographical patronage as people groups, the faithful underwent migrations *en masse*. Each inherited, adopted and adapted to changing economic and scientific circumstances.

No world religion has ever survived without political patronage and no political power has ever survived without the means to pay for that illusion of power. This made the Silk Road a unique laboratory of religious geographical and cognitive migrations³. The importance of economics in politics and religion can be demonstrated in appreciating the tripartite legs of civilization's stool. Each element is indispensable. Religion binds communities with shared beliefs about secular and spiritual powers, realized by political agents with militant force, and money pays for both the political and religious leaders. Yet money and religion without politics cannot fend off competition. And money and politics cannot survive internal dissent without the role of religion as the spiritual arbiter who endorsed the king with divine favor. All three play pivotal roles in civilizations.

Eastern Central Asia in the premodern period became a melting pot of religious traditions because it served as a remote refuge for heterodox beliefs, and that well into the Mongol period it was one of the most religiously diverse places on the globe. How this very pluralistic religious environment came to be one of the world's most uniformly Muslim regions is one of the more intriguing questions of Silk Road history.

Silk Road texts manuscripts were found to have been written in 17 different languages, many of which were unknown to anyone alive at the beginning of the 20th century. The majority are Buddhist works, but a substantial number are Manichaean and Nestorian Christian. A Jewish business document in Hebrew letters from the 8th century unearthed at Dunhuang by Sir Aurel Stein has provided the earliest known example of the "Islamic" New Persian language.

The multitude of languages reflects the long evolutionary geohistory of land, people and faiths.⁴ Buddhist teachings from India migrated northwest across the Karakoram and Himalayan mountains through the Punjabi corridor to modern Afghanistan's old Gandharan Kingdom. There it veered eastward across the Tien Shan mountains into western China and came to dominate China's religious landscape. Christianity came from the Persian Church of the East as the Nestorian tradition through modern Iraq and on to Mongolia, Siberia and China. Islam came through maritime Arab traders and terrestrial caravans from Persia through Central Asia and on to China. The reverse journeys of all

Zoroastrianism. Often this, mixture is expressed in that deliberate, peculiar syncretism of Manichaeism. (See Richard Foltz's *Silk Road Religions*)

³ By cognitive migration, I refer to rapid and near total conversion of religious identities to survive.

⁴ Johan Elverskog, *Buddhism and Islam on the Silk Road*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

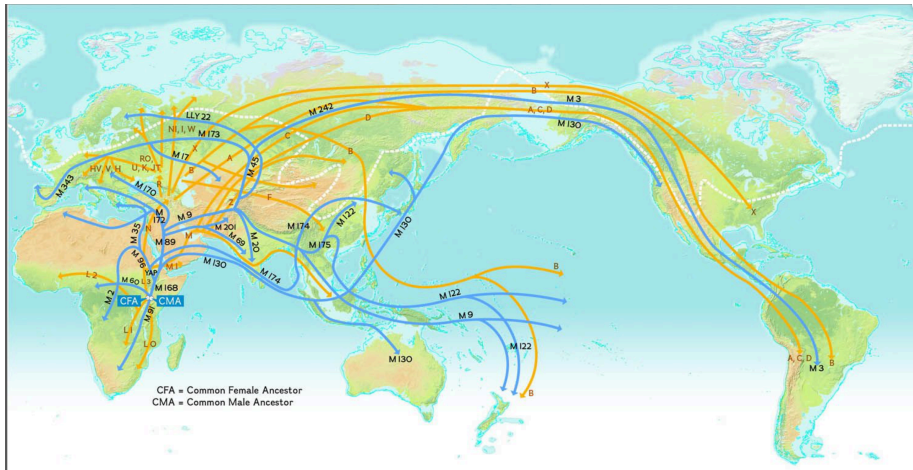
three religions westward to Europe retraced the steps upon which rituals and discourse confronted each other. Competing truth-claims about reality from all three faiths would have changed all three as varying success rates of verification and falsification drew adherents and distanced heretics alike.

Counterfactuals of Geohistory

The outcomes might have been different if Buddhist rather than Christian chronology was internationally acknowledged – Jesus' birth would have been marked by the years after the birth of Shakyamuni Buddha. The migrations of religions would pan out differently if where Alexander the Great did not encounter Indian Buddhism at the ancient Gandharan city of Taxila and changed it forever from a local philosophy into the world's first global religion. Indo-Greek culture shaped the first visual image of the Buddha as a real historical man, thus changing Buddhism: the personification & divinization of the Buddha. The youthful portrayals of the Buddha were made hundreds of years after he lived so no one knew what he looked like. But the face and hair resembled the Greek god Apollo with his clothing resembled that of a Roman toga and the body of a toned Greek athlete.

In 325 BCE, Alexander started his chaotic return to Europe and left an Indo-Greek culture that marked the flowering of Buddhism. At Taxila, the great Jaulian Buddhist monastery was constructed around 200 CE. Rather than practicing a closed monastic life, Jaulian was a center of learning open to new ideas. Students came from Persia in the West, India in the South and China in the North. Here in Gandhara (modern Pakistan), Buddhism spread from the Gangetic plains of India to the rest of the world - Central Asia, China, Japan, Korea, South East Asia and Europe. By 460 CE, the White Hunz (hence the Hunza region of Pakistan) or Huns from Central Asia attacked and destroyed Taxila. Gandharan Buddhism went on to find its home in imperial China as pilgrims and monks came to bring Buddhist scriptures to the Far East. When the 7th century Chinese monk Xuanzhang came to Taxila, he found it already in ruins. By the 8th century CE, Buddhism completely declined and disappeared in Pakistan itself. In around 1000 CE, the Hunz were themselves booted out of Pakistan by horsemen from the West led by Mahmud of Ghazni, who brought in a new religion - Islam. Here they built their capital, Lahore.

In the 13th century, Chinggis Khan created the Mongols as a unified war machine and with his descendants, terrorized much of the known world. His grandson, Batu Khaan's Golden Horde almost decimated Christian Europe and Islamic Egypt. He died in Europe and his descendants were instrumental in the formation of modern Russia. But by the 1500s, the Mughals from Persia celebrated Lahore as their capital. The Mughals introduced Herda (veiling of women) to India, where previously, many women were uncovered from the waist up. Today, state-sponsored Islamization almost eradicated modern Pakistan's own long history of Buddhism, both Indian and Tibetan. Pakistan is politically very young (70 years) but culturally very old (5,000 years). Although it's history is linked with that of modern India, its land has always been the frontier of the subcontinent and experienced a specific and unique geohistory.



Human Migrations

The history of science is part of Christian history and vice-versa.

Christian doctrines evolve in response to new knowledge, often termed general revelation. Reflections on the faith of our neighbors begin with understanding what makes us human in the first place. The emergence of paleoanthropology in the 19th century began with morphological examination of bones and fossils. Comparative anatomy provided a scientific basis to form testable theories. With the success of molecular biology and genetics, new tools advanced the field of human origins. But the recent discovery that modern genetic techniques can recover data from ancient human remains have shifted the goalposts of paleoanthropology. This genomic revolution is a game-changer that combines the experimental power of biology with the observational power of anthropology. **In his work on genome analysis of ancient DNA, David Reich** argues that the human genome provides all the information that a fertilized human egg needs to develop as well as the history of our species.⁵

Here are some of the exciting discoveries. Genomics uncovers the history of migrations and populations that formed us today, this includes our self-identity as race and religion. Neanderthals interbred with the ancestors of all modern humans living outside Africa. Ancient DNA of the mysterious Denisovans of Siberia, who lived around the time of the Neanderthals, indicate that population mixture between different species is central to human nature. DNA analysis of present human populations can trace remnants and reconstruct the genome of populations that no longer exists. Europeans grew out of the mixture of three divergent populations nine thousand years ago while the Indian subcontinent populations arose from the mass migration of Near Eastern farmers some 9000 years ago who mixed with indigenous hunter-gatherers and some 4000 years later, a second mass migration from the European Steppes led to the formation of Indo-European languages. Native American ancestry points to major migrations from Asia and most of East Asian

⁵ Reich, *Who We Are and How We Got Here*, pxxii-xxiv

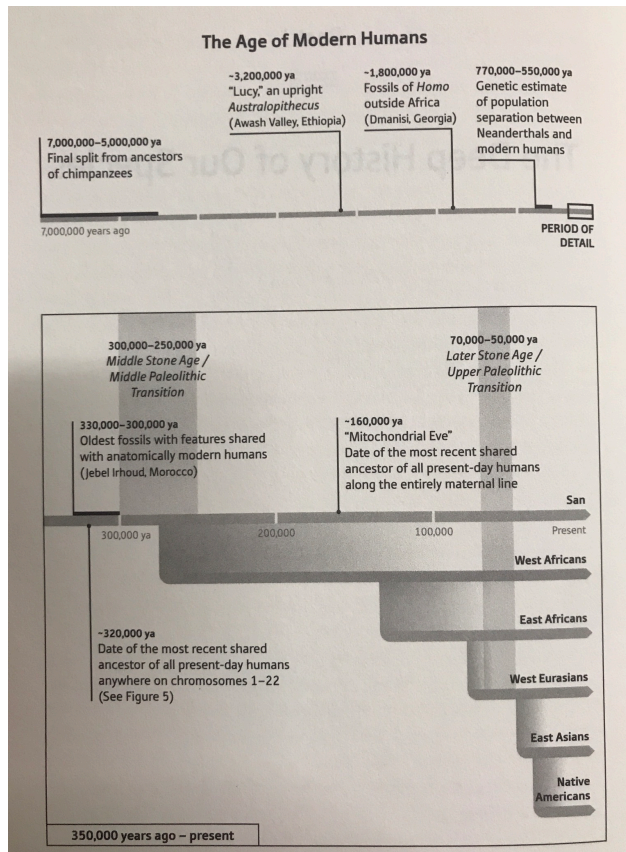
ancestry derive from the Chinese agricultural heartlands. Importantly for people of faith in interventionist deities, genomic studies show that more than anything else, economic inequality (which shapes political and religious access) determined success or failure of reproduction. This means that the very survival of individuals were and are predictably a function of their economic geohistory. God does not appear to intervene in how economics determine the reproductive health of communities. The better access they have to healthcare, the higher the chances of survival. It is economic resources rather than divine intervention changing the laws of physics that influenced the success of human breeding.

Something happened about 50,000 years ago to our ancestors that did not happen to the Neanderthals. It is this that made us uniquely anatomically modern humans (AMH). The question is whether this change is biological or for lack of a better term, spiritual? Three mutations occurred each of which affects a human trait. There are 3,000,000,000 pairs (a maternal and a paternal set) of molecules in our genome and their steady rate of mutations over time forms a biological stopwatch. By studying the genomes of different populations in the world, Asian, African or European, we can date how far back in history their genes have been mutating. This mutation clock indicates how long a human group have existed.

Today, full genome analysis of ancient DNA shows that we cannot even define the modern human race based on genetics, because non-African populations possess around 2% Neanderthal DNA. Even more alarming is the notion that other archaic humans may have interbred with *Homo sapiens* so that our identity as a species remains hitherto unknown. In fact, Reich correctly notes that while earlier theories of the Multiple Regional and the Out of Africa hypotheses were the rage until five years ago, today, all we can affirm is the Mostly Out of Africa Hypothesis.⁶

⁶ Reich, *Who We Are and How We Got Here*, p50.

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Timeline of Modern Humans from Paleoanthropology and Genomic studies of Ancient DNA⁷

Revelation - Disclosure or Discovery?

The foundational theological doctrine of every religion rests on the authorial claim of divine **revelation**, which assures the faithful of secure, presumably reliable knowledge from God. Each religion along the Silk Road had to account for their confidence that their sacred scriptures bear witness to divine mandates authorizing economic interests in tandem with political aspirations usually buttressed by claims to genetic pedigree. The formation of what it means to be the faithful, i.e., a people of God, is often characterized to language, rituals and later, food taboos.

⁷ Reich, *Who We Are and How We Got Here*, p2

However, as we peel away the historical layers of the human experience through the science of paleoanthropology, now aided by genomic ancient DNA analysis, we realize that all religions are derivative of earlier expressions of devotion, going back to at least 50,000 years ago but probably as early as 300,000 years ago. The six questions of revelation include: *What: The corpus of Revelation*, *Where: Geography of Revelation*, *When: History of Revelation*, *Who: Media of Revelation*, *Why: Significance of Revelation* and *How: Transmission of Revelation*.

1. What God revealed? Everything that is knowable by the human mind. The concept of divine revelation in Christianity has long traded on the notion of direct transfer of data, either through secular sources (general revelation) or through sacred texts (special revelation), which includes post-canonical pronouncements of immediate access to the divine mind. From a paleoanthropological perspective, in which humanity as we know it has existed since at least 300,000 years ago, we have and will continue to acquire hitherto unknown knowledge. Thus, divine revelation in an interdisciplinary perspective increases over time – revelation has not stopped and is still going on. The implication of this is jarring – we know more than people in the past and those of the future will know more than us. If knowledge comes from God's revelation, it means that divine revelation is not complete. Nothing we think we know about God is the final word, until revelation has ceased, which is tantamount to the cessation of discovery, insights and inklings. This evolution of revelation explains why doctrinal beliefs change over time, always in response to the discoveries of secular knowledge.

Did God reveal before religions emerged? Religion is simply a term we use to refer to organized forms of worship. Religious dominance from the earliest times of shamanism⁸ around at least 50,000 years ago evolved to become institutionalized religions by about 5000 years ago in places such as Egypt, Mesopotamia and Harappa. Shamanistic religions, defined as practices that involve reaching altered states of consciousness in order to perceive and interact with a spirit world and channel these transcendental energies into this world, exist on every continent on the planet.

At the earliest foundations of organized religions, political leaders encouraged the belief that they enjoy direct and unique access to the gods. The emergence of "philosophers" or lovers of knowledge grew in tandem with religious aspirations. Philosophy was the instrumental field of learning for thousands of years with astrology as the most important tool of observation, until the arrival of sacred or holy writings. The written text allowed the depersonification of priests and became effectively portable priests of philosophy. Anyone with the skill of reading and writing philosophy can now claim the power of divine mediation. Indeed, all institutionalized religions began with philosophers of the first rank, from Zoroaster in Persia to the many Hindu philosophers and the Buddha in India, to Jesus and Paul in Palestine. Philosophers such as Master Mo, Lao Tze and

⁸ The term "shamanism" was first applied by Western anthropologists as outside observers of the ancient religion of the Turks and Mongols, as well as those of the neighboring Tungusic and Samoyedic-speaking peoples. Upon observing more religious traditions across the world, some Western anthropologists began to also use the term in a very broad sense. The term was used to describe unrelated magico-religious practices found within the [ethnic religions](#) of other parts of Asia, Africa, Australasia and even completely unrelated parts of the Americas, as they believed these practices to be similar to one another. See Thomas Alberts, *Shamanism, Discourse, Modernity*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015). pp. 73–79.

Confucius of China made significant contributions that made their way into religions. This transformation from philosophy to theology resulted in the transition from inquiry to interpretation of divine mandates. It was made possible with the emergence of sacred texts, in which the mode of knowledge was no longer observational inquiry but rather obedience to authorial mandates backed up by terrifying sanctions, usually some form of irreversible punitive visitations.

This evolutionary explosion of knowledge acquisition through cultic teaching was most prominently on display during the “**Axial Age**” (800-200 BC), when many of the world’s major religions exploded onto the scene of human thought as if God timed the brain to receive religious revelation. This is a very thin slice of the 300,000-year human history. The origins of writing and the technological invention of printing by the Chinese in the 8th century changed the method and ease of delivery. Knowledge was now portable and not limited to priests who spoke to gods. Portability invited a much larger class of information gatherers.

In Christianity, the idea of divine revelation evolved over time and continues to do so. From the Torah, oldest of the Bible books, Christianity inherited a narrative. Around the 14th century BC, Moses prince of Egypt first set apart the slaves he led out to the Sinai and there, he formed the People of God called Israel. Later writers identified them in a lineage that goes back to Joseph, Abram of Mesopotamia (Chaldees), to Noah and eventually to Adam (Gen 1-11). Torah describes how God revealed himself as YHWH and gave laws to Moses who passed them on to the Israelites through the Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian periods. The Christian New Testament continued the accounts by including the Greek and Roman empires. And the Church Fathers continued with the Byzantine empire which thrived until the 15th century. From the 17th century onwards, philosophers and religious scholars launched the scientific age. Fueled by a desire to participate in God’s work of bringing relief to human suffering, many of the earliest “scientists” were “men of the cloth” – among them was Gregor Mendel, who discovered the principles of genetics.

Today’s Information Age is part of a long line of intellectual evolution that began when the first humans thought, perhaps of God and their place in the world. Later, the Age of Discovery propelled by navigation (long-distance travel) assisted by astronomy (the cosmos) led to the development of modern physics (particles), chemistry (reactions) and biology (life). The inventions of telescoping and microscopy (invisible things) extended our interest in anthropology (body) to heal, culminating in neuroscience (brain). In my lifetime, computing (cyborgs, robotics, artificial intelligence) and information (the world wide web) have become part of everyday life with the popularity of intelligent fridges and fuzzy logic⁹ rice cookers. God will further reveal to us in the future things that we know nothing of today because every new advance in knowledge is attributable to God. How absolute

⁹ Fuzzy logic is a form of many-valued logic in which the truth values of variables may be any real number between 0 and 1. It is employed to handle the concept of partial truth, where the truth value may range between completely true and completely false. By contrast, in Boolean logic, the truth values of variables may only be the integer values 0 or 1. The term fuzzy logic was introduced with the 1965 proposal of fuzzy set theory by Lotfi Zadeh. See Novák, V., Perfilieva, I. and Močkoř, J. (1999) Mathematical principles of fuzzy logic Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, "Fuzzy Logic". Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Bryant University. 2006-07-23. Retrieved 2008-09-30 and Zadeh, L.A. (1965). "Fuzzy sets". Information and Control. 8 (3): 338–353.

should the doctrine of revelation be? This has major implications for how we use the Bible in the light of modern science. To the question what did God reveal must be added, what else will God reveal.

2. Where God revealed? The geography of revelation requires a basic understanding of cosmography. Geography is linked to space, an ever-expanding volume in the universe, spreading in all directions. Since the universe does not expand at a particular speed, but at a speed per distance, it is currently **about 68 kilometers per second** per megaparsec or 3.26 million light-years or 3.084×10^{22} meters from planet Earth.¹⁰ This increasing size of the universe occupying space forms the spatial scope of divine revelation. God could have and can transmit information anywhere within this volume.

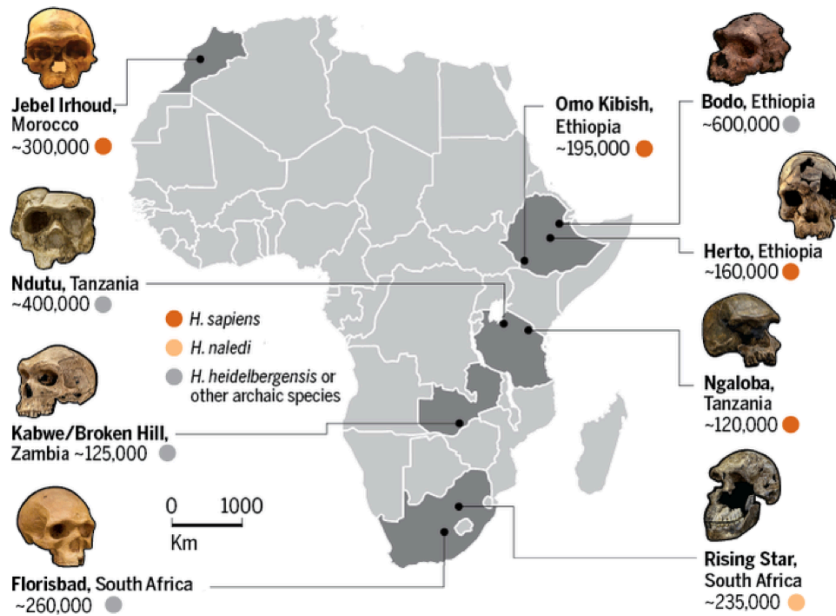
As different religions arose and fell in human history, most tend to privilege the local geographies, partly because long range travel or migration was very difficult. Most known religions, from the shamanisms and totemisms of various indigenous groups to Persian Mazdaism, Japanese Shintoism, Indian Buddhism, or the religions of Egypt, identify the geographies of their founders at the prime locus for divine revelation.

In Christianity, while general revelation refers to any non-sacred transmission of information anywhere in the universe, special revelation may be located in specific geographies on planet Earth. The Christian faith came out of a Palestinian Jewish sect which itself may be traced back to ancient Egypt's 12th Dynasty as it renewed itself down to the Persian, Greek and Roman periods. Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia take geographical precedence. According to the Old Testament, God revealed to Moses in Egypt, to Abraham in Turkey's Sanliurfa (Ur), to Noah and finally to Adam, in the Garden of Eden located either in Lebanon (Ezekiel) or in Iraq (Genesis). According to the New Testament, special revelation took place in the Levant and parts of the Roman Empire. Thus Iraq, Turkey, Egypt, Lebanon and Israel are the geographical locations where God revealed himself to individuals whose testimony later formed the modern Church. Until quite recently, Christian theology did not concern itself with whether God's revelation extends beyond the Holy Lands. However, the circumnavigations of the Magellan expedition, of Sir Francis Drake and of Captain James Cook all raised inconvenient questions for the theological presumptions that carried on all the way to the 21st century. Today, no serious geographical consideration of divine revelation can avoid the claims of divine revelation by other faith traditions.

3. When God reveal? The history of revelation demands the resources of astrophysics and paleoanthropology. The known universe is 13.7 billion years old, life on Earth is 3.5 billion years old, hominids 7 million years old, and anatomically modern humans are 300,000 years old. Although the demarcation between plants and animals is no longer clear since 1974, for much of its history, Christian theology assumes that only humans can receive divine revelation. It was inconceivable that bacteria, plants or animals can learn from God. If God also reveals to all life forms, it would have started on this planet 3.5 billion years ago. Revelation to the inorganic planet Earth would have taken place 4.5 billion years ago, and revelation to the quarks of the universe, some 13.7 billion years ago.

¹⁰ <https://www.universetoday.com/46843/megaparsec/>

And divine revelation to us as a distinct modern human species would have taken place some 300,000 years ago.¹¹



A selection of hominids found in Africa

In his seminal work, Steven Mithen argues for a cathedral of the mind in the evolution of the human brain, when the confluence of different intelligences paved the way for a neural architecture that

¹¹ From *Science* June 9, 2017. Vol. 356, Issue 6342, pp. 993-994. "Researchers have redated a long-overlooked skull from a cave called Jebel Irhoud in Morocco to a startling 300,000 years ago, and unearthed new fossils and stone tools. The result is the oldest well-dated evidence of *Homo sapiens*, pushing back the appearance of our kind by 100,000 years. The new discoveries, reported in *Nature*, suggest that our species came into the world face-first, evolving modern facial traits while the back of the skull remained elongated like those of archaic humans." "These hominins are on the fringes of the world at that time," says archaeologist Michael Petraglia of the Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History in Jena, Germany." "At ... Omo Kibish, two skullcaps were dated to about 195,000 years ago, ... the oldest widely accepted members of our species, until now. Petraglia says, "The oldest known human fossils were found at Jebel Irhoud, 62 miles west of Marrakesh in Morocco in the 1960. In 2004, Jean-Jacques Hublin from the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology revisited the site and discovered fossils of at least 5 individuals. In 2017 the skulls and stone tools were dated to c. 300,000 years ago

enabled a complex cognition reflected in art, music and logic. I extend this postulate to suggest the capacity for religious and moral cognition. From this perspective, biblical "Adam" might refer to the first spiritually conscious cognitively modern humans (CMH) or what I call *Homo spiritualis*, from about 70,000 to 50,000 years ago rather than the first anatomically modern humans (AMH) of 300,000 years ago.

The Bible is a library of testaments, of testimonies of prescientific writers who were unconcerned about modern scientific questions. To assume that the Bible we have before us is the final word on anything as supremely majestic as God's revelation would be presumptuous indeed. Special revelation according to biblical Christianity probably occurred in Iraq, Turkey, Egypt, Lebanon, Israel and Greece. Adam's Iraq c. 70,000 BC, Noah's Iraq c. 2,500-22,000 BC, Abram's Kurdish Mesopotamia c. 1800-2000 BC, Moses' Egypt c. 1400-1250 BC, Jesus' Lebanon and Israel c. AD 25-30, Paul's Gentile Mission c. AD 50-65 and John of Patmos Greece c. AD 95. Thus, biblical divine revelation to humans like us would have taken place after 70,000 years ago.

4. Who revealed God's revelation? Every religion claims that they and often they alone are the prime recipients of divine revelation. In the Christian biblical tradition, God's revelation was made to three categories of life - angels, humans and animals. Whether Jesus himself and the Holy Spirit are subjects or also objects of revelation remain Christological and Pneumatological debates that persists to this day.

Divine revelation includes primary, secondary, modern and future sources. Within most Christian traditions, the primary sources of revelation are limited to the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The secondary sources of revelation include angels ("messengers" who may be mortals or immortals), prophets (true, false and lying) and talking animals, Eden's serpent (Gen. 3) and Balaam's ass (Num. 22). Much of these secondary sources of revelation have been codified into the various canons of the Bible. Modern sources of revelation include inspired speeches, prophetic sermons and predictive prophecies. Each congregation decides whether to grant such claimants the status of divine inspiration but in practice, many congregants make decisions as if such claims are true. Indeed, every interpretation of the Bible in sermons and Sunday school classes often introduce novel ideas that effectively serve as alternative and modern sources of revelation.

Future sources of revelation will surely arise as rapid advances in the natural sciences. This is because all non-sacred sources of knowledge are considered general revelation. Other questions arise: Can God reveal through the collective work of humans who do not themselves claim to be a source of divine authority? Can God use unwitting media to convey his message? This raises the issue of original and repeated revelation, not to mention undiscovered or misinterpreted revelation.

5. Why God revealed? We shall never know the mind of God. But this does not stop theologians from claiming they do. In the Christian tradition, divine revelation is necessary both physiologically and spiritually. As biological life forms, our survival depends on our ability to learn how to avoid suffering and to find sources of food and shelter. As social creatures, we thrive on emotional interaction with others. Humans depend on God's revelation to survive and thrive. As spiritual beings, we are curious about our origins and our fate upon death. Perhaps the most important question we ultimate ask is the prospects for a conscious postmortem existence or the afterlife.

Divine revelation provides relief to these anxieties of the human mind. We are born curious to know, to learn and to wonder. When we stop learning, we perish. This is made more obvious as we peer into the histories of science, technology, and medicine, including pharmacology and surgery. Most of us alive today would not be around if not for these advances that extend our capacities and abilities by first extending our knowledge (*scientia*). Thus, God revealed in order for us to live.

6. How God revealed? The short answer is, through our brain. Does God reveal by supernatural disclosure or natural discovery. This was the debate for much of the 18th century with the Age of Enlightenment. Many Christians felt their assumptions threatened while other Christians welcomed relief from the Church's abuse of power. Both sides felt that discovery and disclosure were mutually exclusive. The rise of modern archaeology showed that all other Near Eastern religions use a similar religious vocabulary to that of the Bible - that divine revelation is transmitted supernaturally. This religious use of spiritual vocabulary worked very well during prescientific times. "Supernatural" was shorthand for "no need for any rational explanation" and protected institutionalized claims of authority. By the 21st century, neuroscience identified activated brain regions and claims of 'supernatural' transmissions decreased significantly. The brain is the only instrument to receive information. God reveals to human minds through their brains. This natural manner of receiving revelation in no way diminishes the wonder and beauty of God. The irreducible quality of thought expressed in brain functions remains unchallenged by any theological doctrine. We ought to expect God to use his created physical universe to convey lessons to us. In the past, it was called knowledge from testimonies in sacred texts. Today, we happen to call it knowledge from science. The more interesting question to ask is about future revelation. With advances in Artificial Intelligence, will our reliance of memory change the what we think of revelation? Will God reveal through non-human cognition? Will we discover new methods of divine revelatory transmission? How will this change Christian beliefs about the doctrine of revelation?

The geohistory of Christian revelation cautions us not to make our current beliefs about divine revelation absolute litmus tests of faith. The Church has survived for 2000 years precisely because it was flexible enough to inherit old knowledge, adopt new knowledge and adapt to different expectations, in order to successfully evolve its teachings in tandem with scientific, technological and medical advances. Indeed, innovation and reinvention are hardwired into the very beginnings of the Christian faith. The first inkling we have as Christianity emerged from Judaism came through the words of Jesus himself "A new commandment I give you..." John 13:34.

CONCLUSION

Geohistorical analysis shows how inheritance, adoption and adaptation of specific religions do not occur in a social vacuum but reflect survival strategies in response to economic pressures expressed in political dominance upon communities on the move. **The Silk Road** showcases the impact of migrations, encounters and power patronage on the survivability of religious institutions as they shape-shift their doctrines to address new questions with old answers. **The doctrine of revelation** highlights the evolution of interpretations as a function of increasing scientific knowledge. **Paleoanthropology** provides a scientific tool to enhance our religious insights into the nature of *human beings being human*. Migratory patterns of its people shaped their faiths alongside

geohistorical

transformations.

Geohistory conditions, but does not determine, the doctrinal options of people groups, while genetics determines, if not conditions, the likelihood of survival to breeding age. Thus, geohistory and genetics predict outcomes that are only disrupted by cultural evolution such as language, learning and migrations.

Genomic ancestry affirms what has long been hinted at in the Christian Bible, in which the ancient story of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph led to Moses and eventually, to the Jewish people, whose national deity became globalized by Paul who interpreted the teachings of Jesus to unify the common dignity of the human race.

Our DNA exposes the myth of genetic pedigree primarily because humans are a restless race. We migrate because we can. As the only bipedal animal on the planet with the most sophisticated brain wiring by which to plan the future, we were able to migrate across the planet, to submerge under the waters and to reach for the sky. The geohistory of life, health and economic access determines the existence of every person who has ever lived. We exist because along our genomic pathway, every one of our ancestors had to avoid pre-reproductive stage elimination, and garner sufficient resources for their young to reach adulthood so they can fend for themselves. A single failure on this ancestral line would have eliminated our existence.

Tribalism, racism and nationalism are social constructs, so we are indeed our brother's keeper. Despite the temptation to privilege our own doctrine of revelation, our neighbor's faith is in fact a variation of our own.

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