

Bridges for honest skeptics

3rd Edition

God sightings?

in prior editions



Rational bases for belief
for truth-seekers struggling
with God's existence,
involvement, and relevance

Joel Lantz

Bridges for honest skeptics

3rd Edition^a

(God sightings? in prior editions)

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^aRevision 3.30. Rewrote most of [Supernatural in extra spacial dimensions?](#). Renamed, revised, and added four accounts to [Help from...?](#) Added to [Can we trust Bart Ehrman?](#). Further refined [God? Then why this mess?!](#) Other more minor edits.

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FIRST THINGS

Forward

"...He so regulates the knowledge of Himself that He has given signs of Himself, visible to those who seek Him, and not to those who seek Him not. There is enough light for those who only desire to see, and enough obscurity for those who have a contrary disposition."

--- Blaise Pascal¹

"God has given us evidence sufficiently clear to convince those with an open heart and mind, yet evidence sufficiently vague so as not to compel those whose hearts and minds are closed."

--- Popularly attributed to Blaise Pascal²

Why this book?

The combined title and subtitle of this book succinctly define its purpose (though *by no means is this book only for skeptics^a*). However, amplification is in order, both here and in the forthcoming [Overview](#).

Why this book?

Why have I written and given away this book? As a former agnostic/quasi-agnostic — a former honest skeptic³ — I now see the need to counter a) compartmentalized (vs. unified) notions of truth and b) popular misunderstandings, misperceptions, and myths about the **supernatural**, God generally, and the **biblical Christ** specifically. In agreement with the above Pascal quotes, I hope evidence and arguments in this book will be “sufficiently clear” to help *honest* skeptics, who:

- Believe truth exists.
- Seek truth.
- Are willing (or at least willing to be willing) to embrace truth when they find it.

^aThough presented foremost as thinking fodder for honest skeptics, I hope that this material also strengthens the confidence of readers well along the path of belief and helps *them* to help *others*.

Why this book?

I hope to build some bridges, however small, over intellectual — and, perhaps on occasion, emotional — obstacles to rational belief and to help honest skeptics gain confidence that God is real and involved.

Such confidence is an *extension* of, not a substitute for, other avenues of reason and evidence — an extension that accepts **transcendence** we can't perceive based on evidence and reason that we can. This book attempts to contribute to the latter.

Again, this book is written for *honest* skeptics. I take pains herein to analytically present evidence and arguments for the existence and involvement of a transcendent God. However, abundant mystery will remain. Refusal to accept mystery looms as a huge roadblock to acceptance of a **transcendent** God. If a **transcendent** God indeed exists — again, as evidenced and argued in this book — then mystery **MUST** exist, and forever-humanly-inaccessible knowledge, perspective, and understanding **MUST** exist, per the definition of **transcendence**. Therein lies the boundary between evidence and faith. Accordingly, refusal to exercise *appropriate* faith — arguably despite subconsciously exercising faith in much of

What's in it for me?

everyday life — falsely elevates human reason to pinnacle status, with attendant logical consequences. If you are rigidly unwilling to accept the possible existence and involvement of a **transcendent** God without absolute certainty, despite accepting life's myriad other uncertainties, then this book is not for you.

What's in it for me?

Absolutely nothing, except for the satisfaction that I'm helping at least some of my readers. Writing this book has been a difficult but hopefully fruitful labor of love.

Contrary to the anti-supernaturalist assertions that I argue against in this book — that we're purely the product of undirected, materialistic, mechanistic, purposeless processes — I submit that each of us has ultimate meaning and purpose. Helping others via this book comprises part of *my* purpose.

Who am I?

I'm a retired physical-chemistry PhD with multi-disciplinary experience. My analytical personality has probably caused more struggles with doubt than

Who am I?

average. I grew up in a church-going family with negligible overt Christian nurturing at home and a few negative 'church people'-associated experiences. Doubts from near the end of high school through partially the second year of graduate school classified me as an agnostic (or at best *quasi*-agnostic, with slight residues of faith), with lots of unanswered questions. I distinctly remember in early grad school referring to students of a Christian-leaning college as "a bunch of Bible bangers."

Nonetheless, I found myself searching. I was an 'honest' skeptic. Through a series of events, I ultimately became convinced that the claims of the **biblical Christ** were true. At first the decision was mostly intellectual assent. Eventually it became a deeper decision in which I became truly committed to the **biblical Christ** — albeit still with unresolved questions. Because this was a process, I cannot assign a date to that transition.

Since then I've still fought doubt battles and still have unanswered questions. In fact, that's probably why I have compassion to help others with doubts. My faith is now planted in "sufficiently clear" evidence and

Bottom line

logic, per the above Pascal paraphrase. It has weathered the storm, and I want to share the benefits that I've learned from my struggles.

Bottom line

For me, the empirical evidence for God's existence and involvement in human affairs — presented in the [EVIDENCE](#) first part of the book — substantially bypasses scientific, philosophical, and theological arguments and questions (which I subsequently address as well). Evidential reality forms a basis for confidence, despite unanswered questions.¹² The helpfulness of those accounts to me motivates sharing them with other strugglers — including potentially you.

Moreover, the scientific, philosophical, and theological arguments and additional evidence I present in the [THINKING FURTHER](#) and [CONCERNING US](#) subsequent parts of the book have buttressed my *own* conviction that God exists and that **biblical Christianity** is rational and true — again, *despite* unanswered questions.

Bottom line

I hope that my thinking efforts will benefit yours. However, for most people, major changes in thinking come incrementally, especially amidst today's constant barrage of information and divergent ideas. The evidence and arguments in this book may comprise just one small step of many on the path toward rational theistic belief (three words in combination that I assert and hope to show do NOT comprise an oxymoron).

I'm painfully aware at times that evidence and arguments alone *do not* and *cannot* ultimately bridge emotional struggles. The same applies even more to *volitional* (human will) resistance. And no *human* evidence and argumentation can *ever* erect the ***last*** bridge — a necessarily large one. Only caring, *drawing* influence from the **transcendent** God, whose existence you may presently doubt or deny, can build that one. If you're not totally hardened, I suggest that you may have transiently sensed that influence on occasion, however faintly.

Overview

The [EVIDENCE](#) part of the book samples forty-five accounts of God's involvement in human affairs — the book's foundational focus — plus, in other parts of the book, additional accounts that contextually illustrate certain points.

- [Miracles impossible?](#) presents before-and-after medical evidence (including extensive evidence analysis in one case) for three healings that cannot be explained by any ever-conceivable biological or psychosomatic mechanism: a naturally impossible regeneration of an almost-destroyed small intestine, the dramatic and sudden restoration of sight in a man with severe central vision loss, and an encounter that enormously improved a woman's tragic health condition in minutes. This chapter further includes three such healings for which I *don't* have medical documentation but come from reliable people, one of whom is a personal friend. I discuss the nature and validity of these miracle accounts specifically and miracles generally.

- [Who transformed these lives?](#) describes dramatic character and behavioral changes associated with profound spiritual changes in twelve individuals.
- [Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?](#) describes and samples a revolution over the last decade in which thousands of Muslims are ultimately turning to the biblical Christ after experiencing dreams and visions of him, in all cases despite risks of shattered family and community relationships and in some cases despite risks of serious harm and even death. Includes ten such accounts.
- [Unusual means meet unusual ministry needs?](#) discusses and samples six examples of providence in tough ministry situations.
- [Help from...?](#) discusses help ostensibly out of 'nowhere', including helpers who suddenly appeared in critical situations and, following the crises, just as suddenly disappeared. Provides six example accounts.
- [Personal experiences](#) briefly recounts a small sample of my own encounters with providence.

The [THINKING FURTHER](#) part clarifies, at length, common misconceptions and misrepresentations,

abundantly arguing that the [EVIDENCE](#) for the existence and human-affairs involvement of a [transcendent](#) God is rational and not trumped by science.

- [God?](#) supports the foundational position of the [EVIDENCE](#) and the book in general: God exists.
 - Argues why rejecting evidence (and, specifically, [EVIDENCE](#)) for God as unscientific, while relying on NONscientific evidence — sometimes almost *no* evidence — for other critical life decisions is a double standard. Illustrates this with multiple examples and cites the high percentage of criminal convictions obtained *without* the benefit of scientific (forensic) evidence.
 - States and defends, at some length, two science-related arguments for God.
 - Argues why belief in God doesn't signify weak-mindedness. Cites science elites who've integrated science and [supernatural transcendence](#) and discusses probable and possible *non*-scientific reasons for above-average rates of agnosticism and atheism in surveyed scientists.
 - Corrects erroneous 'Galileo affair' perceptions and provides perspectives on scientific objectivity, exposing the shoddy background of the

supposed science-vs.-God war and frequent bias in the science community.

- [Supernatural = superstition?](#), supports the rationality of the **supernatural**:
 - Deflates a commonly used but erroneous argument against miracles.
 - Cites **biblical** cosmological concepts that predated current scientific evidence by millennia.
 - Posits and illustrates science-related ‘what-if’ considerations with graphically enhanced thought experiments that support **supernaturality** — including hypothetical explanatory powers of extra space and time dimensions.
- [Mythical foundations?](#) argues for the reliability of the Christian scriptures (New Testament) in support of biblical concepts, quotes, and arguments used occasionally in this book. It also addresses some popular misrepresentations.
- [God? Then why this mess?!](#) outlines a framework that I suggest sheds light on issues of human existence, evil and suffering, and destiny. It implicitly addresses the accusation that, “If God exists and is all powerful, but *does not* defeat evil,

then he's not good. If God exists and is good but *cannot* defeat evil, then he's not all powerful."

- [Christ? Why?](#) first addresses objections to truth in general or to positioning of any belief system as true. It argues that, and why, unless all belief systems are false, one must be true or most true. It then presents why I think **biblical Christianity** is true — the book's obvious position.
- [Talking to the wind?](#) argues for the rationality of prayer, presents evidence of answers to prayer, and discusses potential concerns about prayer — relevant a) to prayer answers in some of the [EVIDENCE](#), b) to the sensibility of even thinking about [Extra time dimensions and prayer?](#), c) and to communication with a **biblical Christ**.

The [CONCERNING US](#) part substantially, but by no means exclusively, supports [God? Then why this mess?!](#), which addresses the beginnings, condition, and destiny of humanity.

- [Just animals?](#) argues for **transcendent** directive influence in the past, just as [EVIDENCE](#) argues for such influence in the present. I argue that **evidence** of **transcendent** directive influence better accounts for the sudden appearance of behavior-

ally modern human traits in the **Upper Paleolithic** era than apparently unfalsifiable, purely-material **conjecture**. The section argues for the cognitive uniqueness of human free will (exposing determinist admissions of cognitive dissonance) and describes other evolutionarily unexplainable human behaviors, capabilities, and desire for meaning and purpose that best fit **transcendent** directive influence.

- [Just stuff?](#) addresses the substance of humanity. Does temporal 'star stuff' totally define us, or are we more? Is mind more than brain? Is the temporal a container for the eternal?

The [APPENDICES](#) (A through D) provide supplementary material. A — detailed evidence analysis for the ['Once I was blind, but now I can see...'](#) healing account; B and C — further scientific support for the [Big Bang initiator?](#) and [Directed fine tuning?](#) arguments for God; D — supplementary perspectives on evil and suffering.

[DEFINITIONS, COMMENTARY, AND CITATIONS](#)

includes a large [Glossary](#) and extensive [Endnotes](#).

3rd-edition changes

I called the first two editions of this book '*God sightings?*' That title fit the 1st edition, but much less so the 2nd edition — which added a large section of mutually supporting arguments and evidence geared to show the rationality of theistic belief to honest skeptics. Now, after further extensive revisions in that direction, it seems appropriate to rename the title to reflect its primary (*but not only!*) objective: to build *bridges* over belief stumbling blocks for doubters who a) accept the existence of objective truth, b) seek truth, and c) are willing to buy into truth when they see it.

This again-hugely-expanded new edition — equivalent to a 3rd edition of '*God sightings?*' • now contains a total of 41 accounts in the [EVIDENCE](#) part of the book,^a not counting several contextual accounts in other parts of the book; • bolsters some 2nd-edition accounts; • strengthens and extends existing content

^aPreviously called ACCOUNTS in '*God sightings?*' editions 1 and 2.

in the remaining sections and adds substantial new content, including five appendices and further colored illustrations; • rearranges some 2nd-edition content and renames some headings; • subtracts a bit of less-helpful/weak content.

Moreover, it now hyperlinks all URLs in the endnotes and elsewhere for easy reference of online citations.

It also corrects some minor 2nd-edition typos — though (please forgive me) the wealth of new material undoubtedly adds *new* missed typos, despite *multiple* checks by a less-than-optimal proofreader: the author. Please have patience with any typos you find.

The hugely expanded 2nd edition of *God sightings?* contained all the evidence of the 1st edition — factual accounts that hopefully encourage honest skeptics to consider or further consider the reality and rationality of God generally and the biblical Christ specifically — plus: • fourteen new accounts; • a large, six-chapter, significantly science-related Rational support section with color illustrations; • a Supplementary Considerations section; • a hyperlinked Glossary; • substan-

tial new Endnotes. The 2nd edition also added Overview and Afterword sections.

NOTE Please don't let the growing page count intimidate you:

- Firstly, many readers will find value in reading **ONLY** the [EVIDENCE](#) part (a tad over 200 *small* pages — equivalent to about 100 pages in a typical paperback) without even glancing at the pages beyond — some of which won't interest all readers. I suggest that the [EVIDENCE](#) *alone* is worth substantially more than the price of the book [: -).
- Secondly, a) the pages are, again, *small* (5" x 7"), b) the mostly-used 12 point Verdana font is appreciably larger than most other fonts of the same technical point size, and c) Verdana is especially readable on backlit screens. I did this to make the book readily readable on smartphones. I had no problems reading the book on my now-'kaput' old smartphone with a small, 3.7"-diagonal screen.

- Thirdly, only roughly 600 of even these small pages, equivalent to about 300 pages in a typical paperback, comprise the body of the book. Introductory material, appendices, a large glossary, and extensive end-notes make up the rest.

Navigating this e-book

I formatted the page size, fonts, and margins with small portable devices in mind — e.g. small tablets, and smartphones. You can of course read the book quite well on large tablets, PCs, Macs, and presumably full-size Linux machines — potentially quite well even in two-page-view mode.

Active links

I have provided abundant active hyperlinks and have extensively cross-referenced the book to tie content together, add supplementary comments, and of course provide source citations. Moreover, starting in this edition, all *URLs* are now active hyperlinks and useful for quickly checking sited Web references (for devices that support Internet connections and Web-site display, of course.) Regarding *internal* hyperlinks, please note the following:

- **Red-bolded-italic**-numbered superscript links, e.g. **8**, lead to important endnotes that supplement and qualify the text, often substantially; I strongly encourage you to read them. By contrast, **Blue-**

Active link usability

nonbolded-nonitalic-numbered links, e.g. [7](#), lead to *source citations* with little or no comment. I so differentiated these links to save time when you've no interest in checking citations.

- All active internal links — endnote links (e.g. [7](#) and [8](#)), cross-references to other locations ([underlined blue text](#)), links to Glossary definitions (terms in [green text](#)), and Table of Contents entries (plain [blue text](#)), work in readers that support PDF hyperlinks. To navigate with internal links, I recommend reading this book with PDF readers/programs that have 'go back' functions, which enable quick return to your last reading location after viewing an endnote or cross-referenced page.

Active link usability

Active links are widely usable in smartphones, tablets, laptops, and desktops. I've successfully tested active link and 'go back' functions in Adobe Reader X for PC and in ezPDF Reader for Android (in which text was quite readable in my now-defunct 3.7 inch-screen smartphone — small by current standards). Doubtless equally capable readers exist for Apple and Linux devices (e.g. GoodReader for iPad).

Footnotes

Though early Kindles, at least versions 2 and 3, display text well, they unfortunately don't support active PDF hyperlinks and probably will not display graphics well. I've not tested the PDF-link capabilities of later-generation Kindles. Doubtless an appropriate PDF reader in one of the Kindle Fire tablets should work as well as in any other Android device.

Early-Kindle users should note that all endnotes reside in a common list at the end of the book, starting on [page 793](#). However, in the course of revisions, many endnotes ended up numbered *not at all* in the sequence in which I reference them in the text — a non-issue for those who can hyperlink to endnotes but potentially a *huge* inconvenience for those who can't; please accept my apologies. Also, internal cross-references to other parts of the book don't include the page number of that text, to avoid a cluttered reading space. Not an issue for those whose devices support the internal hyperlinks, but, again, apologies to early-Kindle users.

Footnotes

You'll also find footnotes at the bottoms of many pages, referenced in the text by a superscript lower-

“Accessed on” comments for URLs

case black letter such as ^a or ^b. Footnote references are **not** active links.

NOTE: A footnote sometimes unavoidably appears on the page **following** the ^a, *etc.* reference in the text. This occurs when the ^a, *etc.* reference in the text body is too close to the bottom of the page to allow adequate room for the footnote. I try to minimize this issue but sometimes fail.

“Accessed on” comments for URLs

I use lots of online source material. The majority of such material is freely available to the public. That's both a boon for my research as a writer and for you as a reader; it allows you to check many of my citations quickly and without cost. But of course there's a downside: online material can disappear or change. Therefore, I've generally appended online-source URLs with notations like “Accessed on (date)”, “Available as of (date)”, etc., to reflect the last time I checked the as-referenced availability of this material.

EVIDENCE

This part of the book contains, for your consideration, forty real-life accounts that I suggest provide direct and associative evidence for God's involvement in human lives and, by implication, evidence for his existence. Again, additional accounts appear elsewhere in the book as contextual illustrations.

Introduction

[EVIDENCE](#) contains a tiny sampling of the many substantive accounts that demonstrate *positive supernatural* involvement in the lives of fellow humans. My objective here is to show that *supernatural* involvement in humanity is rational, intellectually defensible, and real.

In my opinion, the accounts fall in Pascal's "sufficiently clear" category and qualify as significant evidence, regardless of whether the evidence is 'scientific'.^a However, I present them for your *evaluation* — which may start from a far more skeptical perspective than mine. Do they truly represent evidence for God's existence and action in the world? You decide. **8**

I hope that these accounts will at least change the framework of many readers' questions from, 'How can a personal God exist in view of...?' to 'A personal

^aInsistence that all evidence be 'scientific' reflects a **worldview** of scientISM. See the discussions [No evidence?](#)

These accounts ring true

God apparently exists, but why...?' These accounts leave admittedly leave some 'whys' unanswered. ["THINKING FURTHER"](#) starting on page 224 hopefully addresses many such questions. However, I may even more broadly and deeply address 'whys' in a future book or chapter.⁹

These accounts ring true

The healing accounts

Three of the healing cases in [Unusual means meet unusual ministry needs?](#) include before-and-after medical attestation and varying degrees of analyses of the medical records to back up miracle accounts. Though I cannot *prove* that the records weren't falsified or that the doctors were not in collusion to deceive, I suggest that all but the incurably skeptical^a

^aSome atheists I've encountered reject even strong evidence like this, either rationalizing that there *must* be *some* natural explanation or summarily tossing the evidence because it's not 'scientific' — inconsistently demanding virtual standards of proof that they apply to no other life decisions. I'll further discuss such [special pleading](#) in [No evidence?](#)

These accounts ring true

will conclude with me that these medically attested accounts ring true. I submit that if being supernaturally healed were criminal, the evidence I provide would sufficiently convict the three 'defendants' in any court of law. I've also gone to some pains to show that these healings *cannot* be natural.

The other accounts

To the best of my discernment, all other accounts *ring* true. I've deliberately chosen cases in which the associated **supernatural** influence, though not *scientifically* demonstrable, is hopefully clear to unprejudiced readers.

Though I of course can't *prove* that all sources are reliable, I've good reason to believe that they are. I've rejected some questionably reliable authors and accounts — particularly accounts with internal inconsistencies or containing statements that don't 'jive' with known facts. Further, implicit qualifiers for genuineness — such as well-known or verifiable author *character*, internal consistency, external consistency of background details with known information and principles, and inclusion of embarrassing details are

These accounts ring true

obvious in some of the full accounts (which I cite). An endnote lists, in more detail, factors that I consider when selecting accounts for this book. 10

All accounts from others, other than two fully quoted by permission and brief quotations from other originals, are my summaries/synopses. I take full responsibility for the harmony of these summaries/synopses with the original accounts.^a

Many of the accounts come from people who ultimately dedicated their lives in service both to God and humanity. Though you could argue bias from that statement, you can likewise argue for honesty from those most sincerely trying to be faithful to the **biblical Christ** — who spoke at least nineteen admonitions about *truth* per the Christian scriptures (New Testament).

However, suppose you're predisposed to dismiss these accounts *categorically* — perhaps thinking they simply *must* be naturally explainable, purely psychological, distorted, exaggerated, or patently fabri-

^aThe 2nd and 3rd editions include a few of *my personal* accounts which, of course, *are* the originals.

Some themes may irk some readers

cated. I ask you to apply honest, unbiased **abductive reasoning** to the accounts. What is, at least collectively, the **best** explanation? Might you ultimately conclude that 'God is at work in humanity', despite your prejudices? Moreover, will you dismiss all forty accounts (counting the healings)? If not, what about the ones you can't easily dismiss?

In any case, before dismissing *any* accounts, kindly read on. Even if you become uncomfortable with some of the [EVIDENCE](#), the subsequent [THINKING FURTHER](#) and [CONCERNING US](#) discussions may mitigate that discomfort.

Some themes may irk some readers

A high percentage of these accounts *inextricably* tie to God-related terminology and themes — particularly **Christ**-related themes — which presumably will turn off some skeptics, as they would have me at times in the past. I say *inextricably*, because the first edition of this book included *only* such accounts, and I called it *God sightings?* (a name that carried over to the 2nd edition). If the **biblical Christ** is part of God,

Some themes may irk some readers

as I'll later argue, then we should see his involvement in these accounts.^a

Moreover, several accounts involve or ultimately relate to Christian ministries. That too may turn off some skeptics, who may think, "Why this ministry stuff?! I couldn't care less about that!"

I suggest that *how* God works in humanity is substantially independent of *whether* God works in humanity — the primary focus of these accounts. But even considering the *how*, if God exists and is **transcendent**, then *his* priorities are **transcendent**.

They're not subject to *our* priorities, which I submit tend to focus more on fixing *symptoms* than addressing the *ultimate causes* of the symptoms. (See [God? Then why this mess?!](#).) If God thinks relationship with him and treating the *internal causes* of the human condition is more important than treating the *external symptoms* of the human condition — how-

^a This paragraph assumes God's existence and **Christ's** validity. If you doubt God's existence, [God?](#) on page 229 may help. If you doubt the historicity of **Christ**, consider [Mythical foundations?](#) on page 373. If you consider all belief systems equally valid (or equally invalid) check out [Can ANY belief system be true or most true?](#) on page 473.)

Some themes may irk some readers

ever distressing to us, then we should *expect* to see his most dramatic work in pursuit of that priority, which involves *ministry*.^a

If you're uncomfortable with Christ-related themes, please persevere and focus on the overall significance of the accounts. Is God at work in humanity or not?

You decide.

^aWe mustn't repeat the first-century mistake of *erroneous expectations*. Many rejected Christ, and ultimately sought his execution, for not being the *expected* conquering hero who'd deliver them *from Roman authority* — vs. the suffering-servant messiah of Isaiah 53 whose ultimate objective was to deliver them *from themselves*.

Miracles impossible?

Some folks take a dim view of the idea of miracles, perhaps often because they take a dim view of the idea of God (whose existence implies the possibility or even probability of miracles). If that includes you, hopefully this chapter will at least provide thinking fodder and helpful perspective. For others, I hope it provides encouragement and inspiration.

Introduction

The chapter defines miracles, discusses claimed-miracle statistics, presents three medically documented miracle examples, presents three others from reliable sources, and ends with parting comments. Subsequent sections in the book, especially [Miracles are illogical and violate nature?](#), rationally support miracles specifically and the **supernatural** generally.

What are miracles?

I'll define miracles as events that fulfill the following three criteria:

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- They *transcend* (not violate) nature.
- Are implemented by a **transcendent** entity for special **transcendent** purposes — purposes that by definition are often unclear to space-time-limited humans (us).
- Are implemented using a dimensional and physical-law SUPERset that transcends the one-time-dimension, three-space-dimension, physical-law SUBset that defines the essence of our universe, starting at the Big Bang. Therefore science, which can empirically address only phenomena related to the SUBset of our spacetime, has nothing legitimate to say about the possibility or impossibility of a miracle.

I realize that's a somewhat technical definition. However, I want to distinguish it from ideas that miracles are, misleadingly, 'violations' of nature or, unhelpfully, 'exceptions' to nature. A later subsection, [Miracles violate nature?](#), amplifies the concepts in this definition.

I distinguish *miracles* from '*providence*' — which I define as God's influence in the world in general and human lives specifically through and within nature

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Introduction

(vs. transcending nature). Therefore, I'll call *most* of the other **supernatural** involvement reported the book's **EVIDENCE** 'providence'. However, the dividing line is perhaps fuzzy in some cases, and you may think differently. I've encountered the term, 'hyper-natural miracles'.

But, bottom line: is God at work in the world or not?^a

How rare are *medical* miracles?

In this 3rd edition of the book, I'll focus only on *medical* miracles, because of their particular potential for independent, professional attestation — though the term 'miracle' probably applies legitimately to a few other accounts in this **EVIDENCE** part of the book.

Table 1 below contains claims of having experienced or witnessed a medical miracle — or an event *perceived as* a miracle — from samples of the general populations of ten countries. I *projected* the numbers in column 4 by multiplying the 2006 population-*percentage* figures in column 2 by more current *population* figures in early 2015.

^aHowever less than you may prefer.

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Table 1 Claimants experiencing/witnessing divine healing

Country	Claimants in sampled general population, percent ⁹¹	2/6/2015 country population, millions (rounded) ⁹²	Projected number of 2/6/2015 claimants, millions ^a
Brazil	38	203.1	77.2
Chile	26	17.9	4.6
Guatemala	56	16.1	9.0
India	44	1,276.8	561.7
Kenya	71	46.3	32.9
Nigeria	62	181.5	112.5
Philippines	38	101.1	38.4
South Africa	38	53.4	20.3
South Korea	10	49.7	5.0
United States	29	324.2	94.0
Grand Total for ten countries:			955.6

^a Projected number = Population x Percent/100.

These figures exclude a large number of countries, including some big countries like China.⁹³

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The figures project that — per *today's* world population figures — nearly a billion residents of ten countries would claim experiencing and/or witnessing divine healings. Some such claims doubtless are redundant and some *doubtless* relate to coincidence, trickery/fakery, suggestion/placebo effect, psychosomatic relief, false attribution of natural cause and effect, inappropriate definition of the word 'miracle', hearsay, etc. However, even if we assume that 999 out of 1000 claims fall into those categories — a very ruthless discount — that leaves about a million (1 in 1000) that don't. And even if 99.9999% (999,999 out of 1,000,000) were to fall into those categories, that still leaves about 1,000 we need to account for.

I fully agree with the admonition of National Institutes of Health director and former Human Genome Project head Francis Collins to clearly distinguish miracles from naturally explainable phenomena (which, unfortunately, many 'miracle' reporters fail to do):

“...it is crucial that a healthy skepticism be applied when interpreting potentially miraculous events, lest the integrity and rationality of the religious perspective be brought into question.

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Introduction

The only thing that will kill the possibility of miracles more quickly than a committed materialism is the claiming of miracle status for everyday events for which natural explanations are readily at hand.”⁵

Nonetheless, I submit that proverbially ‘throwing out the baby with the bathwater’ — because the term ‘miracle’ is far too often used loosely and uncritically — is a serious mistake, all too glibly made by committed materialists. Such folks tend to set the evidential bar impossibly high, regardless of the evidential strength for a genuine miracle.

I have encountered many detailed miracle claims — not just statistics — from various sources, some of which are quite convincing without formal medical confirmation, based on the circumstances and the reputations of the reporters. Craig Keener’s huge book, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*,⁹⁴ notes hundreds of *modern* miracles, some with medical support, to illustrate modern parallels to sometimes-scoffed-at *biblical* miracles.

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About healings summarized in this book

In this 3rd edition section, I'll restrict the number of miracle summaries to just six: three for which I include medical documentation and three others for which I don't — but which come from trustworthy people. I may add other such accounts to a subsequent edition of this book or to a 'point release' revision. However, if the accounts that follow don't increase your confidence in the reality of miracles — if anti-supernatural bias prevails — then twenty, fifty, or a hundred more probably won't either. (Though perhaps the subsequent [THINKING FURTHER](#) part of this book might ultimately lower barriers of bias.)

General characteristics

All of the healings discussed in this section were associated with Christ-centered faith and prayer. *All* happened *far* too quickly to have resulted from *any* conceivable natural biological processes, ever — *regardless* of the human body's truly amazing and sometimes unexpected capabilities. *None* were medically possible. *None* were associated with spectacularism. *All* were 'permanent' (several months or

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years). *None* were even remotely explainable psychosomatically.

Selection criteria?

I chose these accounts only after careful consideration, implicitly or explicitly based on the types of qualifiers I detail in an endnote.¹⁰ I eliminated several accounts from consideration based on these types of qualifiers (I say *types* of qualifiers, because all of questions listed in this endnote did not apply to all accounts).

Definitely supernatural?

Of course I can't guarantee **supernaturality** with 100.00% certainty. (And of course, someone can *always* conveniently claim lies and distortions whenever they prefer to doubt, *regardless* of evidential strength). However, I submit that the three medically attested events show very strong evidence of **supernaturality**, per the following logic:

1. No ever-conceivable natural, biological causation can explain the events — particularly the dramatic healings occurring in seconds or minutes.

Introduction

2. Therefore, causation from *outside* of nature is extremely probable.
3. The only conceivable type of causation from *outside* of nature is SUPERNatural causation.^a
4. Therefore, SUPERNatural causation of these healings is extremely probable.

Definitely linked to the God of Bible?

We of course can't be 100.00% sure of *that* either. However,

- All six miracles in this section strongly associate with pleas to the God of the Bible — and all of the sudden healings correspond closely to the timing of those pleas. Could some other **supernatural** entity have done the healings? Not impossible...but probable? I appeal to **abductive reasoning** (best choice reasoning), vs. proof. What are the *clear implications*?
- Moreover, failure to prove God-of-the-Bible causation specifically *doesn't legitimize dismissal of God or gods generally*. Appeals to possible heal-

^aI think this premise is sound. But if you have a rebuttal, I'd like to 'hear' it at bridges4hs@hotmail.com.

Introduction

ings in other belief systems is at best a diversion. Were medically documented, naturally impossible healings to occur in non-Christian belief systems, isn't *SUPER*naturally still the logical explanation?^a

Moreover, *SUPER*natural events imply operation of some type of god(s), regardless of identity(s)? Occurrence of permanent (months or years), strongly-medically-attested healings with no remotely conceivable biological or psychosomatic mechanisms — as I report in three cases — in *other* belief systems would only **strengthen** the case for **supernatural**ity and a god(s).

Do these miracle samples exemplify 'selection bias' or 'confirmation bias'?

A **transcendent** God cannot by definition be a cosmic vending machine — subservient to our whims on demand — and miracles are not commodities. Therefore, we cannot claim bias when selection of healing

^aNote that the following logic states only an unverifiable opinion in premise 3: "1. Looks like a miracle. 2. Miracles require **supernatural**ity. 3. Supernaturality doesn't exist. 4. Therefore not a miracle. 5. Therefore no implication of **supernatural**ity or gods."

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accounts isn't based on some concept of statistically representative sampling. For example, if a) a million people pray for healing, b) only ten get healed supernaturally (vs. perhaps a much larger fraction medically), and c) I search for and report those ten, that's not 'selection bias' or 'confirmation bias'. Each such healing is an individual, irreproducible event that we must evaluate on its own merits; **supernatural** healings are not widgets on which we can do statistical quality control. Exclusion of non-qualifying events and selection of qualifying events reflects appropriate exemplification, not bias.

Supernatural healings are perhaps a bit like totally undeserved gifts that a small child might get from a wise parent. Does a wise parent shower his child with gifts every time the kid asks? I don't think so. A wise parent is not a vending machine, subject to the whims of its child. In a very *loose* sense, a good parent is '**transcendent**' relative to the small child — in knowledge, wisdom, power, and resources. The wise parent knows when and if a gift, such as a new toy, is wise or not. If the parent unambiguously gives the child a gift once, and only once, and denies the child

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a gift 99 other times, is the parent a gift-giver? Can we look at the 100 times the child asks and legitimately say the following?

“There's only a lousy 1% chance that the parent is a gift giver — and so, for practical purposes, gift giving [from that parent] doesn't exist.”

If we cite only the single instance of gift giving (ignoring the 99 instances of non-giving) do we invalidate the parent as a gift giver because we 'cherry picked' that instance? Based on just one gift, is the parent a gift-giver or not?

Similarly, supposed we cite just a *single* instance of a strongly evidenced **supernatural** healing from a good **transcendent** God — who ostensibly isn't a cosmic vending machine and provides **supernatural** healings based on **transcendent wisdom**, *considering* heard prayer but not responding on *demand*. If we ignore 99 other times that God *doesn't* provide miracles, can we legitimately say the following?

“There's only a lousy 1% chance that **supernatural** healings are real — and so, for practical purposes, **supernatural** healing doesn't happen.”

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Adult small intestines CAN'T regenerate, but...

Given just one strongly evidenced **supernatural** healing out of hundreds of nonhealings or non-**supernatural** healings, is God a miracle worker or not?^a

Adult small intestines CAN'T regenerate, but...

74 Around 6:10 PM on November 16, 2006, Wisconsin diesel mechanic Bruce Van Natta slid under the five-to-six ton front end of a Peterbuilt logging truck, responding to an unplanned, off-hand inspection request just before going home. His primary work that day had required an engine hoist. To allow clearance for the hoist the six-inch wide beam of the truck's dropped axle^b had been raised and supported

^a*Rarity* does not nullify *verity*. See also the related critiques of Hume's main argument against miracles in [Miracles are illogical and violate nature?](#)

^bBruce notes that, "If you were to look underneath that [front] bumper toward the rear of the truck, you would see that the lowest thing to the ground is the front axle that goes between the two front wheels. It is called a dropped axle because after attaching to the wheels on each side, it immediately drops down and is close to the ground all the way from one side of the truck to the other."

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with a bottle jack, and the wheel had been removed.^a The passenger side was supported exclusively with the jack; unfortunately, no support blocking or jack stands were in place at this point.

To assist with this last-minute inspection, a helper mechanic got in the truck to check a gauge reading. As the assistant climbed in, the truck shifted slightly, the bottle jack flew out, the passenger side collapsed, and the dropped-axle's six-inch wide beam crushed Bruce's middle.

Shannon Cila, one of the first responders to the accident, didn't find a pulse. Among other injuries, multiple arteries had been severed, and most of Bruce's small intestine was destroyed. He should have quickly bled to death, but didn't. After some delay, Bruce was life-flighted to one of his state's largest trauma centers: The University of Wisconsin hospital in Madison.

The head of the trauma department "...told my wife that in all his years as a trauma doctor he had never seen anyone make it to the hospital alive with the injuries I had—and they didn't expect me to live through the night... My wife and others from my fam-

^aTo understand the need for hoist clearance, Google "engine hoist" and see example photos.

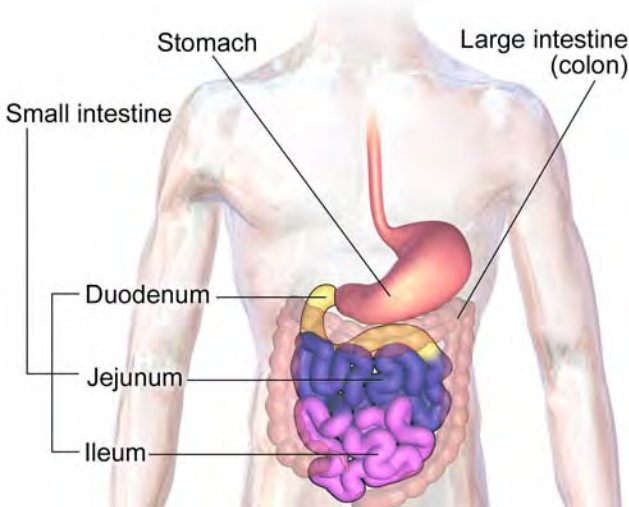
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ily and church decided to praise God for every thirty minutes of life I was given. So they would gather in a circle, hold hands, and thank Him after every thirty minutes that I was alive." Bruce was still alive the next morning — and is still very much alive and active as of my phone communication with him on June 7, 2013. (I last communicated with him by email on April 10, 2015.) Why?

The first surgery

Bruce ultimately needed five major surgeries, four on the small intestines, which are illustrated below. [75](#)



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Per a wikipedia statement (which references Grays Anatomy⁷⁷), "The average [full] length of the small intestine in an adult human male is 6.9 m [690 cm]...."⁷⁶ That number provides perspective for the following discussion of Bruce's post-accident condition.

I have low-resolution photographs of two separate Trauma Operative Note reports on the first surgery. The first Note — reporting surgery on November 16, 2006 (the evening of the accident), was dictated by surgery resident Fumito Ito MD, lists the name of fellow resident surgeon Scott Pinchot MD, and includes the digital signature of attending surgeon Michael J. Schurr (digitally signed by Dr. Schurr on November 22, 2006). This report details two and a half pages of findings and procedures in rather technical language. The list of seven findings, starting at the bottom of page 1 and ending at the top of page 2 includes the following notations:

"6. Approximately 75 cm of viable jejunum with triphasic Doppler signals located in the distal arcade of the bowel.

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Adult small intestines CAN'T regenerate, but...

7. Approximately 25 cm of viable but congested ileum with triphasic Doppler signals being present in the distal arcade of the bowel."

The jejunum and ileum normally comprise the overwhelming bulk of the small intestine, the duodenum comprising the remainder. Only 100 centimeters of the jejunum and ileum were "viable" — usable — and even part of the measly 25 cm of viable ileum was "congested."

As evidence, see photos of the full first page of the initial trauma note, [Figure 1](#), and the top part of the second page, [Figure 2](#). For your convenience, I highlighted the following with yellow graphic overlays: Bruce's name, the surgery date, the "wisc.edu" part of the trauma center URL (the verifiable University of Wisconsin, Madison domain name), and the above-quoted #6 and #7 findings.

A related second report, dictated on November 17, 2006 by surgery resident Fumito Ito, MD and digitally signed by attending surgeon Michael Schurr, MD on November 22, 2006 includes the following statements:

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“Last night he underwent resection⁷⁸ of the 4th portion of his duodenum and resection of mid-jejunum to terminal ileum. In all, he had 75 cm of proximal jejunum and 25 cm of distal ileum with preservation of his ileocecal valve.” ⁷⁹

I omit images from this second report, given their poorer legibility and the sufficiency of [Figure 1](#) and [Figure 2](#) as evidence for Bruce’s extreme loss of small intestine.

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Figure 1 First trauma op note for Bruce, page 1

Vannatta, Bruce L

Sex: M

BD: [REDACTED]

MR#: [REDACTED]

Trauma Operative Note

Nov 16, 2006 00:00

OPERATION: 1. Exploratory laparotomy. 2. Small bowel resection x 3. 3.

Repair of dVANNATTA, BRUCESEX: MDOB: [REDACTED] UWH#: [REDACTED]
(15401310) SURGERY DATE: 11/16/2006

PREOPERATIVE DIAGNOSIS:

Massive hemoperitoneum secondary to mesenteric tear.

OPERATION:

1. Exploratory laparotomy.
2. Small bowel resection x 3.
3. Repair of duodenum at Treitz ligament.
4. Repair of superior mesenteric vein laceration.
5. Repair of superior mesenteric artery transection.
6. Retroperitoneum exploration.
7. Intraoperative Doppler.

POSTOPERATIVE DIAGNOSES:

1. Hemoperitoneum.
2. Superior mesenteric artery transection.
3. Superior mesenteric vein transection.
4. Small bowel transection.
5. Multiple mesenteric tears.
6. Transected 4th portion of the duodenum at Treitz ligament.

ANESTHESIA:

General endotracheal.

ESTIMATED BLOOD LOSS:

3000 mL.

BLOOD TRANSFUSION:

11 units of packed red blood cells, 6 units of FFP, and 10 packed cells platelets in 1 unit of cryoprecipitate.

DRAINS:

None.

SPECIMENS:

Small bowel x 3.

FINDINGS:

1. Massive hemoperitoneum secondary to SMA, SMV transection, and mesenteric tear.
2. Fourth portion of the duodenum was transected at the ligament of Treitz which was primarily closed with 2 layer hand sewn suture proximally and GIA 45 distally.
3. Superior mesenteric artery was completely transected just distal to the takeoff of the middle colic artery.
4. Superior mesenteric vein was also completely transected just proximal of the right colic vein which was ligated. There was a laceration of small superior mesenteric vein at the base of the bifurcation of takeoff of jejunal branches which was primarily repaired with 5-0 Prolene.

<https://wisecit.hosp.wisc.edu/W0B0-NTAP-BIN/webefch.exe/PRD/6?KEY=PT0005INVIS...> 8/21/2008

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Adult small intestines CAN'T regenerate, but...

Figure 2 First trauma op note for Bruce, page 2 top

Page 2 of 3

5. Multiple mesenteric tears causing 3 segments of ischemic bowel including 2 in the ileum and 1 in the jejunum. These portions were resected. The most distal end of this resection was 2 cm proximal to the ileocecal valve.
6. Approximately 75 cm of viable jejunum with triphasic Doppler signals located in the distal arcade of the bowel.
7. Approximately 25 cm of viable but congested ileum with triphasic Doppler signals being present in the distal arcade of the bowel.

So, per the first-surgery reports, Bruce had the following amounts of small intestine left:

- 75 cm of jejunum
- 25 cm of ileum
- 21 cm of duodenum (roughly)

How so? Bruce "underwent resection of the 4th portion of his duodenum." The 4th part of the duodenum is 2 inches (5 cm) long.⁸⁰ A duodenum is normally about 10 inches (26 cm) long.⁸⁰

Therefore Bruce had roughly 21 cm remaining:
 $26 - 5 = 21$.

So, after the first surgery, Bruce had about 121 cm of small intestine length left: 21 cm duodenum + 75 cm jejunum + 25 cm ileum = 121 cm. Over the course of four surgeries, surgeons removed another small part

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of Bruce's small intestine: ⁸⁷ 5 cm. ⁸¹ Final small intestine length: 121 cm – 5 cm = **116 cm**.^a

My online search has shown varying opinions about the *minimum* length of small intestine needed for survival without intravenous (IV) feeding — *unsustainable and ultimately harmful over extended periods*.^b Harvard Medical School's Howard LeWine has indicated an unqualified 5 feet (152 cm), ⁸⁵ and some other authors have quoted shorter values.^c My online searches also suggest that, of the two main parts of the small intestine (jejunum and ileum), the ileum is *the most critical* for nutrient absorption. An ileum is normally around 350 cm long. ⁸⁶ The surgery notes indicate that Bruce had a measly 25 cm left — only 7% of normal.

^a...vs. **690 cm** average for an adult male, and Bruce is a fairly big adult male. ⁷⁶

^bI know this factually as the father of a chronically ill girl who lived on parenteral (IV) feeding for substantial periods. I comment on Pamala's case elsewhere in the book.

^cThis problem is called the 'short-bowel syndrome' or 'short gut syndrome.'

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The starving

In any case, Bruce did poorly with what he had left. He told me personally that, with a combination of enteral and parenteral (IV) feeding — at best only a temporary solution — "...the food I ate wasn't being digested well enough and would come out not long after I ate it — very often still looking much the same as the way it went in..."⁸⁷ Despite the IV supplement, Bruce rapidly lost weight. Three months after his accident he appeared to be almost skin and bone: "The night of the accident I weighed well over 180 pounds, but just three months later I was down to 125 pounds and people said I looked like someone from a concentration camp. I had gone through four surgeries by that point, and the last one had been to remove a portion of the small intestine they had tried to save. I was slowly starving to death."⁸⁸

The prayer

Bruce noted that, "My wife had put my name on prayer lists and prayer chains all over the country." Another Bruce — Bruce Carlson, a New York state guy who had met Van Natta only briefly earlier in the

Miracles impossible?

Adult small intestines CAN'T regenerate, but...

year, heard about his situation and woke up one day with a strong impression to go to Wisconsin and pray over Bruce. Carlson initially dismissed it as emotion, given the already extensive prayer for Van Natta and the \$900 air-travel cost. However, Carlson awoke the following morning with the same strong sense, to which he ultimately responded. After arriving in Wisconsin:

“He [Carlson] started [praying] by asking the Lord to heal me and then said that he was adding his prayers to all the other prayers that had gone up for me around the country already. At that point he placed his right palm on my forehead and began to pray “Small intestine, I command you to supernaturally grow in length right now in the name of Jesus!”

“When he said that, it felt like electricity had come out of his hand and into my body. It was like I had touched an electric fence and had gotten shocked. But instead of staying at the point of contact, the electricity traveled right down into my belly. Immediately I began to feel something cylindrical moving around inside of my stomach.”

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Adult small intestines CAN'T regenerate, but...

"I turned to Brian Strong, my friend who had brought Bruce Carlson to the hospital, and told him it felt like a snake had just come uncoiled inside my stomach, as it was the only way I could verbalize what I was feeling."

The regeneration

Van Natta started *gaining* weight, and eventual follow-up X-rays showed a dramatic increase in small-intestine length. In response to Van Natta's request for written confirmation of the increase, radiologist Andrew Taylor, MD e-mailed Bruce the following:

"As we spoke about today, I looked over the small bowel series that I did from June 18th, 2007. As I mentioned, the small bowel is so circuitous that it can't be measured with a ruler. But as I look at the small bowel remaining, I think you have about one half of the normal length remaining. If the small bowel is thought to be anywhere from 16 to 22 feet, I am going to make the conversion into cm's easier by estimating some things. As we discussed if approximately half of the small bowel could be 9 feet, and there are approximately 3

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feet to a meter (a meter is really 39 inches, not 36) then the amount of small bowel in cm's is about 300 cm's."

More precisely, $9 \text{ ft} = 9 \text{ ft} \times 12 \text{ inches/ft} \times 2.54 \text{ cm/inch} = \mathbf{274 \text{ cm}}$.^a

Remember that Bruce's small intestine, counting the duodenum, was previously about **116 cm** long. (See [page 63](#).)

From ~116 cm to ~274 cm. Not bad, considering that such growth is naturally **impossible**. My Internet searches and special queries to two gastroenterologists revealed that a resected adult small intestine with short-bowel syndrome can sometimes naturally increase its nutrient absorption capacity via adaptive changes in tissue structure, increases in diameter, etc. However, it *cannot* naturally *increase its length*.

- Dr. Jon A Vanderhoof, the consulting gastroenterologist for the Short Bowel Syndrome Foundation, wrote: "It only gets longer if the surgery was

^aBruce is a fairly big guy, so a 274 cm *half-length* figure seems rather conservative if we consider an average *full length* of 690 cm for an adult male small intestine.⁷⁶

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Adult small intestines CAN'T regenerate, but...

done in a baby, not in an adult, both rats and people.”⁸⁹

- My personal gastroenterologist further confirmed that a resected adult small bowel cannot increase in length.⁹⁰

It can't but it did, in response to prayer.

Bruce subsequently had a fifth surgery to remove an organ damaged by the prolonged IV feeding. At that time, the surgeon observationally confirmed the dramatic growth of Bruce's small intestine.

The permanence

Bruce is alive and active as of April, 2015 when I last communicated with him. There's no natural reason he should be.

Comments

The above account summarizes only the essentials, emphasizing doctors' written statements about Bruce's before-and-after condition. Those medical statements are contextually unambiguous. However, author Max Davis⁸¹ has elaborated on his more extensive research into this account, including inter-

Miracles impossible?

'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

views and further examination of medical records, which only bolster the validity and impact of these remarkable events.

Why wouldn't God restore the entire intestine? Consider Bruce's answer: "'My stomach muscles are gone. I have like a net. When I eat, my stomach goes out. When I poop my stomach goes back in. If I were to have all my intestines, I would have a crazy amount of hernias.'" [81](#)

Further information that unfortunately I'm not at liberty to release underscores the veracity of this account.

'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

The title is taken from a hymn that describes *spiritual* healing — appropriate in this account. However, the legally blind recipient received much more than he asked for: sudden restoration of irreversibly-lost central vision.

Miracles impossible?

'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

Legally blind

After several years of difficult police work, Greg Spencer changed occupations and drove cross-country trucks. But he soon had to stop after loss of central vision severely limited sight in both eyes and ultimately rendered him legally blind. He ended up getting help from the Oregon Commission for the Blind and qualified for disability payments.

A letter and test data from Oregon Health and Science University ophthalmologist Dr. Richard Weleber (an expert in retinal disorders) and a letter from optometrist Dr. John Boyer document the evaluation and diagnosis of Greg's legally blind condition and present recommendations for state assistance. See [Figure 3](#) through [Figure 8](#).

NOTE 1) I analyzed much of the evidence in substantial detail — especially the Dr. Weleber letter and data, explaining meanings and significance as appropriate. To help me in that task, I enlisted the paid help of an online retina specialist. See [Appendix A: Greg Spencer evidence analysis](#).

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2) To maximize readability of the limited-legibility evidence scans displayed in this account, I've graphically widened and occasionally lengthened some text to maximally fit the small document page. Therefore, the font appearances of the multi-page Dr. Weleber letter are slightly inconsistent.

Miracles impossible?

'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

Figure 3 Dr. Weleber diagnosis, page 1 of 3

May 31, 1999

Portland, ██████████

SURGEONS

54
E
DY
010
07

Bradley H. Seely, M.D.
██████████ Blvd.
Suite ██████████
██████████, OR ██████████

SERVICE
██████████

Re: Gregory Spencer
DOB: 07-03-1958

DISEASE

██████████
██████████
██████████
██████████

Dear Brad:

ULTRASOUND

██████████
██████████
██████████

On May 21, 1999, I saw Greg Spencer, the 40-year-old gentleman who you referred for evaluation because of his failing central visual acuity. He is the only one in his family so affected. At about age 12-13, he began to experience reduction of vision and his parents were told that he had swelling of the retina. Apparently the vision improved in about 10 months and eventually came back to the 20/30 to 20/40 level, which he maintained for many decades. From age 30 to age 39, he was a police officer. He recently has gone through a professional driving school for driving both trucks and heavy machinery equipment. However, because of difficulty with his central acuity, this began to become very difficulty for him over the past several months. His visual acuity was still 20/40 in August of 1998, but in April of this year the visual acuity had dropped to the 20/60 level and he stopped driving entirely.

VOICE

██████████

ENTINOLOGY

██████████

OTOLOGY

██████████

PLASTIC AND RE SURGERY

██████████

LABORATORY

██████████

OPHTHALMOLOGY

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Without correction his visual acuity today was CF at two feet, 20/400 letters at near in the right eye, and 20/200 no improvement with pinhole at distance, 20/200 letters at near, left eye. The near acuities were with a +2.00 sphere reader in each eye. Tonopen intraocular pressures were 15 mm Hg OU. We were unable to improve the vision with manifest techniques. Goldmann perimetry visual fields performed the previous day disclosed dense central scotomas in each eye, with the larger more dense scotoma being present in the right eye. Ocular motility, external

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'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

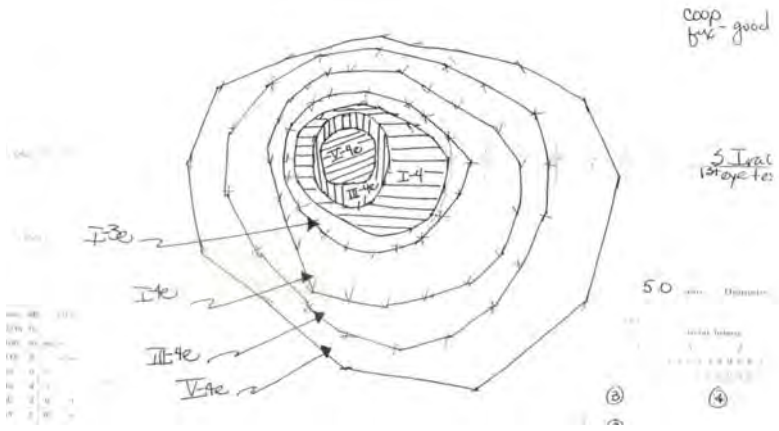
Greg's 20/400 vision indicated that he effectively needed to be positioned 20 feet from an eye chart to read letters that a normal-eyesight person (20/20 vision) can read at 400 feet; his 20/200 vision indicated that he needed to be within 20 feet to read letters that a normal-eyesight person can read at 200 feet.

[Figure 4](#) and [Figure 5](#) below present the Goldmann perimetry results for Greg — which show how well the various areas of Greg's retinas detected light. (I explain Goldmann perimetry in [Appendix A: Greg Spencer evidence analysis](#); see [Dr. Weleber letter — page 1, paragraph 2, sentence 5.](#)) Note that the shaded areas in [Figure 4](#) and [Figure 5](#) indicate central 'scotomas' — areas of central vision loss in the macular area of Greg's retina. The macular area of an eye, especially the fovea, accounts for the great majority of vision under normal (relatively bright) lighting conditions.

Miracles impossible?

'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

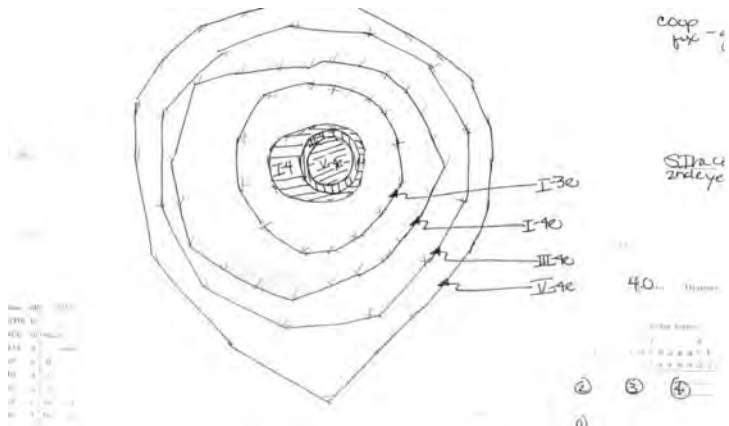
Figure 4 Dr. Weleber Goldmann perimetry, right eye



Miracles impossible?

'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

Figure 5 Dr. Weleber Goldmann perimetry, left eye



Miracles impossible?

'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

Figure 6 Dr. Weleber diagnosis, page 2 of 3

examination, and biomicroscopy were normal. On fundus examination, the optic nerve heads were pink with 0.3 cup-to-disc ratio, and the retina vessels, peripheral choroid, and peripheral retina all unremarkable and normal in appearance. The foveal region had rather striking retinal pigment epithelial mottling bilaterally in an oval distribution of about one disc diameter in size, greater for the right eye than for the left eye. Also on May 20, 1999, Greg had an electroretinogram which disclosed normal amplitudes and implicit times for both rod and cone mediated responses. The final 45-minute rod psychophysical threshold was mildly elevated above normal in each eye.

All things considered, Greg appears to have a macular degenerative process in each eye that has finally resulted in legal blindness status for his better seeing left eye. Because of the rather sudden fall in acuity the most likely situation was that he had a tight ring scotopic around fixation with a central island of vision for the left eye that finally got "snuffed out" leaving him with the large central scotoma. The central scotomas on Goldmann perimetry appear larger than one would expect from just the fundus appearance alone. Nevertheless, I believe that the scotoma sizes are correct and his maculopathy is cause for his marked reduction of acuity.

I spent considerable time discussing with Greg the findings, his current legal blindness status, the lack of any known treatment or surgical benefits, and the various support services available through the Oregon Commission for the Blind. We also gave him literature for the Foundation Fighting Blindness and had our social worker, [REDACTED], meet with him for discussion of support groups and how to proceed with his life. The news of his visual acuity reaching the legal blindness status was quite a shock for Greg and he will need considerable support to assist him through the process of achieving disability and possibly some vocational rehabilitation since all of his work in the past twenty years

Miracles impossible?

'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

Figure 7 Dr. Weleber diagnosis, page 3 of 3

has been related to driving, which will no longer be possible for him.

Finally, I discussed the high likelihood that this is a genetic form of macular degeneration. This could be either an autosomal recessive trait or less likely, an incompletely penetrant dominant trait inherited through one of this parents, or, least likely, a new dominant trait with Greg being the first in his family to be affected. The latter scenario, I believe, is not likely but that is the inheritance situation that would result in the greatest risk for his children to possibly inherit and develop the condition. At this time, I recommend only routine eye care for his children.

Thanks for asking me to see this gentleman in consultation. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance. I recommended that he be re-evaluated in another year.

Sincerely yours,



Richard G. Weleber, M.D.

RGW:bcw

Enc.: Copy of Goldmann perimetry visual fields
and ERG report

Note that Greg's severe central vision loss was diagnosed as macular degeneration — an ***irreversible***

Miracles impossible?

'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

condition. He was given aid from the Oregon Commission for the Blind, a state agency, where he received training to live as a legally blind man (albeit with some remaining *peripheral* vision). See [Figure 8](#) below. He anticipated being on disability for the rest of his life.

Miracles impossible?

'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

Figure 8 Dr. Boyer request to Commission for Blind

June 23, 1999

COMMISSION F/T BLIND

Portland, Oregon

██████████, MS, Director
Oregon Commission for the Blind
fax # (503) 731-██████████

JUL 1 1999

Re: Greg Spencer, CEI # 01-██████████

Dear ██████████:

Today I evaluated Greg Spencer at the request of ██████████. You are aware of his medical condition (macular degeneration) through the report by Dr. Richard Weleber. On June 24, Greg will be at your office to meet your staff and tour the facility. I am of the impression he will soon be going through your complete orientation and vocational assessment and training, including O&M.

Entering vision without correction at distance was: OD 20/500-, OS 20/300. Refraction found low hyperopia of +.75 sphere for each eye. Acutities with correction were unchanged. I could not test his accommodation directly, but I assume because he is 40 years old that some element of presbyopia exists for prolonged close work such as computer use. I am recommending a spectacle prescription for eventual computer use of: OD +3.75 sph., OS +3.75 sph.

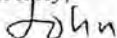
I demonstrated the ZoomText Extra software program to him briefly. You may want to expand upon that. He is a budding author and is struggling with his old computer system and a handheld small diameter +6.50 magnifier. In his new line of employment, he will clearly need software similar to ZoomText. I also told him there is a place for portable magnifiers and that ██████████ or I, will need to look at that issue on a separate occasion, and in regard to specific identified visual tasks.

He is in need of fulltime protection of his preferred left eye and some assistance for his significant photosensitivity, which seems to be concurrent with his macular vision loss. To address these issues, I am recommending a polarized Grade "A" filter (mild tinting effect but full polarization benefit) in today's refraction of +.75 sphere for each eye. These should be worn during all waking hours and are intended for indoor comfort without causing a darkening of vision. When outdoors, or in intense lighting conditions or near water caused reflections, I want him to also use a fit-over dark polarized filter such as the Eschenbach D-244A.

If you wish, I can mail the two spectacle prescriptions to your office. I was not given instructions on how you wish to proceed with recommendations from this evaluation.

Thank you and thanks to ██████████ for asking me to see this pleasant fellow.

Sincerely,



John M. Boyer, OD

cc: ██████████, LCSW

Miracles impossible?

'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

NOTE Note in the second paragraph of [Figure 8](#) that Greg's visual acuity had deteriorated even further by the time of the Dr. Boyer visit. In this letter to the Oregon Commission for the Blind, Dr. Boyer recommends a variety of assistance for Greg.

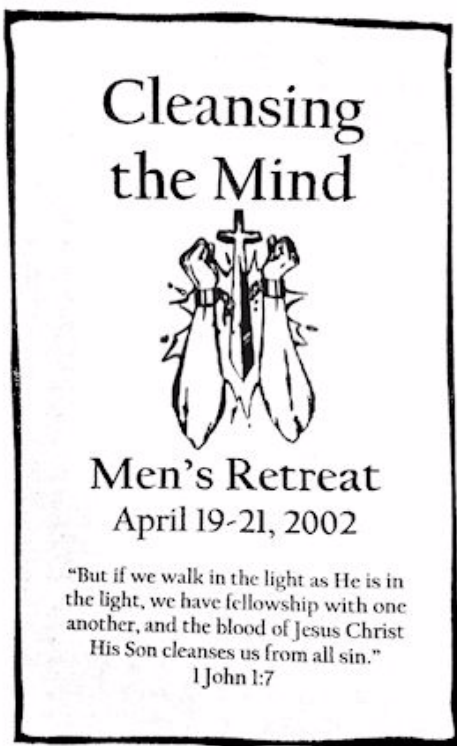
Healed

During his time of legal blindness he met and ultimately married Wendy — a committed Christ-follower who introduced Greg to Christ as well. Then, in April of 2002, Greg attended a spiritual men's retreat called *Cleansing the Mind*. See the retreat-brochure's cover image, [Figure 9](#) below, the evidential relevance of which will ultimately become apparent.

Miracles impossible?

'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

Figure 9 'Cleansing the Mind' brochure-cover image



Regarding the focus of this retreat on "Cleansing the Mind", Greg notes that:

"I recognized I needed that."

Miracles impossible?

'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

Why? His prior years of police work had exposed him to so much violence, death, and depravity, and so many mutilated bodies (as a deputy medical examiner) and pornographic images, that he'd left the profession a hardened and emotionally scarred man — a condition that had cost him his first marriage. Despite having left law enforcement, the awful scenes he'd witnessed remained in his psyche:

“I couldn't sleep nights; the horrid graphic nightmares that I would constantly have closing my eyes with these visions of the violence, the pornography, the bodies, were just overwhelming. I'd wake up screaming at night with these nightmares.”

At the retreat, Greg appealed to God for release...

“My prayer...was, ‘Lord, cleanse my mind, take this junk away, set me free!’”

But he received more than he'd asked for...

“Shortly after praying that I felt the Lord telling me ‘You're clean.’ I opened my eyes and, lo and behold, at the back of the stage where I sat in this chapel I could see a tiny sign that said red ‘Exit’

Miracles impossible?

'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

and at that point realized I had been cleansed of my sin, but I'd also been healed, and my vision had been totally restored."

Observational confirmation

The preceding subsection is necessarily brief. Greg, described to me as very shy, declined to elaborate further on his healing experience. Therefore, to flesh in the events, I phoned two other people who were present at the *Cleansing the Mind* retreat. First I talked with Travis Hunt, who led the session during which Greg dramatically regained normal visual acuity. I later talked with Randy Webb, another pastor at the retreat. Both, it turned out, observed irrepressible excitement by Greg about his renewed vision and observed his 'environmental testing' thereof. Context and key observations follow (not including some further-confirming information that, unfortunately, I must omit to protect Greg's privacy).

Background comments

Before I highlight some of Travis's and Randy's observations, here's a bit of background information:

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'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

- The weekend retreat was held at a rustic campground that included a simple wood-paneled chapel.
- Prior to Greg's dramatic visual restoration, Travis knew him only "roughly." (Randy knew him better, having officiated at Greg's marriage to his present wife.) Travis knew only "that he had bad eyesight" without any idea of the severity of the impairment. Travis had noticed earlier in the session — prior to the healing — that...

"He tried to read. I saw him with multiple pairs of glasses on at once... And he was turning his head sideways, seeing if he could magnify the Word large enough so he can get it through his peripheral vision. He was capable of doing that. I caught him doing that once.

But I had no idea. I didn't know any of his story."

- Using his remaining peripheral vision — a notably poor substitute for central vision in good lighting conditions — Greg could make his way around *before* the healing in a limited way without assistance. The figures below, attributed to the NIH National Eye Institute and widely displayed on the

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'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

Internet⁸³ (including at some professional sites), contrast normal vision, left, with the effects of age-related macular degeneration, right.



The figures above are of course illustrative and not precisely indicative of Greg's specific condition — which, per my analysis ([Appendix A: Greg Spencer evidence analysis](#)), was apparently more severe. They nonetheless illustrate a need for people with macular degeneration to rely on peripheral vision and the possibility of unaided, albeit impaired, navigation on foot.

Context and observations

Travis noted that he'd solidly prepared to *teach* about 'cleansing the mind' in this session but then had

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'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

inwardly sensed God urging him *not to teach* that day. So, following that leading, he simply had an accompanist repeatedly play the tune to Keith Green's *Rushing Wind* song, had the group sing the lyrics he'd remembered (albeit somewhat incorrectly), and use it as a prayer. The song's lyrics,⁸⁴ a few of which I quote below, speak of spiritual cleansing and renewal:

"Rushing wind blow through this temple [referring to God's place within a Christ-follower],

Blowing out the dust within,

...

Holy spirit, I surrender, take me where you want to go."

So, Travis noted,

"We took off our shoes and knelt down, and I said, 'Here's, what we're going to do. We're going to sing this song, repeating this song until we've actually meant it...actually prayed the song. And I want you to ask God to cleanse your mind.'"

Travis asked the attendees to stand if — and only if — God had told them inwardly that he'd cleansed them.

Miracles impossible?

'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

"I had no plans. That was it...we were singing, and Greg was two rows back on my left [Travis was in front, on the stage of the chapel in which the session was held]. I'm sitting there and we're praying. [Accompanist] Mark is playing the music on stage, and I'm praying and leading in singing. And I see Greg, whom I just knew roughly...stand up. I'm thinking 'Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! God spoke to him'...and it looks like he's trying to hold back big blinking. You know, [like] when people really struggle not to cry. [NOTE: Travis found out later that when Greg was blinking he'd been staring at the *knots* in the chapel's wood-paneled ceiling with his new-found vision!] And I thought, 'Oh man, God's really working on his heart; there's something really going on in his heart....This guy needs to pray with somebody; he's obviously got some sort of sin that he's dealing with, and he's just wrestling with God over this sin.' And that wasn't *at all* what was going on. And I said,

'Well, hey, you should pray with a pastor right now and just make a confession and get right

Miracles impossible?

'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

with God. There's some pastors and elders in the back of the chapel. Just go see them.'

He ran! He jumped out and ran. He was the only one in his pew. And he ran!

Now I didn't know about his eyesight at this point. I knew he had bad eyesight, but I didn't know how severe it was and was shocked that he ran out. Instead I thought 'Man, that guy really has issues!'"

Greg ran to the chapel door where Randy was standing nearby at the time. Randy related what happened next:

"...he [Greg] said,

'Randy I've been healed!'

I said, 'What?' He goes,

'I can see. I can see!'

And I said, 'Really?' 'Well, look out here.' The grass was really flush green..., and it was about three or four inches tall. And, there were these little tiny black birds jumping through the grass off in the distance, and you could barely see the tops of their heads. And I said, 'Can you see those

Miracles impossible?

'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

birds out there?' (They were hard for me to see, and I've got good vision!) And he goes,

'Yeah! I can see those birds!'

And he was pointing them out. But see, that's why he ran to the back...to look outside. [Randy noted that the chapel's lighting had been a bit dim.] Because he was all of a sudden blown away that he could see."

Moreover, Randy noted,

"He was looking up into the branches of trees and telling me what he could see... he could see these little birds. And just looking all over the place, taking it all in, you know."

Randy subsequently walked up the aisle to Travis and whispered the news of healed blindness. But Travis related to me that he initially didn't comprehend what Randy was communicating:

"I said, 'Well, ya know, that's great.'...I'm thinking somebody had a deep change. I think it's a metaphor. And he [Randy] goes, 'No. A blind person just received their eyesight.'

Miracles impossible?

'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

Randy further noted the following, which Travis said he observed as well:

"We [including Travis] walked out in the parking lot, you know after he [Greg] looked at the branches and stuff... And he was standing there reading [aloud] license plates on the other end of the parking lot... That was at least 150 to 200 feet away. I mean it was all the way across to the other side of the campground, basically."

Randy noted that the license plates were hard to read even for him and Travis.

Moreover, Greg didn't quickly stop marveling in his newfound vision. Per Randy,

"And, matter of fact, it was going on all weekend, it was going on all the way home..."

Greg still saying...

"'I can see that. I can see that.'"

Medical confirmation

Following this experience, Greg realized he now needed to get off disability. Notifying the government that he could now see and was no longer disabled

Miracles impossible?

'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

triggered a year-long investigation. The conclusion, "...after numerous medical exams..." <Greg's statement, emphasis mine> was that a remarkable healing had occurred. Ophthalmologist Dr. Jon Burpee's letter, [Figure 10](#) below (written just a few days after the retreat dates), provided key evidence.

Miracles impossible?

'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

Figure 10 Dr. Burpee letter verifying remarkable vision change



**Umpqua Valley
Eye Associates**
www.uvea.eyemd.org

*Jon C. Burpee
Eye Physician*

May 3, 2002

Mr. Gregory Spencer

██████████ Street, ██████████

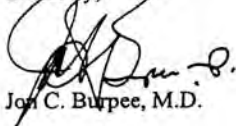
██████████, OR ██████████

To Whom It May Concern:

Dr. Bradley Seely saw GREGORY SPENCER in March of 1999 with a best-corrected visual acuity of 20/200 in the right eye and 20/70 in the left eye. Examination revealed a loss of macular reflex bilaterally, and the patient was referred to Dr. Richard Weleber at the medical school. His examination found that he had 20/400 vision in the right eye and 20/200 vision in the left eye. Hereditary macular degeneration was diagnosed. It is noted at this time that the patient had an episode as a youngster, when he was in his early teens, where he lost visual acuity and then recouped it, until about age 38.

The patient was seen on the 3rd of May 2002 with a remarkable return of his visual acuity. The vision is measured, without correction, at 20/30 in each eye. Examination shows mild macular pigment scatter but no macular edema or deposits at this time. Hopefully his visual return from the 20/200 level in each eye will be permanent.

Sincerely,



Jon C. Burpee, M.D.

JCB/swb

Miracles impossible?

'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

On June 12, 2003, the Social Security Administration finalized the process of discontinuing Greg's disability payments, with the following letter ([Figure 11](#) on the next page):

Miracles impossible?

'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

Figure 11 SS Administration fraud-investigation satisfaction that remarkable vision change occurred

**Social Security Administration
Retirement, Survivors and Disability Insurance
Notice of Disability Cessation**

Gregory Lee Spencer

██████████ St

██████████, OR ██████████

Telephone.

Date:

JUN 12 2003

Claim Number(s): ██████████-67

We're writing to let you know that we've made a decision on your case. After reviewing all of the information carefully, we've decided that your health has improved since we last reviewed your case and you're now able to work. This means that your benefits will stop.

When Your Checks Will Stop

You're no longer disabled as of 06/03. You'll get checks for that month and the next two months. Your last check will be for 06/03.

When Your Medicare Will End

If you have Medicare, your coverage will end the last day of 08/03.

The Decision on Your Case

The following medical evidence was used in evaluating your original claim:
Oregon Health Sciences University records received from 1999
Bradley Seeley, M.D. records received 6/24/1999
Richard Weber, M.D. records received 6/24/1999

At the time you were awarded benefits, you were found to be disabled and unable to work due to macular degeneration causing statutory blindness.

The following reports were used in making this decision:
John Burpee, M.D. records received 5/1/2003
Oregon Commission for the Blind records received 4/29/2003

Your file has been returned to us at this time to determine if there has been any change in your condition.

You have stated that your vision has been restored. Testing performed on May 3, 2002 indicated that there had been a remarkable return of your vision. There are no limitations placed on your ability to perform work activity at this time. Therefore, your benefits will stop.

Miracles impossible?

'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

Truly a miracle?

Based on the independent observations of Greg's restored sight at the time he specified and my detailed analysis of the evidence (see [Appendix A: Greg Spencer evidence analysis](#)), I *unequivocally* conclude the ***affirmative***.

- Greg's severe central vision ***loss*** was an ***irreversible*** condition that could ***not*** have gone away naturally:
 - Greg had foveal epithelial mottling in both eyes — a condition that my retinal consultant says "***never goes away.***" <Emphasis is mine.> Though foveal epithelial mottling may have multiple causes, it's ***always*** a sign of compromised central vision.
 - Carefully done Goldmann perimetry tests for Greg show large central-vision 'scotomas' — areas of vision loss. Though these tests may not have fully quantified the ***degree*** of severe central vision loss, they clearly demonstrated the ***fact*** of severe central vision loss.
 - The results of Dr. Weleber's electroretinogram tests are consistent with central vision loss.
 - Greg was diagnosed with macular degenera-

Miracles impossible?

'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

tion, generally recognized to be an ***irreversible*** condition.

- As a result of multiple examinations, Greg was medically declared legally blind and was provided substantial government help for that condition.
- Greg's central-vision ***RESTORATION*** could not have been faked.
 - Good vision — like any ability — *cannot* be faked, neither in acuity tests nor in normal-life *functionality*. People cannot demonstrate functionalities they don't possess.
 - Examination of Greg's inner eye after restoration of his acuity apparently showed the absence of any significant pathology.
 - The government launched a one-year investigation of possible disability fraud and ended up satisfied that Greg had indeed experienced a “remarkable” return of vision.
- Greg's middle-age vision loss and restoration was ***not*** an encore performance of his youthful vision loss and gradual, natural restoration (page 1 of Dr. Weleber letter, sentences 3 and 4). Key distinctions of his middle-age loss and restoration:

Miracles impossible?

'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'

- Different pathology.
- Uncorrectability by any known means.
- Established **irreversibility**.
- Legal blindness status.
- Extreme *rapidity* of vision restoration (vs. restoration over a period of ten months in his youth). Beyond the anecdotal *claim* of rapidly restored vision by Greg — a person who demonstrated his honesty by voluntarily ending his disability payments — the following points argue for extremely rapid restoration:
 - The retreat participants who observed Greg's irrepressible excitement about his renewed vision and observed his 'environmental testing' thereof, on multiple occasions over several hours.
 - The documented very short time lapse between the *Cleansing the Mind* retreat dates (April 19-21, 2002) and the Dr. Burpee medical-verification-of-restored-vision date (May 3, 2002).
- The healing was *permanent*; Greg retains normal vision — for a now 57 year old man — as I write this paragraph in late April 2016. A couple of days

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Chronic pain disappears

ago Travis Hunt, who's still in touch with Greg, wrote me that...

“Greg has normal aging eyes now. I think he has started wearing 'cheaters'. :-)”

...14 years after instantly regaining his lost central vision.

Chronic pain disappears

Though I don't have medical documentation for the following two accounts, the subject individuals — one an international apologist who routinely argues strongly for truth and the other a personal friend — are reliable individuals, and the context in which they related these events was in no way hyped.

Back #1

During an April 2015 Q&A session in my area,⁹⁵ apologist^a Ravi Zacharias prefaced an answer to a ques-

^aThat doesn't mean Ravi specializes in 'apologizing' to people. An apologist "...argues to defend or justify some policy or institution" [WordWeb] — in this case, the validity of truth and Christian history and principles. In that sense I am an apologist, though hardly of Ravi's caliber.

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Chronic pain disappears

tion about evil and suffering by recounting his personal experience with severe, chronic pain. Objective: to show that he didn't just theoretically 'arm-chair' his treatment of such issues. In the 1980s, Ravi injured his lower back so badly that he has two titanium rods spanning vertebrae L3 to S1,⁹⁶ eight screws, and four clamps. Regarding the associated pain, he noted that,

“...for years and years and years I would wake up and never know how the morning was going to be. I remember the days that I would sit in my car with the steering wheel in front of me. I'd park, put my head on the steering, and just cry in agony. The pain was just so bad.”

Relatively recently, after Ravi had lived with this pain for 28 years, a friend from Singapore called him, noted that he was in Atlanta (Ravi's headquarters), and insisted on seeing him. Despite Ravi's expressed regrets that the meeting wasn't practical — because of his impending flight out of town next midday on a five-week trip — the two ultimately met very briefly the next morning.

Miracles impossible?

Chronic pain disappears

The friend — a godly man — first noted his habit of remaining in bed for a half hour each morning to ask God, “Lord, speak to me if there's anything you want me to do to prepare for this day” and then wait for God to ‘answer’, ostensibly through thoughts and impressions.^a During the previous morning's 30 minute session, the friend received a distinct understanding that God wanted him to tell Ravi that,

“... he will still have a lot of struggles and challenges physically, but I'm going to take care of him 345.”

The puzzled friend had no idea what “take care of him 345” meant but understood that Ravi would know the meaning.

So he relayed the message to Ravi during their brief meeting, asking whether it meant anything to him. Ravi, a bit amazed, speculated to his friend that the message related to his back injury:

^aI realize that sounds weird to a skeptic. But it's a biblically-founded practice, and I know of godly Christ-followers who have found life-altering benefit in what's called 'waiting on the Lord' — sometimes even to the extent of sensing words distinctly placed into their minds.

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Chronic pain disappears

"...for the last 28 years I have lived with a broken back. And it came about by the herniation of L34 and L45 [the disks between vertebrae L3 and L4 and between L4 and L5, respectively]. And I'm straddled from L3 to S1 [with hardware]. So when you say 345, all I can think of is L34 and L45."

The friend started crying, saying, 'I knew nothing of what the spine is like' and 'Where is this?' After hearing the explanation, the friend put his hand on Ravi's back and prayed for him.

Ravi noted that many people had prayed for his back over the years, sometimes accompanied by the biblical practice of 'laying on hands'^a, and the pain problem did not go away.

He left on his trip at midday, as scheduled. He commented to us that he'd always needed an associate to help on such trips. He couldn't bend down, couldn't carry a suitcase or bag, and couldn't place his belongings in aircraft compartments. In fact, he needed to tie his shoelaces in a kneeling position; the price for crossing his legs and pulling on his laces was days of

^aSee also the next account.

Chronic pain disappears

limping. (Injuries in the L3, L4, and L5 region of the spine affect the legs.⁹⁶)

After going through an airport security line on the trip — requiring, of course, removal and replacement of shoes — he surprisingly found himself uncharacteristically sitting on a chair, crossing his legs, and tying his shoes. His shocked travel associate exclaimed,

“What are you doing?!”

Said Ravi,

“From that day till now I have never had any pain in my back.”

He noted that he needs to be careful but that his travel associate will tell us that...

“...I'll pick up my suitcase. Pick up my bags. Put them up there. I do all kinds of things. I just say, 'Lord, if you've really healed me I need to at least be able to put my briefcase up on the top out there.'”

Back #2

In late 2014, during a dinner party with friends, I mentioned a possible miracle in my own family. One

Miracles impossible?

Chronic pain disappears

of the friends, Al Van Kirk, then briefly related the dramatic and permanent relief of his severe back-injury pain some years ago. I subsequently asked him to retell his account while I recorded it digitally. The text below relates this recording, including a short bit of Q&A that followed the basic account.

“My story begins with my being sent to Vietnam as an infantry soldier. In August of 1968, I was injured when the truck in which I was riding in the back of was blown up, and I was off the back of that truck going about 45 or 50 miles an hour.

As a result of that I suffered some fairly severe injuries in the lower part of my spine in the L5, S1 area⁹⁶, which is right around the belt. Bone was chipped off from the inside of the vertebral body and floated around inside the central nerve canal for a few years. I would spend anywhere from two to five weeks per year flat on my back in just excruciating pain.

In February of 1978 I was fortunate enough to have a complete neurological workup by a group of top neurologists. And the outcome of that workup was that I was told I had a ‘floater’ on the inside of my vertebral body, and that was not a

Miracles impossible?

Chronic pain disappears

good thing. When I quizzed him [the doctor] as to what that meant, I was told that I would require surgery to go in and remove that [bone chip] using a device they referred to as a 'hockey stick' — which basically meant they went in blind and tried to find the bone chip and remove it.

I asked the question, 'What's the probability of a full recovery from this.' He said, 'About 50%.' And I thought that wasn't a very good number. I asked, 'What happens if I don't have that surgery?' And I was told, 'There's a near-100% chance you will be[come] a paraplegic for the rest of your life.'...I opted to do nothing for several months.

In April of that same year I was sitting in church, and our pastor, as he was closing the service, said,

'The Holy Spirit has told me there's someone here who needs healing. I don't know who you are, but at the end of the service I'd like you to come forward. We'll call the elders to lay on hands, [a New Testament practice specified in James 5:14] and we'll pray for your healing.'

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Chronic pain disappears

At the time I was a brand-new Christian and had never been exposed to that type of prayer. I looked at my wife and said, 'He's got to be talking about me.' And she said, 'No, no. Just stay here.' And I said, 'No, I've got to go.' So I stood up and went forward. The pastor called the elders, they anointed me with oil, and prayed over me for some time, perhaps 20 minutes. During that period of time, toward the end, something happened and I felt a complete shiver go through my body, the likes of which has never happened before or since. And God healed me that day. From that day to this, I've not had the first bit of trouble with my back. By age 55 I was stronger than I had ever been in my entire life. I give the credit to God. He healed me that day in front of 35 or so people that waited around after church."

I asked Al about the level of pain before the point of healing.

"I didn't have a whole lot of pain that particular day, because the pain would come and go as that little bone chip would float around inside. It's [in] what's called the neural foramina, in the base of the vertebral body, through which the nerve —

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Chronic pain disappears

the sciatic nerve — passes and goes down the back of the leg. And when the bone chip would lodge itself in that hole inside the bone, the pain would just be excruciating. And the only way it would go away was for me to lie perfectly flat and allow the body to do whatever it did to have it move out of that hole.

My comment: "So at times you had severe pain."

"At times the pain was so bad I would have to crawl on my stomach to get to the bathroom."

My question: "And you're saying that's never returned now since then?"

"I've never had the slightest relapse."

My comment: "And if I recall, you said [when we were at the dinner party] that if you were to look at that with imaging, whatever type of imaging is appropriate, it still looks awful. But the pain is gone."

"That's correct, Joel. I've had five or six MRI studies done of my spine — I was in that business, so I didn't have to pay for it. But the images looked terrible. They looked unlike any other spine I've ever seen."

Miracles impossible?

Direct encounter

My question: "And you say you've seen others, because you're in the business [the medical imaging business]?"

"I've seen hundreds and hundreds of them."

Direct encounter

[97](#) In April of 1993, at age 46, Ema McKinley searched for a product in her employer's stockroom loft, among cartons piled nearly to the ceiling. When a nearby improperly-baffled gas heater turned on and blasted her with high-temperature air she slipped, fell, and ended up dangling unconscious from a wedged, twisted foot for over two hours.

Pre-encounter condition

Ema's body quickly reacted to the trauma with an exceedingly painful condition called Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy (RSD), alternatively called Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Syndrome (RSDS) and Type 1 Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS).

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Direct encounter

“Reflex sympathetic dystrophy syndrome (RSDS), also known as complex regional pain syndrome, is a rare disorder of the sympathetic nervous system that is characterized by chronic, severe pain. The sympathetic nervous system is that part of the autonomic nervous system that regulates involuntary functions of the body such as increasing heart rate, constricting blood vessels, and increasing blood pressure. Excessive or abnormal responses of portions of the sympathetic nervous system are thought to be responsible for the pain associated with reflex sympathetic dystrophy syndrome.”⁹⁸

In the early days after her accident, one of Ema’s doctors frankly primed her that RSD was at the top of the McGill pain index.

The initial RSD in her left foot and leg, painful enough, subsequently spread to other parts of her body. I know that seems strange, given that it initially resulted from trauma in her left foot and leg. However, RSD in an *injured* limb can spread, even to the opposite *uninjured* limb:

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Direct encounter

“The pain may spread to include the entire arm or leg, even though the precipitating injury might have been only to a finger or toe. *Pain can sometimes even travel to the opposite extremity.*”⁹⁹
<Emphasis is mine.>

Some individuals’ bodies appear predisposed to respond this way to trauma:

“CRPS represents an abnormal response that magnifies the effects of the injury. In this respect it is like an allergy. Some people respond excessively to a trigger that causes no problem for other people.”⁹⁹

Her self-insured employer — legally forced to continue extended treatment over several years^a for the increasingly stubborn and *spreading* condition — stopped treatment multiple times and had to be legally compelled to resume. In a hurry to end their costs, the company sometimes forced wrong-headed procedures, such as intense physical therapy, to ostensibly shorten the duration of her condition.

^a...because of company negligence relating to the improperly baffled heater that lead to her accident.

Direct encounter

However, such uninformed approaches instead often prolonged and aggravated the condition. Also, the prolonged need for Ema to use crutches resulted in *upper-extremity* RSD in this apparently predisposed individual.

To illustrate the severity of RSD pain, even TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation) applied to her left ankle *at maximum* intensity had no effect. The TENS technician, thinking the machine had malfunctioned, tested it on her husband at a much lower intensity setting, causing him to scream and jump out of his chair.

Ultimately, over months and years, she ended up incapacitated in a wheelchair, with severe upper-body muscle contractures that forced her to lean over the side of her chair at a substantial angle. Further, issues with internal organs (including gut, heart, and lungs) arose, apparently as secondary effects. At her worst she needed a whopping *2000 mg/day* of long-acting morphine sulfate (MS Contin) to *partially* deal with the pain — a dose that would quickly kill anyone without an acquired tolerance:

Miracles impossible?

Direct encounter

“The starting dose for patients who are not opioid tolerant is MS Contin 15 mg orally every 12 hours [that’s only *30 mg/day*]...Use of higher starting doses in patients who are not opioid tolerant may cause fatal respiratory depression.”¹⁰⁰

Pre-encounter physician observations

In the next subsection I’ll describe an encounter that changed Ema’s condition dramatically. But here are a few brief *pre-encounter* quotes from Ema’s **medical records** — which she includes in substantial detail at the back of her book. The significance of these quotes is unambiguous, independent of context.

NOTE I don’t have photos of the original medical documents, neither for the physician quotes in this subsection nor for the physician quotes in the subsequent [Post-encounter physician observations](#) — only *textual* statements from the back of Ema’s book. However:

- I have checked out all of these doctors online: name, specialty, and location. All are affiliated with the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota,

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Direct encounter

where Ema lives. (And, in the medical reports at the back of the book, one of her quoted doctors — Dr. Bell — refers to "...her Mayo Clinic CRPS specialists.") Everything fits.

- Had Ema fabricated the medical reports, presumably one or more of her doctors would have rebutted the quotes by now. But a 7/30/2015 Google search of "Ema McKinley" + "____" (doctor name), for each doc, returned not even a hint of a rebuttal from any of her doctors.
- Ema's medical reports contain a few grammatical errors and one trivial date error, next to which the book indicates "[sic]," implying direct medical-record quotes.
- October 24, 1995 — Dr. Stephen Noll (lower extremity specialist) wrote:

"The left leg...is held in an internally rotated and adducted position at the hip... ankle is essentially in a fixed position... unable to bear weight on the left lower extremity and ambu-

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lates with two axillary crutches... reflex sympathetic dystrophy was considered severe... ***permanently and totally disabled.***" [pp. 244-245] <Emphasis is mine.>

- January 21, 2009 — Dr. Amindra Arora (gastroenterologist) noted that in his physical examination he observed that Ema's "***...left hand is clawed and immovable.***" [p. 253] <Emphasis is mine.>
- August 31, 2009 — Dr. Keith Bengston (upper extremity specialist) wrote:

"...significant ***truncal contracture***...with a scoliotic curve of the thoracolumbar spine. The assumption has always been that this is a manifestation of the CRPS and in general related to the asymmetric involvement of the trunk muscles...I suspect that, given the chronicity of these changes, they are ***irreversible.***" [p. 256] <Emphases are mine.>
- April 1, 2011 — Dr. David Bell (primary care physician) wrote that, at her appointment, Ema was...

"... seated in her wheelchair in her ***typical posture leaning far laterally towards the left...***" <Emphasis is mine.>

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Noting that he had little further to offer except to try raising her already whopping morphine dosage, Dr. Bell indicated that he had...

“...rewritten her prescription for MS Contin 100 mg tablets to take 10 twice daily” [***a total of 2000 mg of morphine per day***]. [pp 257-258.]

The encounter

In the early minutes of December 24, 2011 — more than 18 years following her accident — Ema was alone after preparing the house for Christmas Eve guests with the help of a friend. As she ended a brief time at her computer and tried to move away, one wheel of her wheelchair caught on the computer desk. The wheelchair flipped over, throwing Ema painfully to the floor, pinning her crooked left foot behind her right leg, and immobilizing her club-fisted left arm beneath her. She could not get up to access the phone on her desk, and cries for help to her normally nearby neighbors went unheard; they were not home.

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Direct encounter

So Ema, whose book abundantly notes her faith in Christ, called out to *him*, repeatedly. After several hours of this she heard a wind-like sound, sensed a presence, observed a bright light, and then saw the approach of a man in a glowing bright robe. Though I can't ethically reproduce Ema's description of the ensuing remarkable encounter, I can list the results:

- Her crooked foot straightened, with a cracking sound.
- Her club fist opened and new skin formed such that she could flex her fingers.
- Her neck and spine straightened.
- She ended up walking, however stiffly and hesitantly.

Doubtful? I suggest rereading the [Pre-encounter physician observations](#) and then comparing the bullet list of changes to Ema's body during [The encounter](#) with the [Post-encounter physician observations](#) below.

Post-encounter physician observations

Here are a few brief *post-encounter* quotes from Ema's **medical records** — which, again, she includes

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Direct encounter

in substantial detail at the back of her book. The significance of these quotes, which **confirm** the healings she experienced per [The encounter](#), are unambiguous, independent of context.

- Ten days later, on January 4, 2012, Dr. David Bell (primary care physician) wrote that, at her appointment, he found Ema as follows:

"Astonishingly, she was standing independently when I entered the room today...able to walk a few steps with standby assistance to her wheelchair. Has an upright posture in her wheelchair...***Her previous chronic posture has been wheelchair bound, leaning far laterally toward the left***...since my initial meeting with her in 2004, gradually worsening." [p. 259]
<Emphases are mine.>

- January 18, 2012 — Dr. Kathryn Stolp (head of physical therapy) wrote that in Ema's '**before**' condition she had...

"...sat in her wheelchair full time and in fact ***slept in her wheelchair*** and she ***sat flexed at the waist in a very distorted posture*** with her *left hand closed shut* and

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Direct encounter

she was ***only able to use her right upper limb...totally dependent in self care...***"

<Emphases are partially mine.> [p.261]

Concerning Ema's '***after***' condition, Dr. Stolp wrote that Ema had...

...quite good cervical and lumbar range of motion... Elbows, wrists, fingers move well... This is an extraordinary case... it is amazing the joints move as well as they do. <Emphases are partially mine.> [p. 263]

- March 30, 2012 — Dr. Clark Otley (dermatologist), in describing Ema's '***before***' condition, wrote that, in addition to substantial RSD-related dermatological problems, she had been...

"...contracted in a wheelchair for as long as I have known her with severe immobility... bent over at the waist with poor functioning of her hands and feet." <Emphases are mine.>[p. 264].

Dr. Otley then described Ema's '***after***' condition, noting that she is now an...

"...upright, straight-spined, noncontracted individual who is able to walk with no

Miracles impossible?

Direct encounter

assistance but with hesitation...Her ***skin feels very normal on her hands***, and she has ***mobility of her hand joints***. She is ***able to move her legs normally***...it is *amazing that she has had a dramatic recovery from her chronic contractures and immobility due to her complex regional pain syndrome.*" [p. 264]
<Emphases are partially mine.>

Remarks

Ema makes clear that she was not *fully* healed in [The encounter](#). She still had *some* of her RSD symptoms, including substantial residual pain. *However, that in no way nullifies the healings that **dramatically** improved her life situation.* Moreover, by February of 2013 — 14 months later — she was able to reduce her morphine dose from a high of 2000 mg/day to *zero*.

I leave you with an August 2012 quote from Dr. C. Robert Stanhope, a Mayo Clinic surgeon of 30 years (whom Ema does not mention in her book):

"What happened to Ema last Christmas is simply not explainable to my knowledge from a medical

Miracles impossible?

'Dead within 24 hours'

perspective. I believe the only explanation has to be that God intervened in her life with a miracle."¹⁰¹

'Dead within 24 hours'

The account

Gary Habermas (historian/New Testament scholar/philosopher of religion) related a personal experience.¹⁰³ One Tuesday in 1995, as he sat at the bed of his dying 87-year-old grandmother, her doctor of around forty years walked in and noted rather strongly to Gary that the grandma would be dead within 24 hours — 48 hours max. (Hopefully out of the grandma's hearing range; Gary didn't say.) She'd just had a stroke, simultaneously had two types of pneumonia,^a and had congestive heart failure. Gary and three aunts and uncles "...had a little prayer meeting that night," for the grandma.

^a"Many small germs, such as bacteria, viruses, and fungi, can cause pneumonia. Pneumonia is not a single disease. It can have more than 30 different causes."¹⁰²

'Dead within 24 hours'

When Gary called the hospital early next morning (Wednesday), the person receiving the call said, "You know your grandmother — it's kind of incredible — she's doing really well this morning." When the doctor arrived he found no sign of *either* type of pneumonia nor did he find signs of congestive heart failure. The 87-year-old grandma was released two days later and lived another year, ultimately dying of causes unrelated to the conditions of the fore-described hospitalization.

Remarks

You need to understand that Gary related the account above not to trumpet a miracle but rather to illustrate a contrast. He was addressing a philosophy-conference question about why some people get miraculously healed and others not. Six months after the described events Gary's wife died from stomach cancer, and yet the elderly grandma was remarkably rescued from death, gaining another year of life. Why?

Miracles impossible?

General comments about miracles

So what is the answer to Gary Habermas's question. Why was his elderly grandmother healed and his wife not? And why do we so rarely hear of such events?

Well, they undoubtedly are *relatively* uncommon — though I have fact-based reasons to think that miracle accounts are often ignored or suppressed by folks whose worldviews simply cannot accommodate the **supernatural**. And frankly, the plethora of questionable or patently false stories in the Internet encourages even less-resistant people to lump them all together — discarding the proverbial baby with its bath water. Even some archconservatives strangely have 'miracles don't happen anymore' worldviews.

If you resist such evidence, perhaps assuming educated people today are too scientifically sophisticated to accept such events, perhaps the extensive [THINK-ING FURTHER](#) part of this book will provide helpful perspective.

In any case, miracles *are* indeed *exceptional* — undoubtedly done out of compassion for suffering, debilitated individuals but perhaps *especially* out of a

General comments about miracles

more *general* compassion for what Christ called 'lost sheep' — to help such people to find their way to him:

- For faith-building, e.g. via the case of Bruce, who now ministers full-time to others — and perhaps including faith-building in YOU via this book.
- To periodically reinforce understanding that he exists and isn't an absentee landlord.

Moreover, if all illnesses — including degeneration due to aging — ended in miracles, we'd have overpopulated earth a long time ago. And one could argue that universal supernaturally-induced healing would at least *sometimes* effectively nullify human free will by nullifying the negative consequences of wrong or even wicked choices.

Of course that's scant comfort for the great majority of us who'd like to see miracles for ourselves or loved ones. I know that personally. I watched and tried to help as my daughter Pamela experienced 28 years of womb-to-tomb suffering²⁶⁰ despite thousands of prayers. Yet my wife was at one point apparently healed from a hospital-diagnosed perforated bowel — in response to friends' prayer — on the day of her emergency. (Ref: [A de-perforated bowel?](#)). Special

Miracles impossible?

General comments about miracles

purpose in that? Chronically ill Pamela badly needed her mom's almost full-time care at the time, including bandaging most of her body at least once per day. But why didn't God just heal Pamela? I don't know. I do know that, despite her awful condition, she tried to excel anyway and was an inspiration to others. She died not shaking her fist at God but with great faith in the **biblical Christ** — and admonished others to have the same, in a pre-written note in her memorial-service bulletin.

Following Gary Habermas's musings (see end of last account, ['Dead within 24 hours'](#)), he concluded that, rather insisting on *answers we don't have* to 'why-A-healed-and-not-B' questions, we need to focus on the *evidence we do have*.

Good advice?

Miracles impossible?

Who transformed these lives?

In my opinion, transformed lives are hard to explain away; the transformations can be verified by people who knew the transformed individuals before and after the changes.

Some readers may be tempted to explain away *causes* of these transformations as purely psychological. However, taken as a group (ignoring possible outliers), what is the *best* explanation: God or some unknown psychological mechanism — barring categorical denial of God's existence prejudicially, for reasons independent of the evidence. I reiterate, what is the *best* explanation, NOT "do these accounts constitute *proof*?" Moreover, I encourage my most skeptical readers to consider whether similar dramatic, action-validated positive character changes have resulted from embracing atheism. (If you find examples, feel free to send them to me at bridges4hs@hotmail.com — accompanied by citations of the documented accounts.)

Who transformed these lives?

Qualifying remarks

The accounts reported in this chapter do not typify the experiences of all people who claim to be **Christ-followers**.

- Firstly, not all people who claim to be 'Christians' truly are. For example, some people use the word 'Christian' primarily as a cultural distinctive (i.e. *not* Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, atheist, etc.), perhaps as a result of family background or childhood associations with a church. Such individuals may not have submitted their lives to God, been transformed, or live according to God's power. True transformation is ultimately a God accomplishment. Even faithfully attending church, responding to a so-called altar call, or fruitfully serving in a church do not *necessarily* identify a transformed Christ-follower.¹³ No one is ultimately 'converted' internally by human experience or works. Following Christ and internal spiritual 'regeneration' is always individual-specific; no one becomes a true Christ-follower by birth, family ties, religious affiliation, or cultural association.

Who transformed these lives?

Qualifying remarks

- Secondly, the very real transformations and spiritual encounters of genuine **Christ-followers** are rarely so dramatic as described in these accounts. In my opinion, the transformations recounted herein providentially met exceptional needs and/or accomplished special purposes — for example, to create special leaders and ministries and to build faith. However, less-dramatic God-enabled positive life changes are the norm in those who have intrinsically committed their lives to the **biblical Christ**. Complete lack of positive life changes suggests lack of true, exclusively-*God-enabled* ‘regeneration’.
- Thirdly, though some people may experience and display exceptional transformation *events*, the *overall* transformations of **all** genuine **Christ-followers** are incomplete and continuously in-process — emphatically at variable stages of maturity. *All* **Christ-followers**, including the people described in these accounts, have still struggled with negative behaviors (sin) to some degree and sometimes disappointed the watching world.
- The wrongs justifiably cited against Christian ‘religion’— such as the Inquisition, witch hunts, the Crusades, ruthless imperialism and enslavement

Who transformed these lives?

Qualifying remarks

under the banner of Christianity, and occasional moral failures of people in ministry — were and are committed in *contradiction* to the **biblical Christ**'s teachings. They were committed through some combination of ignorance, human-concocted theology, rationalization, blatant disobedience or less blatant capitulation to temptation, and — above all — not under the leadership of the **biblical Christ**.¹⁵

On the other hand, the summaries in this chapter are in many cases inadequate to convey the full impact of the originals. In particular:

- The first summary in this chapter discusses only one of multiple dramatic accounts in the original.
- The second summary in this chapter (for the *End of the Spear* and a companion book) scarcely captures the impact of dramatically changed lives, love, and grace that the sources convey.

Who transformed these lives?

Jew-hating PLO sniper strives to reconcile Arabs & Jews

The transformation of Tass Saada

¹⁶Taysir Saada — now nicknamed Tass — began life in 1951 in a squalid refugee camp that was formed after Jordan, Syria, and Egypt ordered Palestinians out of Israel in 1948 — as a prelude to attempting, and failing, to destroy the newly established state. The Arabs' failed attacks resulted in displacement of still more Palestinians and the destruction or abandonment of many Arab-majority villages.

Growing up, first in Saudi Arabia and then in Qatar, Tass became a major troublemaker — partly out of resentment over inequitable treatment of Palestinians but substantially because of a self-admitted aggressive, violent streak. Moreover, his ill-perceived blame of Israel for his status, combined with inflammatory rhetoric from Islamic religious teachers, fueled a growing hatred for Jews.

Hatred grew to rage after the Arabs' humiliating defeat in the infamous Six Day War. Tass ran away

Who transformed these lives?

Jew-hating PLO sniper strives to reconcile Arabs & Jews

from home at age 17, lied his way into Syria, joined Fatah, and became a sniper nicknamed Jazzar, 'Butcher.' He lived up to the name. Wild beyond Fatah's objectives and boundaries, he threw grenades and machine-gun bursts into Christian homes and tried to assassinate the Jordanian crown prince — landing Fatah in hot water and putting Tass on Jordan's 'Wanted!' list.

His father ultimately arranged for a home visit to Qatar AND for the confiscation of Tass's passport, in an attempt to force him to finish his education. But an angry Tass caused more big trouble, including attempting to murder a despised teacher. Tass stayed out of jail — this time and many previous times — only because of family political connections.¹⁷ Ultimately, in great desperation, his father helped get this troublemaker out of the family's hair by reluctantly paying Tass's way to the 'satanic' United States.

There, Tass quickly married single-mom Karen just to get a US 'green card', with plans to subsequently dump her. After a new baby complicated his plans, Tass successfully pursued restaurant management —

Who transformed these lives?

and progressively became a philandering workaholic who quarreled with Karen in particular and neglected his family in general.

Over these first nineteen years in the US, he had become good friends Charlie, an executive who frequented a restaurant that Tass managed. Then one day Charlie threw a curve ball, questioning Tass's fear of God and offering to help through his 'connection'. Despite this offense, recent positive changes in Charlie's behavior churned Tass's curiosity. He ultimately begged Charlie to explain the 'connection' that changed his life and gave him new peace. Tass soon heard the shocking price for this "connection": he had to love a Jew! (Tass still hated Jews with a passion. A transformed Tass said in a YouTube interview that he'd sometimes been tempted to poison the restaurant's predominantly Jewish clientele!¹⁸) But at Charlie's home, when Charlie read John 1:1 in the Christian scriptures ("In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"), it inexplicably affected Tass so deeply that he began to shake. He then involuntarily fell to his knees and saw and heard a talking light that said "I am the way,

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the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." 19 Tass admits that...

"... this sounds really odd, and readers may say I was hallucinating. I can only tell you how events unfolded that afternoon on Sunday, March 14, 1993."

He says that at that moment he somehow knew that

"...the triune God existed—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I knew that this God loved me."

Tass then blurted out...

"'Oh, Jesus, come into my life!...Forgive me and be my Lord and Savior!'"

He felt peace, joy, and the sense of a heavy load leaving his shoulders. He says that he almost palpably felt the presence of God. 20

Observer Charlie was flabbergasted, noting that Tass had literally been lifted from the couch and deposited on his knees. Tass was further shocked next morning to find himself praying on behalf of Israel! He immediately called Charlie to ask whether Jesus was a Jew.

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Unknown to either man at that point, Tass's son had secretly become a Christ-follower¹³, and his son's church had prayed for Tass 24/7 over the previous three months.

His family started noticing unmistakable changes in Tass's life. His son predictably rejoiced in Tass's transformation. His heretofore neglected and cheated-on wife and neglected daughter were initially skeptical and took time to forgive and reconcile.

However, Karen ultimately became his ministry partner. In ensuing years, Tass pursued bold ministries — including a dangerous one in Gaza. One of these ministries included close friendship with a Jew who had once intensely hated Arabs. Tass ultimately founded two ministries that continue today. One is called *Hope for Ishmael* — a ministry of reconciliation between Arabs and Jews. The other is called *Seeds of Hope*, a humanitarian ministry to the children and youth of Jericho.

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Reviewer: "Tass Is the Real Deal!"

[21](#) I don't normally excerpt book reviews, but I think that the following adds valuable support for the author and his story.

"There was a time when I knew Tass only as Ben's dad. Ben was the boyfriend, then husband, of our youngest daughter's best friend...I also knew Tass...as a highly respected restaurateur.

We knew that Tass was of Palestinian origin... Little did we know that Tass had a past as a Palestinian warrior/sniper and former aide to Yasser Arafat.

When Ben came to Christ in his late teens, he was naturally fearful of how his Muslim dad would react. Some in our church started a 24/7 prayer chain for him, and three months later Tass experienced a truly amazing encounter with Jesus that you can read about in this book.

Tass and Karen now minister in Israel...I can only tell you that his testimony is genuine, authentic and anointed. He is no slick, professional 'Chris-

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Father's hateful killers become son's loving family

tian' celebrity or superstar with a personal agenda and inflated ego. Tass is the real deal."

Father's hateful killers become son's loving family

[22](#) Little 5-year old Steve was devastated the day that his daddy, his hero, didn't come home — ever again.

Steve's father, pilot Nate Saint, and four other men had laboriously established what they thought was peaceful contact with the Waodani — pejoratively called Aucas. Anthropologists classified these Ecuadorian people as probably the most violent society ever studied — 60% homicide rate within their tribe. "Old age" — early 30s at best — meant "top killer." They also viciously killed people who ventured into or sometimes even near their territory.

The objective of these five men was to bring a life-changing message to the Waodani and to stop their course toward self-extinction. By January, 1956 the five had established friendly contact via airplane "bucket drop" gift exchanges, culminating with seem-

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Father's hateful killers become son's loving family

ingly friendly direct personal interactions. However, shortly thereafter they were speared to death — for reasons that would be understood only years later. World media dramatically publicized news of the killings.

Years before, Nate's sister Rachel had traded offered-luxury for a lifelong commitment to God. She saw a vision of dark-skinned people who'd never heard of Christ's love and strongly sensed a call to tell them. After ministering elsewhere in Ecuador, she heard about the Waodani from Nate. Thereafter, Rachel was unwaveringly convinced that the Waodani were the dark-skinned people in her vision.

Eventually, Dayumae, a Waodani woman who fled for her life from tribal violence, taught Rachel the Waodani language. In turn, Rachel and others taught Dayumae about Christ's love and "carvings" (the Bible). Dayumae unofficially adopted Rachel as a sister and gave her the name of her speared-to-death biological sister.

Following the missionary deaths, two of Dayumae's aunts also left the jungle and lived for a couple of months with one of the killed-missionaries' widows,

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Elizabeth Elliot. Dayumae later accompanied her aunts back to the tribe to tell them how to live without hating and killing. A party of Waodani then invited Rachel and Elizabeth to return with them to the jungle. This was quite an astounding — and, humanly speaking, risky — invitation! But both women were willing to give their lives to help these people.

Elizabeth lived with and ministered to the Waodani for a year and returned to the states to write a book and speak about these people. Rachel lived the rest of her life with the tribe, 36 years, until her death from cancer. She loved these people as family, taught them the **gospel**, and — with Waodani help — translated the Christian scriptures into their previously unwritten language. Many of the Waodani, including the men who'd speared the missionaries, accepted the message, changed dramatically, and likewise loved Rachel as family. **23**

At age nine, Steve Saint began visiting the Waodani. He was instantly accepted — though, as a strange-looking clothed white kid (in contrast to the dark, then-naked Waodani) he initially was “inspected” by a designated woman to determine whether he was

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male or female! Mincaye, the warrior who had delivered the final, fatal blow to Steve's dad, became a father to him — and later a beloved grandfather to Steve's children when Steve later lived there with his entire family for a year and a half. Two of the other former killers baptized Steve and his sister at the same river location where these men had speared their father to death. Mincaye was with his 'adopted' granddaughter, Stephanie Saint, as she died from a cerebral hemorrhage, and ministered words of comfort to his 'adopted' son Steve.

Steve did much with and for the tribe over many years and became a mentor in the ways of civilization — necessary because of the encroachment of hostile interests and threats of unwholesome dependency on civilization without the necessary coping skills. (Steve too was mentored by the Waodani in many ways.) The goal was to help the Waodani ultimately become self-sufficient and independent amidst the many changes they faced. For example, the tribe ultimately ended up owning and piloting a specially-modified ultra-light aircraft, which enabled them to address many practical needs.

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In 2000, Steve, Mincaye, and Tementa — the tribe's ultra-light aircraft pilot — spoke for a few minutes to an international conference of evangelists in Amsterdam. At the end of the address, Steve said to the attendees, "I have never been able to explain to them [the Waodani] that God has used them, as well as my father and the four other missionaries, to spread His **gospel** around this world. If what we call the [then well-known] 'Auca Story' has affected you in some significant way, would you quickly stand so they can see that God has worked good from what they meant for evil?" Thousands of delegates, from all over the world, rose to their feet.

So what happened here? What dramatically transformed killers in the most violent society ever studied into lovers (in the familial/brotherly/sacrificial sense of the word)? Self-help books? Gurus? Or something much greater?

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Slave to wickedness becomes minister of freedom

Slave to wickedness becomes minister of freedom

²⁴Hot-tempered, 6' 7" tall, and often armed — sometimes with a machine gun — drug runner Mitch Zajac was an intimidating and violent man. In one of his many brawls he bent a metal plate that had been implanted in his hand to fix previous fight injuries. Mitch was also an addict, often spending between \$200 and \$500 a day on his habit. He says that he overdosed eight times, once with such extreme levels of cocaine in his body that he couldn't sleep for 28 days. His resume included involvement in biker gangs, prostitution, gambling, and alcohol. He went to prison eight times.

But this is not the Mitch Zajac that I've talked to; not the man who today visits and ministers to scores of prisoners, helping them to see God's way out of the spiritual slavery and lifestyles that put them in prison. My niece benefited from Mitch's ministry while serving time for drug use and theft. So what changed Mitch?

Mitch knew that his lifestyle was wrong, but he "...loved the thrill and the adrenaline rush of running

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from the police and getting into fights." Though his pursuit of pleasure never gave him any real lasting satisfaction, he says that, "The calls of evil were powerful, right from the demonic world, and became impossible to resist."

But Mitch eventually began receiving calls from another world — in unlikely ways: • He found (and pocketed) a **gospel** tract in a phone booth that was located in a crime-infested neighborhood just feet from where people had been murdered. • In a crack house, a woman tried to hand him a note telling him how much Jesus loved him. • A psychic warned him that "If you don't get right with God, you'll die."

Over time, feeling alternately convicted of sin and terrified by the information in the tract he had found, Mitch alternately reread and hid it. Finally, he asked its publisher to send more information, resulting in a visit from a Christian pastor. During that visit, Mitch surrendered his life to the **biblical Christ**.

Today, though still suffering from the scars from his former life, Mitch continues to minister to prisoners. My conversation with Mitch and my niece's encoun-

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Sets out to make intellectual joke of Christianity, but...

ters with him convince me that he's the real deal — a living example of **supernatural** transformation.

Sets out to make intellectual joke of Christianity, but...

²⁵As a teenager, Josh wanted to know who he was, why he was here, and where he was going. When he tried to find answers in religion, he felt worse, so he tossed religion. When later he tried to find answers to these questions at the university, he became disillusioned.

There were exceptions, however; he was positively impressed with the exemplary lives and attitudes of a handful of students and professors. But when they said that Christ made the visible difference in their lives, Josh wanted nothing to do with 'religion'. In fact, when challenged to intellectually examine the claims of Christ's divinity, he "... decided to write a book that would make an intellectual joke of Christianity" and pursued this goal in earnest.

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Sets out to make intellectual joke of Christianity, but...

"I left the university and traveled throughout the United States and Europe to gather evidence to prove that Christianity is a sham."

Josh ultimately noted that the more he researched, the more he had to suppress a sense that he was mistaken. Josh says,

"I began to realize that I was being intellectually dishonest. My mind told me that the claims of Christ were indeed true but my will was being pulled in another direction. I placed so much emphasis on finding the truth, but I wasn't willing to follow it once I saw it. ...becoming a Christian seemed so ego-shattering to me. I couldn't think of a faster way to ruin all my good times."

Ultimately Josh resolved his inner conflict by putting Christ's claims to the test and submitting to what he had tried so hard to refute. Despite initial doubts about this decision, his life started to change dramatically. One huge change was his ability to love the father that he had hated and wanted to kill. His father, the town drunk, had hurt the family in multiple ways, sometimes beating Josh's mother so badly that she couldn't get up from where his father had left her

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White-hating Black Panther to white-majority pastor

— in the family farm’s manure pile. Josh’s forgiveness was so powerful that his father likewise committed his life to Christ and never drank again (after 40 years of drinking).

Josh McDowell has since been involved for many years in prominent ministries worldwide.

White-hating Black Panther to white-majority pastor

[26](#) Marshall Brandon has been one of my pastors at Christ Community Chapel, a white-majority church that values and honors racial diversity. I'll let Marshall tell his story in his own way in his own words:

“My name is Marshall Brandon and I am the fifth of six children born to Edward and Ruth Brandon in Huntsville, Alabama. My Father Edward was the youngest of 18 children and my grandfather, Joe was born in slavery in 1863. My mother Ruth was the youngest of 5 children, 4 girls and a boy.

My father was a farmer, and in 1951 he moved his family north from Alabama to Youngstown, Ohio where he found employment in the steel mills.

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It was a difficult beginning and we often had little food and sometimes no heat.

I can remember at the age of five coming home from school and finding my father on the porch asleep and trying to awaken him unsuccessfully. I later discovered that my father was intoxicated. This addiction caused much harm to my family. We grew distant from one another as the alcohol took full effect in our family. The strain of my father's addiction separated my parents and my mother began to seek comfort from another man.

I can recall coming home from kindergarten school and seeing a strange man kissing my mother. While I was only 5 years old, I clearly knew that something was wrong.

When my father came home, I told him what I had witnessed. He and my mother had a horrible argument and my father left our home and consequently, me alone with my mother. She was very angry with me for telling my father what I had witnessed. She immediately found an extension cord and beat me until I was bloodied and bruised, then locked me in a dark closet with the admonition that I had better keep whatever I wit-

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nessed her doing to myself. I learned my lesson and over the years, as I witnessed wrong behavior in my house, I kept my mouth shut.

Over the years, my mother became a rageaholic who ruled with fear, intimidation and frequent beatings with extension cords and whatever else was available. My father, on the other hand was a verbal abuser, constantly reminding me of my lack of value as a human being.

This lifestyle of abuse not only from my parents but also from my older siblings caused me to become a survivor. I turned my anger and resentment inward and became an introvert.

I began to act out violently with fighting, and I became very proficient at it. This gave me physical protection in and outside of my home.

My home was not a safe place and I found myself out in the streets trying to survive, and soon I was leading a gang that terrorized others.

I wanted to escape my situation but I didn't know how. I often dreamed of being rescued by someone who would love me and provide opportunities and direction for me.

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White-hating Black Panther to white-majority pastor

When I became old enough, I asked my parents' permission to join the military. They agreed and I enthusiastically joined the army with renewed hope for a future. But my enthusiasm and hope was soon changed as I found my 18 year-old self thousands of miles away from home in the war in Vietnam.

This changed everything, as war has a way of causing you to grow up quickly. I was very afraid and feeling lonely. My eyes began to open as I experienced drugs, bigotry, and racism. The year was 1966, and in the USA, black people were still not allowed to vote in some states and segregation was prevalent.

My time in Vietnam greatly impacted me.^a I came home from the war angry and bitter about the injustices experienced by many black people in my country. So I determined that I would liberate black people in the USA. I became a hater of white people and of my government.

^aNorth Vietnamese propagandists like Hanoi Hannah tried to demoralize soldiers. Sometimes they focused on black soldiers, telling them how foolish they were to support the aims of a country that had such negative regard for them. Their messages were effective in Marshall's case.

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When I was discharged from the army, I began to try and organize black people to help overturn injustice and a government that supported repression of black people.^a

Fortunately, I was not successful. I was ahead of my time in Youngstown, Ohio. My hatred, bitterness and anger turned inward and I found myself trying to find peace through an addiction to morphine and heroin.

This addiction caused me to steal and rob to support my habit, and I was arrested and convicted of armed robbery. At twenty-one years of age, I was sentenced to prison for 10-25 years.

Prison however, gave me the opportunity to evaluate my life and plan next steps should I survive the violence and terror found there. It also allowed me to gain a vocational trade and start college—I was the first in my family to ever go to

^aWhen Marshall was interviewing to become a pastor at my church, he told our lead pastor that a primary aim upon returning home from Vietnam had been to kill whites. He'd had little regard for peaceful resolution of racism and considered Martin Luther King an 'Uncle Tom.'

college. I became an honor inmate and after 3 years was released early to attend college at Akron University. I made many promises to myself—foremost was the promise that I'd never go back to the lifestyle that caused me to go to prison. Little did I realize that I was powerless to keep that promise.

I started college and soon after met the woman whom I would ask to become my wife. She was the most beautiful woman on the campus. We began to date and soon fell in love, so I asked her to marry me and she agreed. Life was good, or so we thought.

It wasn't long before I once again engaged in drug abuse and was addicted to heroin. Addiction causes one to become a slave to depravity. There was not much I would not do to feed my habit. I was a liar, cheat, and deceiver.

My relationship with my wife was in deep trouble and she separated from me with the intent to get divorced. I hit rock bottom without any boundaries, and I began to engage in any activity that I wanted to. I was depressed, dejected, and suicidal.

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One day I dropped in to visit my wife at her new apartment. When I saw her that day she had a different look about her and a different attitude toward me. I asked her what was different about her and she told me that she had given her life to Jesus. I did not know what it meant to give your life to Jesus, but I was pleased with this new attitude toward me and this peace that I saw in her eyes and in her life. She invited me to go to church with her and told me that she would pick me up and take me with her, and I agreed.

When I first went to church with her, my motives were not to find God; my motives were to try and win back the affection and love of this woman, my wife. One of the first things I noticed at this church was the attitude of these “church people” toward me. They were so different than the world from which I was coming—where I had no real friends and where it was “everyone for himself.”

Well, I would like to tell you that the first time in this church my life was changed, but that is not the way things happened. Over a period of time, as I would go and visit this church, I began to

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hear more from God's Word, the Bible. The more I heard from His Word, the Bible, the more I realized that it is true.

God began to convict me that Jesus Christ is God and that He loves me so much that He died to take away all of my sins. I began to hear the truth that if I would confess Jesus Christ as LORD, He would come into my heart, and change me and help me become the person He wanted me to become.

In June of 1977 I asked Jesus Christ to come into my heart and save me. He did, and my life has never been the same.

Here are some ways that God immediately began to work in my life.

- He took away my addiction!
- He restored my marriage. My wife and I will celebrate 36 years of marriage in September, 2010.
- He took the hatred out of my heart and put love in its place.
- He blessed my wife and me with two wonderful children and two grandchildren.

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Personal changes prompt personal investigation

- He has given me spiritual gifts and a calling to be a pastor and share the **gospel** with believers, unbelievers, and a watching world.

In conclusion—God is good!”

Personal changes prompt personal investigation

³⁰Lee Strobel, former legal editor for the Chicago Tribune, had considered himself an atheist and tossed away God cavalierly.

“I had read just enough philosophy and history to find support for my skepticism—a fact here, a scientific theory there, a pithy quote, a clever argument. Sure, I could see some gaps and inconsistencies, but I had a strong motivation to ignore them: a self-serving and immoral lifestyle that I would be compelled to abandon if I were ever to change my views and become a follower of Jesus. <Emphasis is mine.>

But Strobel's motivation to reconsider came from an unexpected source: his wife. He was shocked when she became a Christ-follower:

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Personal changes prompt personal investigation

"I rolled my eyes and braced for the worst, feeling like the victim of a bait-and-switch scam. I had married one Leslie—the fun Leslie, the carefree Leslie, the risk-taking Leslie—and now I feared she was going to turn into some sort of sexually repressed prude who would trade our upwardly mobile lifestyle for all-night prayer vigils and volunteer work in grimy soup kitchens."

But unanticipated positive changes in her character, integrity, and personal confidence caught his attention. He was so impressed that he decided to investigate the cause, with vigor — more vigor, he says, than for any news story of his career...

"Setting aside my self-interest and prejudices as best I could, I read books, interviewed experts, asked questions, analyzed history, explored archaeology, studied ancient literature, and for the first time in my life picked apart the Bible verse by verse."

"I applied the training I had received at Yale Law School as well as my experience as legal affairs editor of the Chicago Tribune. And over time the evidence of the world—of history, of science, of

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Christ-follower hater to mission administrator

philosophy, of psychology—began to point toward the unthinkable.”

...leading Strobel to become a Christ-follower and publish several books, including the *Case for Christ* — which is substantially a series of interviews that reflects his own investigative journey.

Have you been disappointed NOT to see changes like Leslie's in people who claim to be Christ-followers? Have you even been hurt or otherwise mistreated by some such claimants? Perhaps you'll benefit from reading/rereading [Qualifying remarks](#) and the following endnotes: [13](#) and [14](#).

Christ-follower hater to mission administrator

[29](#)Dr. Viggo Olsen — surgeon, internist, and former agnostic — turned down a potentially prestigious and lucrative surgical position to found and serve in a mission hospital in East Pakistan, before (and subsequently after) it became Bangladesh. In 1964, as the hospital was being built, a man named Akand — a

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“vitriolic anti-Christian young Muslim”...

- Bitterly criticized the hospital to the governor of East Pakistan.
- Tried to “poison” a more local commissioner against the hospital.
- Established an anti-Christian center, tried to convince locals that hospital would endanger Islam, and spread vicious lies.
- Subsequently provoked a petty official to have locals to savagely beat a Christ-follower into unconsciousness.

In 1971, when Olsen returned from a furlough, he was introduced to the mission's new administrative officer — Andrew Akand. At first Olsen didn't recognize him, perhaps in part because of his new non-Muslim first name. But then Akand recounted all the trouble he had made — noting that, “In those days I was your most bitter enemy” — and recounted the events that led him to become a Christ-follower. Olsen notes that...

“Like a latter-day apostle Paul, he had been a great enemy of Christians and Christianity; then

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Christ-follower hater to beloved Christ-follower leader

Christ touched his life, changing him into a strong, fruitful Christian."

Christ-follower hater to beloved Christ-follower leader

27The Jewish guy from Turkey *really* hated Christ-followers. He sought to destroy the Church in general, made murderous threats, and went from house-to-house and synagogue-to-synagogue to beat and imprison Christ-followers. He presided at the murder of at least one grace-filled and falsely-accused **Christ-follower**.

Intending to expand his wave of persecution, he traveled several days journey towards a remote location to capture and imprison more Christ-followers. However, shortly before he arrived, a bright light flashed around him, a voice asked the Jewish guy why he was persecuting *him* (the speaker, who identified himself as Christ), and the voice gave him directions.

Yeah, I know. This guy's experience sounds really weird — a bit like Tass Saada's experience a couple of thousand years later. (See [Jew-hating PLO sniper](#)

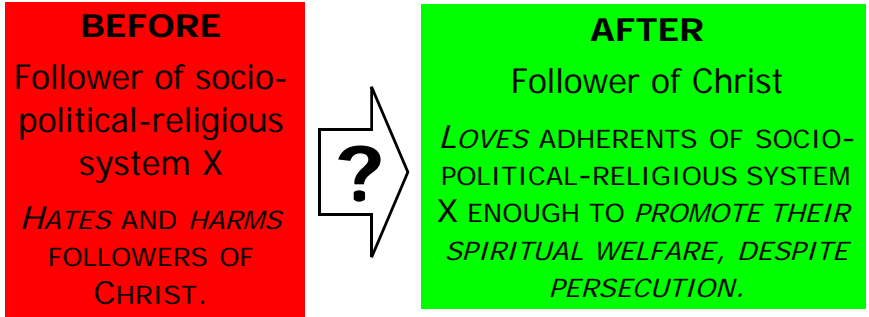
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[strives to reconcile Arabs & Jews](#) on page 128.) But something dramatically transformational happened as a result. The Jewish guy, who found he was now temporarily blind, obeyed the spoken directions, made an abrupt about-face, and became one of the most influential Christ-followers in history — the apostle Paul. He worked courageously on behalf of the Church, despite intense persecution, and was ultimately executed for his efforts. He wrote almost half the books of the Christian scriptures (New Testament) — some from prison.

Do you discount the validity of the account above because of its ancient source, the Christian scriptures (the New Testament). Firstly, I suggest putting any prejudices on hold before reading [Mythical foundations?](#) Secondly, consider *modern* parallels of persecutors who have been transformed from haters to advocates — to the extent of risking (and sometimes

'Mr. Insecticide' risks life for 'insects'

forfeiting) their lives to minister to the hostile people groups to which they once belonged.



What's in the **?** arrow? What causes such a dramatic change?

Of the *many* such accounts that exist, the next three summarize examples.

'Mr. Insecticide' risks life for 'insects'

[32](#) In the 1970s, Nigerian Muslim "Babasola" specialized in destroying churches and killing Christ-followers. "An expert in car bombs, riot planning, and infiltrating Christian organizations, Babasola was the 'James Bond' of Islamic terrorism.'" His services were much in demand by Christ-follower-haters in the

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'Mr. Insecticide' risks life for 'insects'

twelve Islamic states of northern Nigeria. Some approvingly called Babasola "Mr. Insecticide."

One of his projects involved infiltrating a church and pretending to be a Christ-follower — for six years — while secretly continuing his life as a Muslim. He deceived the church so effectively that they selected him to be the youth leader. Then, at a youth conference with over 2000 fellow attendees, he heard a pastor speak from 1 Kings 18 (in the Hebrew scriptures, the Old Testament) about Elijah's challenge to choose between a pagan deity and the true God. The speaker challenged his listeners to choose similarly:

"How long are you going to waver between two opinions?...Who are you deceiving?"...How long now since that day you said you have accepted Christ and you have not been serious?...Why are you playing a double game?"

These statements so directly applied to Babasola that he became convicted about his wrongdoing and began to think his cover had been blown.

The pastor continued, asking his hearers to *humble themselves*, stand up, receive prayer, and receive for-

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'Mr. Insecticide' risks life for 'insects'

giveness — regardless of what they'd done in the past.

“Forget that you are an armed robber, forget you are a killer, forget all those things...Stand up!”

Babasola indeed humbled himself that day and sought and received forgiveness — on his knees.

His actions didn't go unnoticed, and the news apparently traveled quickly. Even as Babasola left the youth conference, someone warned him of plans at the local mosque for his execution — the first of a long chain of persecution and death threats that continues today, many years later.

After confessing his deception and telling his story to shocked church elders, the elders prayed for and hid him with a pastor some miles away. But he couldn't keep quiet about Christ and became very effective in introducing Muslims to him.

As noted, the death threats continue, including a mob's unsuccessful attempt to murder Babasola and his family — but the mob unfortunately did kill his first-floor neighbors when they tried to intercede. Extremists murdered Babasola's oldest son while

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Hindu supremacist transformed by supreme love

attending classes at a university — simply *because* he was Babasola's son.

Babasola continues his ministry despite the risks...

"He secretly counsels Quranic teachers, mullahs, and sheiks who want to become Christians."

...and even speaks with persecutors. He even offered forgiveness to the man who planned his son's murder; this man rebuffed Babasola but that man's son ultimately followed Christ.

Lunacy...or love, inspired by God? Religion or regeneration?

Hindu supremacist transformed by supreme love

[33](#) Indian thug Lakshimi Narayan Gowda joined, excelled in, and soon *ranked* in a large, violent Hindu supremacist organization called RSS that especially hates and physically attacks Christ-followers and churches.

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Beater to benefactor

After yielding his life to Christ through a remarkable series of events — prayed for by the same pastor whose church he helped burn to the ground and whom Gowda sought to murder — he eventually pastored multiple Churches. In turn, he was violently persecuted by former RSS colleagues — and was once tortured close to death over two hours — but ultimately continued undeterred in his efforts to tell others about the **gospel** he'd once ruthlessly fought to squelch.

Beater to benefactor

³⁴ Malaysian Muslim “Mahohd Zikir” 1) became radicalized via Egyptian followers of Ayman al-Zawahiri (once Osama bin-Laden’s second-in-command), 2) rose to become a militant Islamic leader, and 3) violently persecuted Christians — for six years savagely beating any he could find.

After yielding his life to Christ through an impressive series of events, Zikir now leverages his remarkable transformation from a violent, fanatical past to openly and effectively minister to Muslims — despite

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Christ-followers show love to their torturers

substantial harassment by the Malaysian government's 'Religious Department' (including frequent searches of his home).

Christ-followers show love to their torturers

Richard Wurmbrand, once a self-described militant atheist, was later one of very few pastors who refused to compromise with Romanian communism and suffered fourteen years of imprisonment and tortures — in some cases, he says, *unspeakable* tortures. He cataloged some of the *speakeable* ones in his May 6, 1966 testimony before a US Senate subcommittee³⁵ and his 1969 book *Tortured for Christ*.³⁶

Some of the tortures

Here are samples of what Wurmbrand and/or his fellow prisoners endured: • Frequent beatings; • Christians tied to crosses for days with hundreds of prisoners forced to urinate and defecate on their bodies and faces. • After nearly insane from tortures, a

Who transformed these lives?

Christ-followers show love to their torturers

priest forced to consecrate and serve communion with human excrement and urine. • A pastor tortured with red-hot pokers, knives, severe beatings, starving rats in his cell, standing for over two weeks; then forced to watch his son beaten to death for asking his father not to compromise. • Handcuffs with spikes inside the cuffs. • Hanging upside-down on ropes and beaten so severely that bodies swung back and forth under the blows. • Placed in freezing refrigerated cells, removed just before death, and then warmed — repeatedly. • Forced to stand in cramped boxes studded inside with sharp nails. • Drugged and brain-washed for seventeen hours a day — for weeks, months, and years—hearing “Communism is good!...Christianity is stupid!...Nobody loves you anymore...Give up!...” • At times being virtually starved and told, “We give you as many calories as you need to be able to breathe only...” (they got “dirty soup” every day); • One torturer saying, “I thank God, in whom I don’t believe, that I have lived to this hour when I can express all the evil in my heart.’”

Who transformed these lives?

Christ-followers show love to their torturers

"The tortures and brutality continued without interruption. When I lost consciousness or became too dazed to give the torturers any further hopes of confession, I would be returned to my cell. There I would lie, untended and half dead, to regain a little strength so they could work on me again. Many died at this stage, but somehow my strength always managed to return...they broke four vertebrae in my back, and many other bones. They carved me in a dozen places. They burned and cut eighteen holes in my body. When my family and I were ransomed out of Romania and brought to Norway, doctors in Oslo, seeing all this and the scars in my lungs from tuberculosis, declared that my being alive today is a pure miracle! According to their medical books, I should have been dead for years. I know myself that it is a miracle. God is a God of miracles."

Upon request, Wurmbrand took off his shirt during his Senate testimony and showed the subcommittee some of his scars.

Who transformed these lives?

Christ-followers show love to their torturers

Similar horrors continue today. Consider, for example, the treatment of hundreds of thousands of North Koreans who, with their entire families, suffer for political reasons in prison camps. The June 2014 issue of *Voice of the Martyrs* magazine shows illustrations of some of the tortures, as drawn by an escaped prisoner.

Some responses

Wurmbrand describes some responses, his own and that of some other imprisoned Romanian Christ-followers: • "I have seen Christians give away their last slice of bread (we were given one slice a week) and the medicine that could save their lives to a sick Communist torturer, who was now a fellow prisoner." • "Iuliu Maniu, a Christian and the former Prime Minister of Romania, who died in prison: 'If the Communists are overthrown in our country, it will be the most holy duty of every Christian to go into the streets and at the risk of his own life defend the Communists from the righteous fury of the multitudes whom they have tyrannized.'" • "A minister who had been horribly beaten was thrown into my cell. He was half-dead, with blood streaming from his face and

Who transformed these lives?

Christ-followers show love to their torturers

body. We washed him. Some prisoners cursed the Communists. Groaning, he said, "Please, don't curse them! Keep silent! I wish to pray for them." • "When one Christian was sentenced to death, he was allowed to see his wife before being executed. His last words to his wife were, 'You must know that I die loving those who kill me. They don't know what they do and my last request of you is to love them, too. Don't have bitterness in your heart because they killed your beloved one. We will meet in heaven.' These words impressed the officer of the secret police who attended the discussion between the two. He later told me the story in prison where he had been sent for becoming a Christian." • "I hate the Communist system but I love the men. I hate the sin but I love the sinner. I love the Communists with all of my heart. Communists can kill Christians but they cannot kill their love toward even those who killed them. I have not the slightest bitterness or resentment against the Communists or my torturers." • "I have seen Christians in Communist prisons with fifty pounds of chains on their feet, tortured with red-hot iron pokers, in whose throats spoonfuls of salt had been forced, being kept afterward without water,

Who transformed these lives?

Christ-followers show love to their torturers

starving, whipped, suffering from cold —and praying with fervor for the Communists. This is humanly inexplicable! *It is the love of Christ, which was poured out in our hearts.*" <Emphasis is mine.> • "Later, the Communists who had tortured us were sent to prison, too. Under communism, Communists, and even Communist rulers, are put in prison almost as often as their adversaries. Now the tortured and the torturer were in the same cell. And while the non-Christians showed hatred toward their former inquisitors and beat them, Christians took their defense, even at the risk of being beaten themselves and accused of being accomplices with communism." • "My last deed before leaving was to go to the grave of the colonel who had given the order for my arrest and who had ordered my years of torture. I placed a flower on his grave. By doing this I dedicated myself to bringing the joys of Christ that I have to the Communists who are so empty spiritually."

I have read of many other cases where love quashed hatred in Christ-followers who were severely persecuted.

Who transformed these lives?

Why such responses?

What about those of us who look on from relative comfort — who hate and condemn outrageous behaviors from positions of relative ease? I must admit sometimes feeling and expressing intense anger at a whole host of injustices that I read about or see in a documentary. Something seems out of whack, yes? Shouldn't the opposite apply? Shouldn't the sufferers of injustice be the most angry and those of us in relative comfort the least?

Are Christ-followers who return love in exchange for such treatment fools? Idiots? *Or did something special, something humanly unexplainable, something transcendent occur in their lives?* Did someONE do a special work in the lives of those who could express such love and compassion for those who administered such hideous cruelty?

Who transformed these lives?

Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?

As of this writing, more than a decade after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, most readers probably have some understanding that radical Muslims consider Christ-followers to be infidels. What many readers don't know, however, is that thousands of Muslims in a wide spectrum of countries have moved toward Christ and ultimately *become his followers* in response to dreams and visions of Christ — often resulting in huge risks, even of death — and have sometimes been dramatically transformed as a result.

The phenomenon

You may recall the account about the life of Tass Saada, a particularly violent PLO sniper whose transformation to **Christ-follower** began in a bizarre manner. (See [Jew-hating PLO sniper strives to reconcile Arabs & Jews](#) on page 128.) Concerning his own experience, he says that, "...a high percentage of Muslims who come to faith in Christ do so because of

Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?

The phenomenon

a vision, dream, or other **supernatural** experience. I believe this is not because we are something special but because we are stubborn."

Referring to another Muslim who had such an experience, Tass says that,

"One was a twenty-two-year-old former Hamas member who had volunteered to be a suicide bomber—until Jesus showed up one night while he slept." He notes further that, "To political leaders who want to dominate the population, of course, this kind of thing is exasperating. They can cut off evangelistic events and broadcasting, they can limit travel, they can root out copies of the Bible—but what can they do about a dream in which Jesus appears to a person asleep at home and says, 'Come, follow me?'"¹⁶

An Iraqi pastor told author and speaker Joel Rosenberg that...

"...Muslims are seeing visions of Jesus Christ. He is coming to them and speaking to them, and they are repenting and giving their lives to him. Shiites! I'm talking about Shiite Muslims seeing visions of Jesus and becoming his followers. In fact, I actu-

Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?

The phenomenon

ally haven't personally met any Shiites who have come to Christ who were converted because someone shared the **gospel** with them. They have all come to faith through dreams and visions. They are coming to us already persuaded."⁴³

Per the September, 2013 *Voice of the Martyrs* journal, 'Emmanuel' — a Baghdad pastor — noted that...

"'In our church, over 200 people have left in the past five years'" due to families fleeing the ongoing violence, leaving only 60 members. However, he has creatively compensated by broadcasting Christian radio programs. Emmanuel said that "Many, many Muslims are contacting me at the church because of the radio programs and say they have seen Jesus in dreams and visions."⁵⁸

Tom Doyle, who ministers in the Middle East, says:

"These days, Jesus is introducing Himself to Muslims...The phenomenon is not limited to a few isolated locations. It's not happening in just one or two African nations. There's not just one of several hundred people groups affected in India. He's not simply visiting some lucky town in the Middle East. What we see is Jesus presenting Himself to Muslims everywhere. Dozens of Islamic countries

Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?

The phenomenon

and countless Muslim cultures have been invaded by Jesus' love... [they] live in Iran, Afghanistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the Gaza Strip. They make their homes in Syria, Jordan, Iraq, and the West Bank. And everywhere, they are bold and *willing to die for Christ*^a... In fact, we believe more Muslims have become followers of Jesus in the last ten years than in the last fourteen centuries of Islam." <Emphasis is mine.> **44**

Doyle details several dream/vision-related accounts in his book, typically encounters in which Christ expressly or implicitly transmits love and peace. He notes that, following dreams or visions of Christ, Muslims often report experiences such as:

- "I felt loved on a level like I have never experienced."
- 'I felt safe and protected.'
- 'I have never felt such a surge of joy and peace.'
- 'I knew that He loved me, and I loved Him with my whole heart.'"**45**

^a...*in just the opposite way from jihadists* — they are ready to die as the persecuted**ed**, not as the persecut**ors**.

Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?

The phenomenon

Gina Fadely, International Frontier Missions Director of YWAM (Youth with a Mission) noted that...

"All over the world amongst Muslim peoples there is something happening where they are having unusual dreams...from God. I totally believe that they're from God. And this happened in a notable way in North Africa amongst a people group in Algeria, where on the same night in the same village of whole group of men had the same dream about Jesus Christ saying, "I am the way, the truth and the life, and no man comes to the father but by me." And [this event] actually started one of the few movements that we know of in that part of the world. This is happening so commonly that if I am talking with on a plane or something or meet a Muslim person, I will often just ask, 'Have you had any unusual dreams lately?'...they might say, 'Well, you know, I haven't told anybody this, but...' It's just happening that often."⁵¹

An Egyptian man who works extensively with Muslims through digital media (I'll not name him due to socio-political sensitivities) told me that sometimes Muslims receive specific instructions in their dreams and

Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?

The cost

visions of Christ to contact a specific person and/or go to a specific location to receive additional help. Some cases in the [Sample accounts](#) that follow confirm that statement.

The cost

Embracing Christianity can be very costly for a Muslim. Minimally, apostate Muslims living in Muslim families and communities often pay heavy relational costs — including strained or severed family ties. Leaving Islam is considered a shame to family and community honor.

“According to the Muslim mindset, Islam is a surrender to the entire Islamic system. This includes obedience to Islamic law, traditions, social norms, and family wishes — as well as to religious beliefs and practices. In practice this means that every Muslim living under Islamic rule must resign himself absolutely and unquestionably to the customs and authority figures of his community...His identity as a Muslim is derived from his belonging to a Muslim family, society, culture, and political system — and conforming himself to them.”³⁷

Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?

The cost

Leaving Islam can be traumatic — even for Western Muslims. For example, in *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*, American-born Nabeel Qureshi chronicles his long and sometimes agonizing saga to learn the truth about Islam and slowly to move past his contrary mindsets to Christianity — with predictably unhappy and yet-unresolved family repercussions.^{[38](#)}

More critically, at least three reports in the **Hadith** most revered by Sunni Muslims (the *Sahih al-Bukhari*) advocate death for Muslim apostates.^{[39](#)} Unsurprisingly then, nineteen dominantly Islamic countries (91% Islam average) legally penalize apostasy,^{[40](#)} even with death. [Table 2](#) illustrates support for the death penalty for apostasy.

Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?

Table 2 2013 Pew-survey findings of top eight populations favoring the death penalty for leaving Islam⁴¹

Country	Percentage of all Muslim respondents favoring the death penalty for leaving Islam ^a
Afghanistan	78
Pakistan	64
Egypt	64
Palestinian terr.	59
Jordan	58
Malaysia	53
Iraq	38
Bangladesh	36

^a Numbers = percentages of Muslims favoring death AND sharia law (Pew report p. 55) multiplied by the percentages of Muslims favoring sharia law (Pew report p. 46) That is: $(N_{\text{death}}/N_{\text{all}}) = (N_{\text{death}}/N_{\text{sharia}} \times N_{\text{sharia}}/N_{\text{all}})$

Moreover, in some Islamic countries ordinary Muslim citizens may kill — without legal retribution — a person who leaves Islam, a practice particularly prevalent in Jordan.⁴⁶ Sometimes a family member will perform the killing to restore family honor. Per my

Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?

The cost

conversation with a couple who works with Muslims, sometimes even Muslim families who are not very religious will perform 'honor' killings.

You may recall the account in this book about Tass Saada: [Jew-hating PLO sniper strives to reconcile Arabs & Jews](#). Tass's eldest brother was poised to kill him after Tass became a **Christ-follower** and returned briefly to his home town. The brother brought a revolver and the sharia-required number of witnesses with him. For the remarkable story of why the killing didn't happen — and why, years later, Tass even received his eldest brother's blessing — read Tass's full account in *Once an Arafat Man*.¹⁶

Bottom line: How can we legitimately dismiss, as merely subjective flukes, dreams and visions of Christ that ultimately lead people to risk ostracism, persecution, and legal penalties, up to and including death?

Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?

Sample accounts

Bibles in the rain

⁵⁴My friends, who are friends of the people directly involved, related the following brief account to me. My friends are trustworthy individuals who have risked their lives to help others. I heard the same account independently from another reliable source. I've excluded certain sociopolitically sensitive details from my summary.

Some Middle Eastern Christ-followers sensed God compelling them to bring Bibles to an overwhelmingly Muslim country — without knowing who should get them. So they loaded and hid hundreds of Bibles in a car and prayed that they would not be intercepted. After successfully driving into the Muslim country, the Christ-followers encountered a night-time rain storm so intense that they stopped the car to avoid sliding off the slippery road. While stopped in the downpour, there was a knock on the driver-side window. When the driver rolled down the window, a man asked, "Did you bring the books?" The driver asked, "What books?" The man said that everyone in his nearby vil-

Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?

Sample accounts

lage had the same dream, a vision that someone is bringing them books about Jesus.

They got the Bibles.^a

NOTE Psychologist Gary Collins said the following about hallucinations: "Hallucinations are individual occurrences. By their very nature only one person can see a given hallucination at a time. They certainly aren't something which can be seen by a group of people. Neither is it possible that one person could somehow induce an hallucination in somebody else. Since then an hallucination exists only in the subjective, personal sense, it is obvious that others cannot witness it."⁵⁵

Moreover, note that a clinical psychologist friend of New Testament scholar Gary Habermas did an in-depth literature search and found *no documented cases of group hallucinations*. (NOTE: The impossibility of group hallucinations also nullifies anti-resurrection conjec-

^aNote: even owning a Bible can be dangerous for Muslims.

ture that biblically reported appearances of Christ to groups of people after his crucifixion were hallucinations.)⁴²³

Did the villagers hallucinate? You decide.

Vision → mission

⁴⁷Surprisingly wide awake one night during her family's hadj in Mecca, Aisha was startled by a man in a shining white robe who suddenly appeared in her family's tent without an obvious point of entry. "He raised a hand, as if in greeting but also to calm her. No one else stirred. Light from the Man's clothing seemed to flow into her body...an unearthly warmth emanated from this Man. She instantly knew He loved her deeply. And in that instant, she also knew who He was. Jesus stood in her tent." She had subsequent visions of Christ, sometimes in broad daylight, sometimes only of his face. But each time she saw a "Come with me" message in his eyes.

Later Aisha cautiously discovered that her cousin Reem was having similar visions. Ultimately, the two cooperated smuggling New Testaments from Jordan into Saudi Arabia (where Christian literature of any kind is forbidden). Each time, Reem sewed twenty tiny

Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?

Sample accounts

New Testaments into the hem of Aisha's hijab, and then Aisha brought them into Mecca — a 'crime' that would have led to her death had she been caught. Each time there were takers for all New Testaments. She said, "And even though I never tell anyone about the books, they are gone the day I arrive home."

Gunpoint rendezvous

⁴⁸Early one morning, after having discreetly but repeatedly discussed Christ with Muslims — a dangerous endeavor in Egypt — Hassan found himself roughly pushed at gunpoint through Cairo's dark streets. And when his abductor forced him to jump over an alley between two rooftops and climb down a hatch into a dark warehouse, his execution seemed imminent. Imagine his surprise to find ten candle-lit imams inside, each of whom had dreamed about Christ, subsequently followed him, and now met secretly three times a week to pray for their families and mosque attendees to find Christ. His captor, also an imam, asked Hassan to teach them the Bible and apologized for the frightening ruse — ironically the only way to get him there without potentially arousing suspicion of apostasy.

Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?

Sample accounts

Of all Muslims, imams perhaps most resist Christ. They are the guardians of Islam and the teachings of the Quran who "...live to defend their religion at all costs—usually the cost of life of anyone who dares to convert to Christianity. So when someone shares Christ with them, imams are usually combative, angry, and arrogant." They conversely take enormous personal risk when abandoning Islam themselves. (Recall the statistic for Egypt in [Table 2](#))

So, of the available options, what's the most likely explanation for such radical change and risk-taking?

Angry Muslim cleric wants Bible

⁵⁶Joel Rosenberg related speaking privately in early 2011 to a Jordanian pastor about evangelism to Muslims. Some Arab pastors avoid such evangelization because of hurt that they and other **Christ-followers** have experienced from Muslims.

The pastor remarked that his wife, though, had a passion for reaching these people with the **gospel**. Once while he and his wife were driving through Amman, Jordan she suddenly asked him to stop. Pointing to a Muslim cleric across the street with a

Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?

Sample accounts

long robe, large beard, and seemingly surly look, the wife sensed God urging them to give the cleric a Bible and tell him about Christ. After the pastor adamantly and repeatedly refused, his wife finally jumped out of the car with an Arabic Bible and ran over to the cleric (a particularly bold move for a woman in an Islamic country!). As the pastor nervously watched, the cleric's body language revealed anger and yelling.

After the wife finally returned to the car, the pastor peeled away, citing her foolishness and the cleric's behavior. The wife replied that the cleric had not been yelling at her for giving him a Bible. In fact, the cleric demanded to know why she hadn't arrived earlier. Jesus had appeared to him, the cleric said, telling him a) to follow Him and b) that someone would give him a Bible if he waited at that spot at 11:00 AM. It was already 1:00 PM!

Beating Jesus?

[57](#)After Iranian girl 'Shahnaz' became a **Christ-follower**, her father 'Ebi' — a devout Muslim and Iranian government official — assumed it was just another life phase that would pass with time. But after two years it *didn't*, and Shahnaz began leading a Bible study.

Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?

Sample accounts

So Ebi pursued an interesting ploy to return Shahnaz to Islam: marry her to a Muslim man whom she once sought to marry — and whom Ebi previously rejected. Shahnaz's parents invited the man and his parents to their home, discussed possible marriage, and then privately asked Shahnaz what she thought. When Shahnaz indicated that her changed life and faith ruled out marrying a Muslim man, the young man's parents left angrily and Shahnaz's parents were embarrassed. (In a Muslim shame-and-blame culture, such an event is an insult to family honor.)

Ebi began to beat Shahnaz with a belt, screaming that he could legally kill her as an apostate. He threatened to beat her until she renounced Christianity and returned to Islam.

As Shahnaz called out, "Jesus help me", Ebi suddenly stopped beating her and started beating himself, saying "I am a bad person. I am so dirty. I am so stupid. I am fighting with God." and ultimately calling out for God's forgiveness. He eventually fell on the floor.

After recovering, Ebi asked for his daughter's forgiveness and explained what had happened. While beat-

Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?

Sample accounts

ing Shahnaz, he "...saw a vision of Jesus with his left arm wrapped around Shahnaz and his right arm motioning for Ebi to stop swinging the belt. 'Don't beat her.' Jesus told him. 'She belongs to me.'"

Shahnaz forgave her father, Ebi became a **Christ-follower**, and he now hosts a house-church meeting (risking arrest by government authorities).

The Muslim in the market

49Noor's vivid dream included the following:

"...that love I felt in my dream— His love—was different than anything I've ever experienced. I've never felt so much peace in my heart. I didn't want to leave. I didn't want Him to leave. I asked this Jesus, 'Why are You visiting me, a poor Muslim mother with eight children?' And all He said was, 'I love you, Noor. I have given everything for you. I died for you.'"^a

Moreover, Noor saw another man in her dream who also turned out to be a real person — an ardent

^aNote that Islam considers Christ just a prophet, inferior to Muhammad — not a savior and *emphatically* not a savior who died on their behalf.

Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?

Christ-follower. The next day the full-body-shrouded Muslim woman spotted, identified, and excitedly ‘accosted’ the stranger in her dream in Cairo’s crowded Khan el-Khalili Friday market^a with “‘You’re the one.’” “‘Yes! You!’” Following this culturally inappropriate encounter, Noor subsequently asked the stranger many questions about Christ and ultimately followed Him — fully knowing the risks. Interestingly, the man, Kamal Assam, atypically visited the hectic market; he went that morning only after experiencing a compelling sense that he should go.

From contempt to Christ

⁵⁰Dina was a ranking official in the Iran’s Female Secret Police whose duty was to hunt and torment women for the slightest deviation from Muslim codes. She also relished regularly calling in to Hormoz Shariat’s US-based *Iran Alive!* satellite-TV broadcasts to Iran^b to rant about its Christian content.

^aDoyle refers to the market as “pandemonium.”

^b...watched ‘illegally’ (per Iran’s religious police) by an estimated 7-9 million Iranians.

Sample accounts

During one call-in, Dina shockingly and contemptuously said that she and her dying mother would commit suicide that evening during the call. Hormuz kindly but strongly dared her this over the air: if she was going to kill herself anyway, why not give Christ a chance in her life for a week before doing so? Surprisingly, Dina ultimately accepted the dare — even praying (with great doubt) during the call to invite Christ in her life — and promised to call in the following week and shock Hormuz’s viewers by killing herself then. However, five days later, after feeling unexplained peace despite her original intent to die, Dina had a momentous experience: her previously bedridden and agony-ridden mother walked into her room, pain-free^a — after seeing a vision of Christ the night before.^b

Dina’s next *Iran Alive!* call, in which she reported this dramatic turn of events, and the ensuing news had a dramatic positive impact on *Iran Alive!* viewers. Dina

^a...and, as it turned out, now cancer-free.

^bNOTE: Dina’s mother had not known about Dina’s challenge from Hormuz.

still hunts women — but now to share the **gospel**, despite several death threats.

Life-saving dream

Though the most dramatic number of life-changing Muslim dreams and visions have occurred in the last decade or so, they are not new.

⁵²In 1969 a prominent imam awoke one morning with abdominal pain, some miles from the hospital that surgeon and internist Viggo Olsen founded in Muslim East Pakistan — now Bangladesh. (See also [Christ-follower hater to mission administrator](#) and [Whose intervention?](#)) After three days of pain, fever, and vomiting, the pain became excruciating. On the third night the imam had a dream in which a man in Middle Eastern dress identified himself as Isa (the Muslim word for Jesus) and said,

“Your sickness is unto death. You must go to the young man at the Christian hospital, Dr. Olson. He is your only hope!”

The man followed this directive, and Olson surgically resolved acute appendicitis. The imam's appendix

Sample accounts

had ruptured, resulting in abscesses and peritonitis — which would have killed him.

Several days later the imam spoke privately with Olsen.

"I understand one meaning or reason for the dream. The prophets sent me to the hospital where, under your hand had been born again. I was dead, but now I am alive again. Can you advise me, Doktor Sahib, of any further purpose for my dream?"

Olsen replied,

"Perhaps you were sent here so you could be not only physically reborn, but also spiritually born again." The imam tearfully responded, "That's what I want, to be born again spiritually and someday enter God's kingdom!"

Olsen taught the imam from the Christian scriptures, noting in his book that he had reason to believe that the imam's desire was fulfilled.

Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?

Taliban transformation

53 “John” was the son of a top Taliban leader and himself an Islamic theology teacher in Afghanistan. During his November, 2011 hadj — a pilgrimage to Mecca — a man in shining white clothes appeared in a dream and said,

“My son, I see that you are seeking after Me, but the real faith is not here, and also, I am not here.”

As the hadj continued, John began to see glaring contradictions in some practices he’d once embraced.

When the man in white appeared again, in a vision, John asked his identity. The man said that revealing his name would be costly for John, who would lose:

- The Quran and Muhammad
- His parents
- His only child
- His relatives
- Respect/love (replaced with hatred)
- His wealth, home, and country

Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?

Sample accounts

John accepted these losses and indicated his willingness to trust the man in white, who then revealed that,

“I am your God. I am Jesus Christ.”

John noted that he slept thereafter and awoke a different person “cleansed from the inside” and feeling “like a newborn baby.”

Thereafter, John indeed left behind the Quran and Muhammad. And after returning from the hadj three days early and revealing the transformative reason to his father, John suffered nearly 18 months of torture in a bunker normally used to detain and torture anti-Taliban insurgents. After John’s wife, mom, sisters, cousins, and others in the community also began following Christ in response to John’s testimony, his father murdered John’s mom and five sisters and had John’s two-year-old son murdered by the Taliban.^a When his wife’s Taliban brothers protested such actions in a gunfight, one brother died.

The father beat John’s pregnant wife severely, hoping to abort her second child — whom doctors thereafter

^a...who displayed a photo of the dead child on a website.

Sample accounts

declared dead in the womb. After John prayed intently for the baby anyway, the doctors found the fetus alive next day and declared a miracle. (Kindly put your skepticism on hold before reading the next section, [Unusual means meet unusual ministry needs?](#)) A healthy baby arrived in February, 2014.

As explained earlier, the cost for leaving Islam is often severe — up to and including death (recall [The cost](#)). John and his wife indeed lost their home and fortune. They had to flee their country and even received harassment and death threats in other countries — at one point forcing them to move six times in eight months. But this former teacher of Islam now teaches Christ to Afghans around the world, both in person and over the Internet.

Is “John” crazy, or is something powerfully positive at work here?

ISIS guy enjoyed killing Christians, but then...

⁵¹Gina Fadely, International Frontier Missions Director of YWAM (Youth with a Mission) — whom I quoted

Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?

Sample accounts

earlier on the general topic of Muslim dreams and visions of Christ — noted that in early 2015 a YWAM worker's friend introduced him to an ISIS fighter who had killed many Christians...*and admitted that he'd enjoyed doing so.*

But then the guy started having dreams of a man in white who said, "You are killing my people." He began feeling sick and uneasy about his actions.

Later, a Christian the ISIS guy was about to kill said, "I know you will kill me, but I give to you my Bible," and later the guy surprisingly began to read it.

In a subsequent dream, the man in white — whom the guy identified as Christ — made a request to follow him. So now the ISIS guy was meeting with the YWAM worker and his friend wanting to become a Christ-follower, and asking to be discipled (taught/mentored in the ways of Christ).^a

^aNOTE: Fadely didn't identify the YWAM worker, the friend, and the transformed ISIS guy — for obvious reasons.

Comments

Some readers might think, “Dreams and visions? Dreams are common; we all have them; what’s the big deal? And why should I care about Muslims changing from Islam to Christianity? Why should I be impressed by people changing ‘religion’?” I suggest that the plethora, unique nature, and consequences of these encounters should give us pause. Moreover, mere change in ‘religion’ is in one sense secondary here — if you consider misuse of the word ‘religion’. Consider that:

- These experiences have commonly culminated in changed lives — sometimes dramatically changed lives.
- The changed individuals are willing to risk ostracism, persecution, and legal penalties — up to and including death.
- Those who receive these dreams and visions have not initially sought them (though some Muslims have been so moved by initial dreams or visions that they’ve sought more, and some Muslims have seen *many* dreams or visions of Christ).

Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?

Comments

- Some Muslims who've received these dreams and visions of Christ have been previously been *hostile* to Christianity.
- The magnitude and breadth of this phenomenon is unprecedented: thousands over a broad sweep of the Muslim world. The phenomenon has been reported independently by multiple observers in multiple countries.

Again, I suggest that **how** God works in humanity is substantially independent of **whether** God works in humanity — the prime focus of these accounts. Is God at work here or not?

Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?

Unusual means meet unusual ministry needs?

Public attitudes toward ministry folks vary substantially. Unfortunately, the media often seeds those attitudes with unrepresentative negative examples. Though *nobody* is perfect, the majority of people in biblically-Christian ministry, especially in foreign missions, typically have faithfully and sacrificially accepted and executed difficult job assignments to spread the **gospel**. These job assignments often involve substantial risks and hardships that demand dependence on God's help, in ways that most Christ-followers never encounter. This chapter describes a few examples.

Whose impressions?

Over the years I've read and heard several accounts of unexpected just-in-time, just-the-right-amount provision of funds to ministry folks in need. Here's one for your consideration.

Unusual means meet unusual ministry needs?

Whose impressions?

Jeff Manion's parents had virtually no funding for their '60s-era church-planting ministry in southwest Idaho. Their finances were regularly short. Jeff calls it an "adventure of trust," in which a request like "Give us today our daily bread" from the Lord's prayer was hardly a rote formality.

One day Jeff's mom was in tears over an itemized list of needed — and unaffordable — items, the cost of which totaled \$727. That was a lot of money for a '60s family with minimal income. They prayed!

Later that day, they received a single letter in the mail — from a California couple his parents knew by name but had never met. The brief letter noted that the couple had recently sold their delivery business at a profit of \$7,270. They had decided to give away a tenth of the profit, felt *impressed* to send it to Jeff's parents, and enclosed a check for \$727.⁶⁸

Some readers might say, "It's impossible for snail-mail to travel from California to Idaho in a few hours! If God were involved, he would have needed to *impress* the California couple to send the check *at least a day or two ahead of time*, before the prayer. That *couldn't* have been an answer to prayer!"

Unusual means meet unusual ministry needs?

Whose promptings?

...*IF* God has *our* time limitations, on *our* timeline.

But what if a *transcendent* God doesn't? *Our* 'arrow' of time is unidirectional, perhaps because our universe's clock winds down with increasing *entropy*. But there's no theoretical prohibition against bidirectional time. What if God is the *transcendent* uncaused *First Cause* behind the *Big Bang*, at which *our* time — technically our *spacetime* — began? (Discussed subsequently in [Big Bang initiator?](#) on page 243.) He needed to initiate *our* timeline from a *different* timeline. If that first timeline were bidirectional — infinite in both directions, as we'd expect for an uncaused *First Cause* — then why couldn't God see the need and hear the prayer two days in advance, and then prompt the California folks a couple of days back?

Subsequent discussions in [Extra time dimensions and God?](#) on page 365 hopefully clarify this point.

Whose promptings?

⁶²After years of other challenging ministries, Floyd McClung and his young family decided unanimously that God was asking them to move to the very core of

Unusual means meet unusual ministry needs?

Whose promptings?

Amsterdam's notorious Red Light District, into a tiny building squashed between a Satanist temple on one side and a sex cinema on the other. Objective: bring Christ's love to the prostitutes, pimps, and other sex-trade purveyors, as well as to drug dealers, addicts, and 'tourists.' And they did, with even the kids — only ages five and ten at the time — playing important roles in the ministry. (NOTE: The kids participated in the decision to go there!) The whole idea admittedly seems insane until one reads the full story in McClung's book⁶², which I recommend. The summary that follows highlights just one of several remarkable accounts reported in his book.

Unsurprisingly, the Red Light District ministry efforts sometimes faced hostility — even being the targets of rotten fruit, hot water poured from high windows, and a death threat. In one encounter, Floyd was rudely rebuffed by a man whose verbal promotion of a sex cinema was unusually vulgar and explicit, even by Red Light District standards. As Floyd moved away he experienced a sense that this unknown man's beloved wife had left him, that he was struggling to raise two young daughters for whom he cared deeply,

Unusual means meet unusual ministry needs?

Whose words?

and that this awful job — of which he was very much ashamed — was the only financially adequate one that he could find.

Turning back, Floyd asked the hawker whether: he was indeed married, his wife had left him, he had two daughters to care for, and this was the only job he could find. The surprised man replied, "How do you know, eh? Who told you?" Floyd and the man conversed about hurt, rejection, and God's allowance of personal suffering. McClung says that God touched this man in a special way that night and that soon thereafter he left the Red Light District job and found work elsewhere.

So how did Floyd McClung perceive this just-in-time information about a complete stranger. Where did it come from?

Whose words?

⁶³During the first half of the 20th century, H.B. and Ruth Garlock ministered to the people of Liberia, Africa — for years known as the 'white man's grave' because of so many missionary deaths from malaria

Unusual means meet unusual ministry needs?

Whose words?

(which infected the Garlocks as well). During one incident, H.B. tried to rescue a man who had been captured by a cannibal tribe and sentenced to be killed and eaten. During Garlock's rescue attempt, he too was captured and sentenced to the same fate. However before the tribe carried out the sentence, the witch doctor laid down his wand in front of Garlock, a gesture indicating that he could say something in his defense before the tribe killed and ate him.

Though Garlock could understand some of this captor's language, he could not speak it. But thereafter, for several minutes, his mouth poured out words that he did not understand — fluently and forcefully.⁶⁴ Then, after a period of silence, the witch doctor spoke to his men, followed by a ceremony in which he killed a chicken and placed blood on himself, Garlock, his fellow captive, and the cannibal chief, signaling substitutionary death. Ultimately he, the village elders, and the chief plead, "Please do not harm us. We see that your God has power and fights for you."

So how did those words get in Garlock's mouth — words even he didn't understand?

Unusual means meet unusual ministry needs?

Whose army?

Whose army?

67The following event is extraordinary. Does it make sense that God often reserves extraordinary interventions for extraordinary situations?

In 1925 future evangelical leader Clyde W. Taylor and two other men set up a temporary deep-jungle camp near the Amazon headwaters, subsisting only on meat that they could hunt for and vegetables that they could grow. Their objective: evangelize the Campa Indians, despite knowing that no white man had ever emerged alive from that area. They had been informed that if the Campas attacked, they would do so at night, shoot flaming arrows into the thatched roof of their hut, and then rob and kill them.

Therefore, after hearing strange whistles one night, the men left the camp and concealed themselves in the jungle, close enough that they could watch what happened. They saw Campa warriors gather around the camp but then mysteriously go back to their canoes and paddle away.

Years later, after successful evangelism of the tribe, resulting in changed lives, the chief admitted...

Unusual means meet unusual ministry needs?

Whose direction?

"...that yes, 30 to 40 Indians had come to attack the missionaries. 'But there were too many of you!', he said. 'Your roof was covered with people wearing white cushmas [traditional sack-like gowns]. We were afraid to go near because we knew we didn't stand a chance against such an impressive army.'"

What did the Campas see? (Group hallucinations can't happen, remember?) Just-in-time supernaturally induced visions? Just-in-time 'angels'³⁴⁷? Does it matter?

Whose direction?

⁵⁹Tom, an acquaintance whose character I can vouch for, was invited back in the '70s to play basketball in the Philippines with an Australian team sponsored by Sports Ambassadors, an organization that sends ministry-focused sports teams to a multitude of countries. The organization's home office made the arrangements and sent a telegram to their representative in the Philippines, a man named Tine Harde- man, asking him to pick up Tom at the Manila airport.

Unusual means meet unusual ministry needs?

Whose direction?

However, Tom arrived but Tine didn't. Tom waited for hours at the airport in stifling heat under a metal roof, with no air conditioning — the situation in that era. He eventually attempted to rest atop his travel cases.

Tom was a complete stranger in this enormous city.⁶⁰ He didn't speak the language and had no practical way to communicate his plight to anyone; public phones were generally unavailable, and phone service was in any case unreliable. Tom prayed a lot.

Finally, in desperation, Tom hailed a cab and asked the cabbie if he knew where Tine Hardeman lived — unaware that, for cultural reasons, Filipinos do not like to say 'no.' The cabbie said 'yes' and drove Tom around for nearly an hour. More prayer! As they passed through a less-intimidating, less densely populated area away from the city center, Tom spotted a man who didn't look Filipino in his front yard. He asked the cabbie to stop, got out, talked to the man, and discovered that the guy was from Alabama! He then asked the guy whether he knew where Tine Hardeman lived. The reply: 'Yes,' right across the street!

Unusual means meet unusual ministry needs?

Whose intervention?

When Tine opened the door in response to Tom's knock he was shocked and flustered. Tine knew absolutely nothing about Tom or the telegraphed request for an airport pickup. (The telegram arrived only two weeks later.) After overcoming his shock, Tine became excited and said, "Tom, you've experienced your first miracle!"

Whose intervention?

As noted previously, surgeon and internist Viggo Olsen founded and operated a mission hospital in East Pakistan, now Bangladesh (recall [Christ-follower hater to mission administrator](#) and [Life-saving dream](#)). His book, *Daktar: Diplomat in Bangladesh* — as well as a sequel called *Daktar II* — recounts both great difficulties and some remarkable resolutions of those difficulties.

⁶¹The government required a survey of the hospital site before the signing of the lease and the start of construction. In late July 1963, despite days of heavy monsoon rain that logically delayed the urgent survey, Olsen strongly sensed that he should pursue it.

Unusual means meet unusual ministry needs?

Whose intervention?

When Olson requested the survey — to be done the day following the request — the surveyors laughed at him; the survey would be impossible in such rain, which they anticipated would continue for several more days. Olsen notes his response at that point...

"I could hardly believe the next words I heard myself say: 'Don't worry about the rain, gentlemen; we are God's men doing God's work, and He will take care of the rain. We will be back at 8:30 in morning for the survey.'

Great Scott! What had I said? I had spoken as though possessed — I hope I had been possessed by God's Spirit and not some other spirit. I had opened the door either to one of life's greatest experiences or one of life's biggest fiascoes."

The next morning Olson awoke to rain. He and his associate "...prayed again, as though our lives depended on it..." and went to the surveyor's office with raincoats and umbrellas.

"We said, 'Gentlemen, get your chains and other tools. It's time to get started.' Convinced that we were surely mad, they remonstrated with us.

Unusual means meet unusual ministry needs?

Whose intervention?

Because we were adamant, they finally gathered their umbrellas and tools, and we piled into the Jeep.

As they drove to the hospital site, 32 miles away, the rain intensity increased to 'blinding sheets' such that the driver had to slow to a crawl. The surveyors were openly smirking. At the 28th mile, the rain continued to pour, and Olson prayed inwardly,

"Oh, Father, will you help us now? Will You uphold Your own name and do something to help us for Your project's sake and for Jesus' sake? Amen."

But the heavy rain continued.

"Seconds ticked by. Then, suddenly, as though a giant hand had sealed the heavens, the rain abruptly stopped! The smiles vanished from the surveyors' faces. I looked up to a patch of blue... A half hour after our arrival, the high, firm, gently sloping land was sufficiently drained for us to survey, demarcate the twenty-five acres, and install concrete corner posts."

Coincidence? What's the probability that at just the right time, shortly before they reach the survey site,

Unusual means meet unusual ministry needs?

Whose intervention?

heavy rains in the middle of monsoon season will abruptly stop — locally stop — in correlation with prayer?

A lie? If you read the full account in the context of Olsen's book, I doubt that you'll come away calling him a liar. This event is bracketed in his book by interesting but unhyped chronological narratives of selected events — many of which have a personal-interest nature, some of which are quite difficult, others of which are quite remarkable, but none of which hint at fabrication or sensationalism.

Unusual means meet unusual ministry needs?

Help from...?

General comments

Over the years I've read several accounts of individuals in difficult situations getting help from 'someone' who suddenly showed up in time of need and then disappeared. Three that come to mind from memory: a woman trailed by shady characters in an alley but then suddenly accompanied by a powerful clean-cut man who appeared out of nowhere and then vanished when the woman reached safety; a woman lost in a blizzard who suddenly saw taillights that lead her home and then disappeared; a baby who nearly drowned in a fountain, rescued by someone who then vanished. Such testimonies may not reflect your life experiences, but a) I suggest that there are too many such accounts from respectable sources to dismiss them all as lies, and b) consideration of extra spatial dimensions and evidence for **transcendent** mental influence potentially moves acceptance of these phenomena beyond mere trust in reporter veracity. (Regarding extra-D considerations, see [Supernatural in extra spacial dimensions?](#) later in this book.)

Consider the following examples.

Help from...?

Who pushed the car?

Who pushed the car?

My friend Bud Thayer and I live in Northeast Ohio, which sometimes gets heavy lake-effect snow storms. During such a storm one night, Bud struggled his way home from work on the slippery surface of a partially-remote byway called Riverview Road. On one of the dark, remote sections of this route a spin-out slid Bud's car off the road and into the snowbank. Having no cell phone (this was the '80s), Bud stood in front of the car, wondering if he could push it back onto the road. An absence of traffic frustrated considerations of hitching a ride.

Then two big men drove up and got out of their vehicle. At first Bud felt a bit fearful, but the men were very friendly. They asked him to get back in his car, after which they'd push it back onto the pavement. Bud complied, and the two men indeed pushed him back onto the road. Then Bud leaned out the window to thank the men...but couldn't. They had disappeared.

Who guided the skier?

On top of a mountain near Innsbruck, Austria, skier Kathe Hanson needed to get down quickly amidst rapidly worsening conditions, which culminated in a

Help from...?

Who towed the car?

white-out. Barely able to see anything, vertigo forced her to stop and just stand — “freezing,” as she described it.

A minute or two later two men appeared before her, barely visible in the white-out and communicating in an unfamiliar language. One of them hand-signaled her to follow. Focusing on his skis and keeping hers just behind his — over what she says “seemed an eternity”, she ultimately found herself at the bottom. But she could not find the men to say thanks, neither at the foot of the mountain nor in the nearby lodge. Nobody in her ski group had seen the men come down with her.⁶⁹

Who towed the car?

Tina Wurschmidt, driving along a narrow road, veered right to avoid a car coming toward her and ended up in a small ditch. Spinning tires signaled the futility of trying to drive out. Shortly after quietly praying. “Oh, God, I sure could use a tow truck”, a red one pulled up, offered assistance, connected his cable to her bumper, pulled her out, and refused payment. As she started her car and looked in the rear view mirror, the tow truck was nowhere in sight.⁷⁰

Help from...?

Who temporarily flew the plane?

Who temporarily flew the plane?

Private pilot Ronald Bisset once shared a landing strip with a farmer-pilot. It was merely a lane in the middle of a long, narrow wheat field — with rows of mature trees growing parallel to the strip. The landing approach could be daunting under favorable conditions, but on one occasion a sudden shift in wind direction made safe landing doubtful. Trying anyway, Bisset maneuvered the landing approach successfully until the last few seconds. Then a wind gust caused the plane to veer toward and graze the wheat, causing tremendous deceleration. Trying to avoid disaster...

“With my right hand I reached quickly to **close the throttle**, and with my left hand I intended to **pull back on the stick**, which would, I hoped, stop us from cartwheeling tail over nose...”

...but instead...

“As I went to **push** the throttle, I felt a hand come over the top of my own right hand and **pull the throttle open to full power**. At the same time another foreign hand closed over my left hand and **pushed the control stick forward** so that the

Help from...?

plane went into a nose-down attitude. The result of these control maneuvers was that we broke out of the wheat as if the plane had been catapulted off the deck of an aircraft carrier. I was in awe of what was happening and had no control of the plane. We shot out of the wheat and headed straight toward the line of trees on the right-hand side. Whoever was in control banked the plane sharply to the left and then leveled it out to start climbing. At about one hundred feet and climbing, on a straight path, I felt the other hands letting go of my own, and I was given back control.”
<Emphases are mine.>

...after which he safely landed the plane.⁷¹

Who held the guns?

During a surveillance operation, Rick Underwood, an unarmed corporate investigator whose partner called in sick, faced armed thieves alone in an alley behind a prospective victim's business. After radioing for help, Underwood promptly ran his vehicle over a curb toward the crooks — *before* the called-for help arrived. (He had to move quickly, because these par-

Help from...?

Who rescued the little girl?

ticular crooks reputedly finished heists within 90 seconds.) He crazily tried to bluff his way for nearly four nervous minutes, claiming snipers were on the rooftop. Surprisingly, the thieves dropped their weapons. After police arrived and arrested the crooks, separate detectives interviewed them in separate rooms. Much to the investigators' surprise, each crook *independently* claimed that he saw two men at one end of the alley with drawn handguns and a third guy at the opposite end of the alley with a shotgun. Though Underwood got many 'What were you thinking?!' remarks, everyone involved began calling the investigation 'the angel case'.⁷³

Who rescued the little girl?

One day at the beach, as seven year old Juli Catlan swam too far from shore she got caught in a riptide. Her efforts to escape were futile, and her parents couldn't hear her screams. Just as she began to panic, a strong man appeared, pulled her out of the water, carried her to shore, and walked her to her parents. Her parents could couldn't see the man behind her, and after hearing of the rescue, her

Help from...?

Discussion

father's attempts to thank him were futile; he was nowhere to be found.⁷²

Discussion

For readers willing to 'think outside of the box', I suggest considering one of the following two lines of reasoning for each of the above scenarios — based either on 1) the implications of a forthcoming extra-dimensional thought experiment or 2) previously presented [EVIDENCE](#) for **transcendent** brain influence.

1. For cases in which someone(s) physically acted on material entities and then disappeared, the thought experiments forthcoming in [Supernatural in extra spacial dimensions?](#) could apply. Transcendent rescuer(s), normally aligned with three extra-dimensional axes and invisible, could have temporarily aligned with our normal 3D axes, performed the physical action...

- Pushed the car onto the pavement
- Pulled the car from the ditch
- Rescued the girl from the riptide

...and then realigned with invisible extra-dimensional axes (and so disappeared).

Help from...?

Discussion

2. For two of the three other scenarios we can still consider line-of-reasoning #1. However, *alternatively* consider **transcendent** influence on the mind, as per evidence in [Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?](#) (also discussed in [Just stuff?](#)) and/or on neuromotor brain processes...
- The crooks could have 'seen' visions of cops with weapons (of which investigator Underwood was apparently unaware). [NOTE: *Not* hallucinations! Recall that two people can't identically hallucinate. [55](#)]
 - The skier lost in the white-out could have been guided with visions of men and skis.
 - Brain-controlled motor processes and the mind of the pilot who narrowly averted disaster could have been manipulated **transcendently** to guide the controls and sense hands on his, respectively.

Help from...?

Personal experiences

In response to friends' suggestions to include some personal experience in the book, here are a few personal accounts that I think illustrate providence. Impressive or not, they are first-hand.

A de-perforated bowel?

One Sunday afternoon a couple of decades ago I rushed my wife Doris to the hospital in extreme abdominal pain. X-rays and an elevated white-cell blood count signaled a perforated bowel and the need for emergency surgery. A group of close friends came to the hospital to pray. Doris's pain thereafter substantially subsided, and the surgeon on call insisted on follow-up x-rays before cutting. The new x-rays showed no evidence of perforation, though the white-cell count was still elevated. The surgeon privately told Doris that unexplainable things sometimes happen. After the surgeon came to the waiting room and told me what happened, I asked him about the possibility of a miracle. He said, "That could be." [104](#)

The just-in-time job

I'm ashamed to share a faith-deficient struggle in this account but am happy to share the outcome — the memory of which has bolstered me during subsequent times of difficulty.

I've been laid off multiple times in my career, always due either to employers' economic situations or to completion of temporary jobs — which thankfully often lasted months longer than planned. I thank God that my family never suffered substantial economic distress in those situations, even in the midst of my youngest daughter Pamela's severe chronic illness²⁶⁰ and medical expenses. Notwithstanding, I suffered great *emotional* distress near the end of the longest layoff.

In early July, 1993, an employer's business crisis ended my 8-year mostly-R&D job. Thirteen-plus months later, after a hard-fought but unsuccessful job search, I emotionally felt I could not go on. In late August 1994, as I sat in my home office struggling with temptations to end my life, the phone rang. A temp recruiter I'd spoken to just once and from whom I'd heard nothing after a conversation

The just-in-time job

several months back had a temporary R&D-job prospect. I interviewed within a day or two, started a couple of days later, and worked for nearly two years.

Coincidence? Of course I can't *guarantee* otherwise. However, I estimate the probability that *any* prospective employer — let alone an agency that I'd forgotten about — would call me with a job, within that specific half hour of need, to be less than 1/4000:

- I calculate **N**, the number of business (biz) days (d), that could result in employment (allowing a month to first to contact employers and get my job search moving) equal to 264:
 $(400 \text{ d total} - 30 \text{ d to start}) \times 5/7 \text{ biz d/total d} = 264 \text{ biz d}$
- Probability $P1 = 1 \text{ half-hr}/(\mathbf{N} \text{ biz d} \times 16 \text{ half-hr/biz d}) = 1/4224$

Someone might say, "That call may have been in the works well before your session of despair, so how could God be involved?" True. But, as argued in [Extra time dimensions and God?](#) on page 365, if God is God then he likely can access at least two **orthogonal** time or time-like dimensions. If so, then knowing a need

and influencing the solution in advance would likely be trivial.

The rescue

I can't rule out coincidence in the following incident, but it certainly looked to me like *providence* in answer to prayer. 105

On Thanksgiving eve 1971, as my wife Doris and I drove from Rhode Island toward my brother's house in Pottsville, PA — planning to arrive for a late dinner — we encountered an unusual, very heavy snow-storm that crippled the holiday traffic. As the hours passed we ultimately sat at a virtual standstill on a jammed highway. The generator-charged battery in our old Volkswagen beetle started dying. (Unlike modern alternator-based charging systems, a generator-based system drops voltage when engine speed drops, thereby inadequately charging the battery during engine idle.) If I recall correctly, we had to restart the engine once during that time with someone's jumper cables or by pushing the car. It seemed likely that the battery would finally quit and we'd be

stranded — with our two-month-old daughter Karen in the back seat.

We decided to follow a local (and likewise jammed) motorist's advice to bypass the stopped traffic via a side road just ahead. However, the detour turned out to be a trap: the deep unplowed snow made driving almost impossible. Slipping, sliding, and then encountering a steep hill, we could go no further. Other motorists were stuck too. But an enterprising tractor owner began pulling motorists, including us, up the hill — for a stiff fee. More slipping and sliding as Doris and I literally prayed our way down the road. Finally, sometime after midnight, the car died as we approached an unlighted intersection, seemingly (in the darkness) almost in the middle of nowhere, with the snow continuing to fall heavily.

We could make out a few darkened buildings near the intersection. Doris, in distress about being stranded overnight with our baby in the car, wanted to start looking for and knocking on doors. (Karen, thankfully, slept peacefully through it all!) However, not long thereafter we saw the headlights of a full-size, high-chassis American car behind us. We somehow got the

driver's attention and described our plight. Reluctantly, then willingly, he loaded us in his car and took us to his house for the night. As old-hand Earl took a left turn and drove us down the dark unplowed road, onto which *we* would have needed to turn had we not been grounded, it became apparent that our low-chassis VW Beetle would unquestionably have become stuck and stranded, probably next to some farmer's field.

We kept in touch with Earl and his wife for several years — the old devoted-Christian couple even visited us once — until they passed on.

Traffic signs?

Are the following experiences pure coincidence? You decide.

Slippery-road guidance #1?

Some of the heaviest snow in my memory created cleanup headaches during our early years in north-east-Ohio. While driving Interstate 271 south one night not far from home, a crew was removing drifted

Traffic signs?

snow from right side of the highway under artificial light, using a front-end loader positioned perpendicular to the shoulder (something I'd never seen before and have never seen again, thankfully!). I was traveling one lane to the right of the only navigable path: the outer lane. As I tried to steer to the left nothing happened; the road's black ice was apparently almost frictionless. Similar lack of control occurred when I tried to brake. As I helplessly moved closer to the machinery, it seemed like an invisible hand pushed the car's front end into the outer lane.

Slippery-road guidance #2?

While driving home from work on a rainy Interstate 271 in the middle lane, a pickup-truck camper two vehicles ahead in the outer left lane started fishtailing. As the oscillation got worse, I blurted 'Jesus, help him!' Seconds later, the camper swerved sharply — and, surprisingly, safely — across the heavy traffic and ended up on the right shoulder.

THINKING FURTHER

Your worldview just can't accommodate evidence like that presented under [EVIDENCE](#)? Perhaps the following six chapters (not counting the [Introduction](#)) will help to correct some misconceptions and build intellectual bridges between evidence and cognition:

["God?"](#) starting on page 229

["Supernatural = superstition?"](#) starting on page 340

["Mythical foundations?"](#) starting on page 373

[God? Then why this mess?!](#)

["Christ? Why?"](#) starting on page 472

["Talking to the wind?"](#) starting on page 512

In the *2nd* edition I called this part of the book 'RATIONAL SUPPORT', and much indeed *is* rational support for readers inclined to summarily reject any evidence for [transcendent](#) directive influence by God — no matter how strong — as irrational or unscientific. Indeed, the majority of arguments in this sec-

tion support the *rationality* of **transcendence** and **transcendent** directive influence in our world, as reported in the accounts. However, sometimes the 'support' is *mutual* and *integrative*, and the heading **THINKING FURTHER** seems to capture that idea better. In other words, I'll occasionally refer to evidence in the **EVIDENCE** to support arguments in *this* part of the book, as well as the opposite. In particular, thinking about which of two propositions is *better* — **abductive reasoning** — sometimes requires considering evidence in the **EVIDENCE**.

The book's growing size concerns me. A friend or two has suggested breaking the book into two volumes. However, per other concerns about **compartmentalization** (in an endnote [¹³] and in **Just animals?**) the book is best considered as an integrated whole. I want readers to think somewhat holistically about the presented arguments and evidence, and that objective entails *many* hyperlinked cross-references between sections. Therefore, I cannot properly publish **THINKING FURTHER** as a separate volume.

Introduction

Scope

Of the three kinds of belief roadblocks — intellectual, emotional, and volitional (the will) — what follows *mostly* addresses some of the first. [God? Then why this mess?!](#), as well as [Appendix D: Some entropic perspectives on evil](#), does briefly address *core* issues of evil, suffering, and ultimate destiny. But only *we* (with God's help, I submit) can address *volitional* roadblocks — issues of the human *will*.

Emphasis

You'll quickly note that I substantially touch on science and scientists in this part of the book. Why?

1. The [EVIDENCE](#) part of this book substantiates **supernatural** activity. (NOTE: I've carefully avoided accounts that have internal disconnects, have failed my investigations when such were possible, or don't ring true.)

Emphasis

2. Unrealistic adulation of science, supposing it to have the final answers to everything^a, *inappropriately* hinders acceptance of the **supernatural**.
3. Conversely, I submit, some modern science *supports* notions of the **supernatural**.

Science is responsible for a seemingly exponentially-increasing array of discoveries unimaginable to previous generations. Though emphatically some of these discoveries have done more harm than good, we indeed owe a great debt to science.

However, partly for that reason, some people have put science on an unwarranted pedestal, unwisely supposing that it has the ultimate answers to everything.^{a, b} Though critical thinking about issues of life should dispel such notions, some people resist evidence for *any* **supernatural** activity — regardless of credibility — because they mistakenly perceive that science and scientists have shown **supernatural** activ-

^a...a belief that represents not science but **scientism**, a *worldview* related to the waning philosophy of **positivism**.

^b...though others — particularly those with a **postmodern mindset** [106](#) — do not so adulate science, realizing that it hasn't delivered on all of its promises and presumptions.

Emphasis

ity to be primitive and superstitious. I'll try to dispel such notions and encourage readers to look at the **supernatural** more objectively.

I'll try to nudge science and scientists a bit off unwarranted pedestals. However, *I'm by no means anti-science. I'm a scientist* — committed enough to science to have worked for and received a physical-science PhD.

God?

Readers with doubts about God's existence may hesitate to accept the [EVIDENCE](#) at face value and struggle with temptations to discount or explain it away. After all, moving mentally from no God to an active-in-human-affairs God requires a big paradigm shift. Social factors may also come to play; some readers may fear getting called 'weak-minded' or 'unscientific'. I'll do my best in this and succeeding sections to show that belief in God is neither 'weak-minded' nor 'unscientific' but logical.

Arguments and evidence

My goal here is *not* proof of God but corroborating support for belief in God and harmony with science — vs. [scientism](#). (Regarding the word 'proof', note that even in science, 'theories' are supported but few get elevated to 'laws' — substantially *proven* true.)

No evidence?

Is there no *evidence* that points to the existence of God, as some atheists claim? Well, consider the [EVI-](#)

[DENCE](#) in this book. Though most of these accounts are not technically ‘scientific’, I suggest that much of the evidence would ultimately pass muster in courts of law — *especially* the medically documented accounts in [Miracles impossible?](#). I argue below that rejection of such evidence often reflects *special pleading* double standards and the self-refuting worldview of *scientism*.

Moreover, I’ll later argue and present evidence that:

- God is *scientifically* a reasonable candidate for initiator of our universe (see [Big Bang initiator?](#) and [Appendix B: No singularity, no initiator?](#)).
- The *scientifically*-acknowledged extreme fine tuning of the universe, our solar system, and our planet for life points to a *transcendent* creator God — and that common counterarguments are faulty (see [Directed fine tuning?](#) and [Appendix C: UNspecial universe, one of zillions?](#)).

Why the double standard? Why the ‘special pleading’ fallacy?

Why do many skeptics...

Arguments and evidence

1. Summarily *reject* all evidence for God's existence and work, regardless of strength (or even regardless of scientific merit), as 'nonscientific'?
2. Yet routinely accept *all sorts* of *nonscientific* evidence — and sometimes accept even the *absence* of evidence (e.g. in emotional issues) — when deciding on most other critical issues of life?

I suggest that answers to this question often relate little to truth and much to volitional *preference* — the human *will*. Here are a few examples of point #2:

How many critical LEGAL decisions are scientific?

I'll focus here on legal cases, but the same question doubtless applies frequently to many other critical socio-political-economic decisions.

Legal cases highlight *critical* decisions not infrequently made — often reliably (though not always!) — **without** scientific evidence. Long ago, especially before the existence of DNA typing and an array of other modern forensic tools — **scientific** tools — few criminals would have ever been convicted if the judge and jury relied primarily on scientific evidence. And even with the development of *extremely* impressive forensic

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tools over the past century, *much* legal evidence is still non-scientific, including the testimonies of witnesses and investigators and the logical analysis of one-time, unrepeatable events.

Though documentaries of criminal-investigations involving the use of forensics — such as the *Forensics Files Collection* — are hardly uplifting, I view them with great interest. As a scientist, I'm **very** impressed with the broad variety of technologies used. However, recent detailed — yes, *scientific* — analyses of criminal-case data reveal that forensic evidence — *scientific* evidence — is far less used and far less influential than generally assumed. A high percentage of cases get resolved with minimal or no use of forensics and sometimes with *no* physical evidence whatever — scientific or otherwise. And sometimes even physical evidence that *is* collected never makes it to overloaded labs.

Per one article that discusses such findings, prosecutors call exaggerated public expectations regarding forensics the '*CSI effect*', referencing a long-running television-*fiction* series involving use

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of forensics in criminal investigations. That article introduces the topic as follows:

“...does forensic evidence really matter as much as we believe? New research suggests no, arguing that we have overrated the role that it plays in the arrest and prosecution of American criminals.” [261](#)

Though physical evidence (which is not necessarily ‘scientific’ evidence) and forensic data generally provide advantages in the criminal justice process, detailed analyses of official data for 4205 criminal cases in a five-jurisdiction area revealed that a large percentage of criminal convictions depended substantially — and many *entirely* — on **NONscientific** factors. I summarize a few key findings from these analyses in an endnote. [262](#)

The following comments seemingly confirm such findings:

- In a criminal-investigation documentary (*Forensic Files*, series 2, episode 7, ‘Northern Exposure’), Anchorage Asst. District Attorney Sharon Illsley alluded to the criticality of forensic carpet-fiber-matching evidence in the

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2004 conviction of Alaska murderer Carl Brown. Notwithstanding, she also noted that,

“I've seen a lot of evidence in my career, and forensic evidence is something that you don't have as often as the public thinks.”[263](#)”

- Seasoned cold-case homicide detective J. Warner Wallace:

“In all my years working cold-case homicides, I've yet to encounter a case that was assisted by DNA. Most cold-case teams make a living with DNA hits, capitalizing on the latest technology and applying new science to old cases. I haven't been that lucky...Instead, I've been successful assessing cases that have little or no forensic evidence but are replete with what we call *circumstantial evidence*. <Emphasis is in the original.>[264](#)”
- Al Serrato, assistant district attorney, State of California:

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"As a longtime prosecutor, I have come to appreciate the persuasive power of a *circumstantial* case."²⁶⁵ <Emphasis is mine.>

- An Encyclopedia Britannica article on **circumstantial evidence**:

"The notion that one cannot be convicted on **circumstantial evidence** is, of course, false. *Most criminal convictions are based on circumstantial evidence*, although it must be adequate to meet established standards of proof."²⁶⁶ <Emphasis is mine.>

I submit that the empirical evidence in the three medically-attested [Miracles impossible?](#) cases — documented by apologetically-disinterested medical personnel — is *more scientific* than in a substantial percentage of successfully prosecuted criminal cases. If experiencing a miracle were considered criminal, Bruce Van Natta, Greg Spencer, and Ema McKinley would quickly be convicted in any court of law. Moreover, I suggest that if the dramatic life transformations and other events

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reported in EVIDENCE were illegal (as indeed they are in some countries), then enough circumstantial evidence exists in many of the cases to easily convict those involved.

How many critical PERSONAL life decisions are scientific?

For example, on what **scientific** bases do we...

- Choose mates (neglecting genetic counseling)?
- Plan children (neglecting genetic counseling)?
- Choose careers?
- Choose our values?
- Choose/reject people as friends?
- Love others, beyond children or friends?
- Vote for political candidates?
- Accept what teachers/professors/books teach, some of which is biased, even in science.
- Say/not say science is the final arbiter of truth?

How many answers to ultimate questions are scientific?

Is science the ultimate arbiter of all truth? How *successfully* do we apply scientific methods to answer big questions of life, such as:

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- *Meaning — why are we here?* If we came into existence in a purposeless, happy-accident universe through purely mechanistic undirected means (just one of 'zillions' of universes, some theorists propose), then how does science supply meaning — even [PROXIMATE meaning](#), let alone [ULTIMATE meaning](#)? Why shouldn't we live without conscious meaning, like animals: live, reproduce, die; live, reproduce, die; ...live, reproduce, die...? Consider discussions in [Just animals?](#) and [Just stuff?](#).
- *Morality — how should we live?* Can science provide answers beyond survival of the species as to why we should love strangers sacrificially? Despite the atrocious behaviors of some people and the personal faults of us all, why should so many of us simply *want* to be *nice* in the absence of vested interests? If scientific principles dictating regulation of life by survival or at least dominance of the fittest are correct, why should *any* of us unselfishly care? Is this truly all relative, or are there some irreducible universals? Consider [Objective truth doesn't exist?](#)

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- *Destiny* — *where are we going?* Is death the end to an ultimately meaningless existence? “Is that all there is?,” to borrow a once-popular-song title? Can science say anything *whatever* about ultimate destiny? Is not “when y’a dead, y’a dead” ultimately a scientifically unverifiable *opinion*? Any *absence* of scientific evidence for unseen dimensions of life is no verification whatever that such dimensions don’t exist. Even secular philosophical considerations of human consciousness suggest the possibility of more than physicality. (Consider [Just stuff?](#))

I submit that **reductionistic** ‘scientific’ answers to such issues prejudicially miss the mark, and thoughtful unprejudiced people *know* this.

Bottom line

Science is unnecessary and often irrelevant for the disposition of most issues of truth; science is exclusively relevant only to a limited subset of truth. Claims to the contrary reflect scientISM, not science. (See next subsection, [The problem with scientISM.](#))

Dismissing strongly attested evidence for the existence and involvement of God because it was based on irreproducible events (even though successfully prosecuted criminal cases are *always* one-time, irreproducible events, with or without forensics) or because it was circumstantial reflects a **special pleading**, double-standard bias — not an objective search for truth.

The problem with scientISM

ScientISM is a **special pleading**, self-refuting **world-view** to which I'll refer multiple times in this book. The premises of **scientism**, which underlie much of the anti-supernaturalism that I argue against in this book, self-refutes because:

1. ScientISM claims that *science* is the final arbiter of *all* knowledge and *truth*.
2. But scientISM itself is a philosophical *presumption*. It *does not* and *cannot* come from *science*. It cannot be derived either from scientific principles or demonstrated empirically from scientific data.
3. Therefore, scientISM must ultimately reject itself as false.

Note that **scientism** strongly relates to logical **positivism**. A related key tenet of that philosophy, the 'principle of empirical verifiability', likewise self-refutes, as apologist Norman Geisler has compactly illustrated:

"The principle of empirical verifiability states that there are only two kinds of meaningful propositions: 1) those that are true by definition and 2) those that are empirically verifiable. Since the principle of empirical verifiability itself is neither true by definition nor empirically verifiable, it cannot be meaningful."¹⁵⁶

Please note that objections to scientISM are logical and *independent of supernatural perspectives*. As primers, I recommend a Wikipedia article²⁶⁷ and one published through AAAS²⁶⁸ that discuss and comment on the scientific worldview. The following longer **scientism**-related articles — ²⁶⁹, ²⁷⁰ — are a bit more arcane and in a very few places slightly at odds with unrelated positions in this book. However, they are nonetheless valuable reads, as is a two-page discussion of why scientism is self-refuting.²⁷¹

Moreover, I submit that in personal decisions *even* the most brilliant proponents of scientISM frequently

rely on the types decisions discussed in [Why the double standard? Why the 'special pleading' fallacy?](#) — just like everyone else, *with little or no regard for scientific inputs. We don't and can't realistically **live*** according to the assertions of scientISM.

If so, then why would anyone espouse such a worldview? Might **scientism** perhaps function as a psychological defense mechanism to insulate materialistic worldviews from contrary realities?

The limits of science

Moreover, is everything even called science *fully* scientific, at least per the following definition of the 'scientific method'? [107](#)

1. Observation and description of a phenomenon or group of phenomena.
2. Formulation of a hypothesis to explain the phenomena. In physics, the hypothesis often takes the form of a causal mechanism or a mathematical relation.
3. Use of the hypothesis to predict the existence of other phenomena, or to predict quantitatively the results of new observations.

4. Performance of experimental tests of the predictions by several independent experimenters and properly performed experiments.

Do not the so-called historical sciences — such as paleontology, archeology, and evolutionary biology — typically rely on evidence from *unrepeatable, unobservable* events and make extrapolations and assumptions therefrom — extrapolations and assumptions that are sometimes clearly colored by the scientists' philosophical presuppositions? (See [Science is objective?](#) and endnote [108](#) regarding scientist bias.)

Other than in fast-reproduction laboratory experiments, must not even evolutionary molecular biologists often resort to *assumptions* about the *initiation* of and *processes* of genomic change? In the absence of a **scientific** worldview, might evidence and arguments for God's existence temper **reductionistic**, purely mechanistic assumptions?

Many arguments have been offered to support God's existence. Beyond the arguments and [EVIDENCE](#) already presented, I'll limit my remaining arguments in this section (and in supporting appendices B and C)

to just two more — both **cosmology**-related. I'll further support positive **supernaturality** in subsequent sections.

Big Bang initiator?

Most people have heard of the Big Bang, but many mistakenly think that it consisted of an unfathomable bomb-like explosion that randomly scattered matter to form our present universe. Moreover, some ill-informed religious people disdain Big Bang concepts, mistakenly thinking that they displace God's involvement at the beginning of our universe. However, I suggest that arguments and evidence in the next several pages — and in [Appendix B: No singularity, no initiator?](#) and [Appendix C: UNspecial universe, one of zillions?](#) — support the *opposite* conclusion.

The Big Bang universe

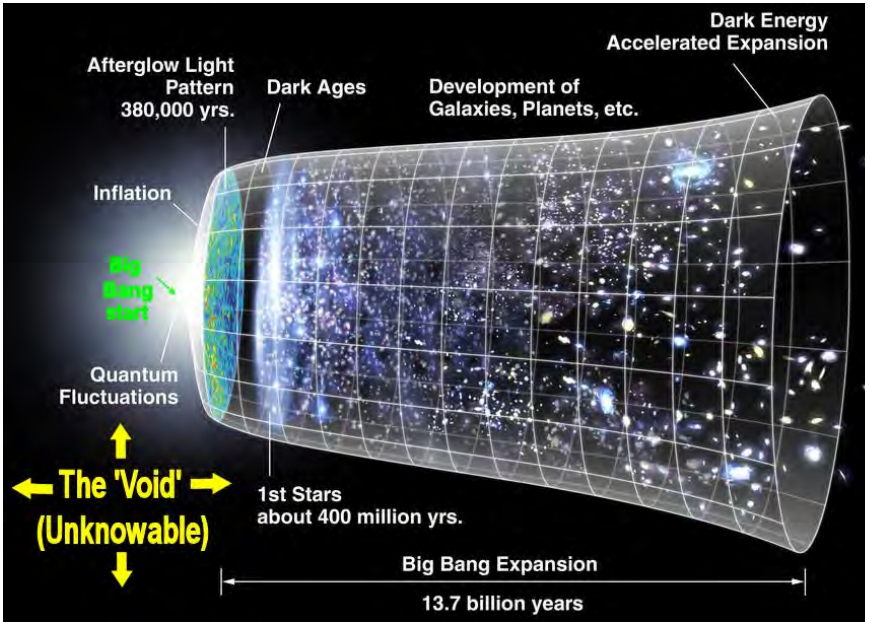
The term *Big Bang* was coined by British astronomer Fred Hoyle to *ridicule* this interloper to his favored (and now discredited) steady-state universe model. Perhaps Hoyle indeed *wanted* to foster a grossly mistaken idea of an unfathomable bomb-like explosion. Hoyle's sarcastic intent notwithstanding, the term

stuck. Multiple types of data now support a Big Bang start to our universe.

[Figure 12](#) graphically illustrates stages in our universe per the standard inflationary Big Bang model. Except for my *added* green and yellow annotations, this is the standard depiction published by NASA as of this writing.

NOTE I refer to the blackness around our universe, in [Figure 12](#) and elsewhere in the book, as the **'Void'** — the forever-unknowable 'nothing', per **human** conceptions of 'nothing', that *preceded* the formation of our universe. (This **'Void'** is emphatically **NOT** the same as the 'outer space' within our universe, which is thought to be permeated with energy fields — corresponding to Dark Energy — and is sometimes referred to as the **'quantum vacuum'**).

Figure 12 Standard inflationary Big Bang¹⁰⁹



Here are brief descriptions of the features shown in [Figure 12](#).

1. *Big Bang start* — Per the *standard* Big Bang model, the universe starts expanding from an infinite-temperature, infinite-density '*singularity*'.

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Space itself expanded from the singularity — not just ‘stuff’ (which was so hot that it didn’t exist as atoms or even sub-atomic particles at that point). In an alternative model, called the ‘no boundary’ model, the universe started from an unfathomably small but finite region rather than a singularity. For descriptive comments on that model, including critiques of *metaphysical* assertions based thereon, see [Appendix B: No singularity, no initiator?](#)

2. *Inflation* — Approximately between 10^{-33} and 10^{-32} seconds after the start of the Big Bang start (see above), many cosmologists conclude that the universe exponentially expanded by a factor of $\sim 10^{26}$ (100 trillion trillion)^a in $\sim 10^{-36}$ sec to roughly the size of a golf ball or grapefruit, after which it began to expand far more slowly, more comparable to today’s rate of expansion.

^a A factor of 10^{26} is roughly *equivalent* to inflating a 5 cm (2 inch) diameter balloon to a diameter equivalent to 50 million light years across, a light year corresponding roughly to 6 trillion miles. (Counting to just a trillion at a rate of one number per second would take 31,710 years.) That’s a *lot* of expansion!

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An inflation scenario after the start of the Big Bang is consistent with the remarkable temperature uniformity of the **cosmic microwave background** (referred to in [Figure 12](#) and item #4 in this list as the Afterglow Light Pattern). It is also consistent with other empirical data, such as what many scientists claim is evidence for a 'flat' universe.

NOTE: Though accepted by many cosmologists, inflation (which involves hypothetical extreme repulsive energy just after the beginning of the universe) is not universally accepted.

3. *Quantum fluctuations* — In the standard inflationary model, many scientists think that both the general uniformity and the very tiny variations in the cosmic microwave background (see *Afterglow Light Pattern* item below) are consistent with **quantum fluctuations** during inflation. Other scientists, including Stephen Hawking, alternately propose that **quantum fluctuations** initiated the Big Bang from an exceedingly tiny (Planck-size) incipient universe and that there was no **singularity**. (See discussions in Appendix B.)
4. *Afterglow Light Pattern* — After the dramatic inflation event, the universe expanded far more slowly. The universe dramatically cooled as it

expanded — until, at around 380,000 years after initiation of the Big Bang, it was cool enough (roughly 3000 degrees K) for the charged particles to combine and form neutral atoms, mainly hydrogen and helium (It was previously an electrically-charged *plasma*.)

As a result of this 'recombination' epoch¹¹⁰, the charged particles of the plasma were no longer around to interfere with transmission of electromagnetic radiation. We now observe the heat at that time as *thermal radiation*, which reaches us from every location in the universe. This radiation is also called the *cosmic microwave background*.^a

5. *Dark Ages* — Sometime thereafter the universe as a *whole* cooled to a temperature too low to transmit *thermal radiation* that we can see *now*, creating a several-million-year epoch of darkness about which our telescopes can tell us nothing.

^aThe cosmic microwave background has attained increasingly longer wavelengths over the 13.7 billion years it's taken to reach us, stretched due to enormous universe expansion. The increasingly expanded wavelengths correspond to increasingly cooler *thermal radiation* temperatures — presently 2.7 degrees K.

6. *1st Stars; Development of Galaxies, Planets, etc.; Dark Energy Accelerated Expansion* — I'll not elaborate on these, given that they're irrelevant to the beginnings of our universe. However, you can easily find relevant material online.

Arguments for a Big Bang initiator

So, where in the forever-unknowable pre-Big Bang 'Void' did Big Bang 'ingredients', including physical principles/laws originate? What in the 'Void' started the first Big Bang processes?

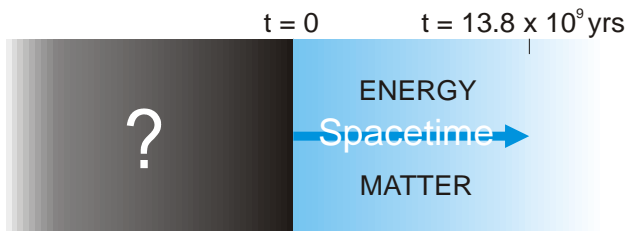
A popular-level **Large Hadron Collider**-project article titled *How Did the Universe Begin?* stated that...

*"...there was **nothing** before the Big Bang as time also started with the Big Bang: there was **no 'before'** for anything to be happening in. Nobody has come up with a testable explanation of what caused the Big Bang, and the question may not actually be meaningful.^a This is mind-boggling stuff, but it does seem to fit the facts."[214](#)*
<Emphases and footnote are mine.>

^a...that is, "...not actually be meaningful" to philosophical excluders of **transcendent** directive influence. Otherwise, I suggest, the question is supremely meaningful.

I'll represent that scenario as in [Figure 13](#) below.

Figure 13 'Nothing-before' Big Bang representation

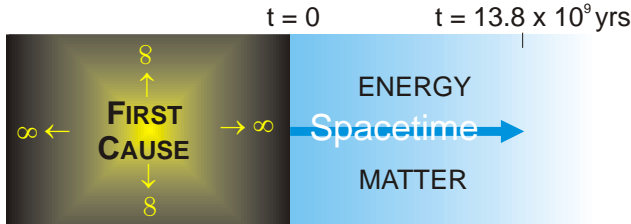


The preceding quoted statement about the so-called 'Void'^a — from a cutting-edge institution of science — is significant within the realm of science. But today's science focuses narrowly and tends to exclude a broader view of reality. Logically, some **thing** or some **one** had to have initiated the **Big Bang** — or at least the 'ingredients' for the Big Bang. I submit that an uncaused cause, a **First Cause**, is a logical candi-

^aThe pre-universe 'Void' — represented by the question mark in [Figure 13](#) — is sometimes also misleadingly called the 'primordial vacuum' in an effort to relate it in some way to the vacuum of *our* spacetime. Click the green 'primordial vacuum' link for my comments about *why* this term is misleading.

date, even the best logical candidate ([Figure 14](#) below)...

Figure 14 First-Cause Big Bang representation



...if we can get past truth-in-a-closed-box **methodological naturalism**,^a the self-refuting presuppositions of **scientism**, and general post-Enlightenment science's categorical bias against the **supernatural** (which I address subsequently in this book). Using **unbiased abductive reasoning**, which of the following options is the *best* choice for universe initiation?

^a...which in frequent practice, instead of seeking truth *generally* when doing science — unbiasedly accepting the implications of observations wherever they lead — insists that all explanations **must** fit into a naturalistic, materialistic 'truth-in-a-closed-box'. It categorically excludes 'out-of-box' explanations from consideration, regardless of validity.

1. *Via cosmic accident* — **Presently unknown and forever unknowable**: the 'Void', the source of our physical laws, the source of universe initiation. All speculations are and must be based on **POST-Big Bang physical laws and constants**.
2. *Via transcendent directive influence* — **Presently known**: evidence for **transcendent** directive influence (recall **EVIDENCE**) and implications thereof:
 - a. We have empirical evidence of **transcendence** OVER nature — e.g. medically impossible healings, documented by disinterested parties, unexplainable by any conceivable natural mechanism now and *too fast* for any conceivable biological mechanism **ever**.
 - b. AND our dimension of time is PART of nature. Why? Not only all of nature but also our dimension of time is scientifically considered to have come into existence at the Big Bang, per multiple theoretical derivations (e.g. the space-time theory of general relativity).
 - c. THEREFORE **transcendence** OVER nature entails **transcendence** OVER our dimension of time.

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- d. Moreover, **transcendence** OVER our dimension of time implies **transcendence** INDEPENDENT of, OUTSIDE of, and BEFORE our dimension of time — i.e. in the forever-unknowable, undefinable pre-Big Bang 'Void'.
- e. So the following also logically applies:
- IF **transcendence** existed BEFORE our dimension of time began.
 - AND **transcendence** is involved AFTER our dimension of time began (now).
 - THEN **transcendence** reasonably existed WHEN our dimension of time began — e.g., AT the Big Bang beginning of the universe.
- f. Moreover:
- IF **EVIDENCE** shows that **transcendence** cares about our universe now
 - AND **transcendence** was present at the beginning of the universe
 - THEN, reasonably, **transcendence** cared about our universe from the beginning AND was involved in the **formation** of our universe.

This logic is **not** 'god-of-the-gaps'^a Moreover it satisfies Occam's razor: "...one should proceed to simpler theories until simplicity can be traded for greater explanatory power."¹³⁷ I submit that — if we eschew **scientific** bias — a **transcendent**, eternal **First Cause** is the simplest, most explanatory, and logically *best evidenced* scenario for initiation of the Big Bang.

Potential objections to a Big Bang initiator

Many scientists have recognized the *theistic* implications of the Big Bang...and *disliked* those implications. Theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking noted that...

"Many people^b do not like the idea that time has a beginning, probably because *it smacks of divine intervention*....There were therefore a number of attempts to avoid the conclusion that there had been a Big Bang."²¹⁵ <Emphasis is mine.>

^aRefers to 'God-did-it' positions on *natural* phenomena that science hasn't yet explained, **not** to scientifically unexplained and empirically unexplainABLE **pre-natural** phenomena in **pre-spacetime before** nature existed.

^b...including Hawking, as I'll discuss in [Appendix B: No singularity, no initiator?](#)

...echoed by astronomer Robert Jastrow...

...scientists cannot bear the thought of a natural phenomenon which cannot be explained, even with unlimited time and money. There is a kind of religion in science...every event must have its cause; there is no **First Cause**. (See fuller quote in [Astronomer Robert Jastrow](#)).

The following subsections address such objections.

Objection 1: Science categorically excludes considerations of God

Assuming truth exists,^a what should science be?

1. Exclusively a materialistic-tunnel-vision search for truth (a **methodological naturalism philosophy**) that ignores or trumps other inputs?
2. Part of a *general, **balanced*** search for truth that, in cases of conflict, *abductively weighs* inputs to arrive at the *best* answers to questions about reality?

Enlightenment thinking, which persists today, excludes revelation and the **supernatural**, elevat-

^aThe **postmodernists** typically do *not* so assume; see my analysis and rebuttal in [Objective truth doesn't exist?](#)

ing human reason to a pinnacle. Is human reasoning and interpretation of scientific data infallible? Is all revelation bogus? (See [Mythical foundations?](#)) Or should reason and **evidence of revelatory truth** be examined in **balance**?

Regarding a God-has-no-place-in-science **mindset** as the only reasonable option, consider that:

- Such a **mindset** would have baffled some earlier science greats who believed that science was a tool to understand what God had created, not an ideology to exclude him. See:
 - [Historical scientists not the smartest?](#),
 - [The 'Galileo affair': science vs. religion?](#),
 - [Did the Enlightenment toss the baby with its bath water?](#).
- Again, defining science as the only way or ultimate way to find all truth isn't science but self-refuting **scientism** (recall [The problem with scientISM](#)).

Objection 2: Materialistic origins have more explanatory power than theistic ones

Do materialistic universe-initiation concepts provide so much explanatory power as to nullify con-

sideration of a **First Cause**? Even if there are multiple universes, when did the *first* one begin and by what cause? Is an **infinite regress** more explanatory than a **First Cause**? I suggest not more explanatory, per Occam's Razor, just philosophically more acceptable to some people. In fact, some scientists have struggled with the **Big Bang** because of its theistic implications, as noted previously. (Again, see remarks in [Astronomer Robert Jastrow](#).)

Objection 3: The universe started as a quantum fluctuation; an initiator is unneeded

Some scientists try to explain away the need for a **Big Bang** initiator, claiming that:

- The net energy of our universe — the combined energy of gravity and everything else — adds to zero.
- Therefore, the formation of our universe could have started from random, virtually zero-energy **quantum fluctuations** that effectively snowballed/combined over all possible paths.

...**quantum fluctuations** *in what?*...**quantum fluctuations** *of what?*...**quantum fluctuations** gov-

erned **by** *what*, given that quantum behavioral laws would not exist or operate in 'nothing'?...all possible paths **from** *what*? What existed in the pre-**Big Bang**, pre-universe '**Void**'? The nature of the '**Void**' is speculative and philosophical. Though some evidence supports hypotheses of **quantum particle generation** and annihilation in **our** universe **after** the **Big Bang**, we have no information *whatever* about the environment from which our universe arose — or from which any other proposed universes arose (...unless they were spawned from existing universes, the origins and initiations of which still beg the question.) In my Internet searches on this subject I found either frank admissions of ignorance about the '**Void**' or pure speculation.

Further, even if **quantum fluctuations** in the '**Void**' were hypothetically possible, how could even experiments with high energy **particle accelerators**, such as the **Large Hadron Collider**, empirically verify them? All such experiments must be performed in **our** energy-field-containing **space-time** environment according to **our** physical laws,

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not in the totally unknown and forever inaccessible pre-**Big Bang**, pre-universe 'Void', about which such experiments can say nothing.

Is it reasonable to suggest that such metaphysical speculations comprise 'materialism-of-the-gaps'?

Objection 4: Hartle-Hawking/Vilenkin/etc. no-boundary proposals eliminate the need for a Big Bang initiator

Rebutted in [Appendix B: No singularity, no initiator?](#) This rebuttal is not arcane but is nonetheless too detailed for here.

Objection 5: A cyclical multiverse hypothesis rules out a Big Bang initiator

Brian Greene implicitly acknowledges (as of 2011) the continuing existence of "*the knotty issue of how the universe began*", but perhaps wants a **cyclical multiverse** hypotheses to eliminate the need for an initiator.^a He says that, "Part of the appeal of a **cyclical cosmology** is its apparent ability to avoid *the knotty issue of how the universe began*. If the universe goes through cycle after

^a...**cyclical universe** models have now largely been abandoned.

cycle, and if the cycles have always happened (and perhaps always will), then the problem of an ultimate beginning is sidestepped....The **brane-world cyclic multiverse** has no need for a beginning to time." However, Greene admits, "The cyclic multiverse [hypothesis] is widely known within the physics community but is viewed, almost as widely, ***with much skepticism***."²¹³
<Emphases are mine.>

Directed fine tuning?

Overview

A long list of physical constants and parameters for our universe, galaxy, solar system, and planet needs to be fine tuned for life to originate and continue. You can download such a list, including relevant scientific-article reference citations, as two PDFs. [219](#), [220](#)

In some cases, extremely tiny deviations in these values would result in an uninhabitable universe and earth. Scientists keep finding more such fine tuning, referred to in versions of the so-called **Anthropic Principle**. The almost negligible probability of such coincidences coming together randomly suggests directed

intent — even for primitive life. The 'Big Bang' was more like an exquisitely programmed expansion than an explosion. Arguably it was *specialy programmed/directed* for future life.

Even Stephen Hawking acknowledges and describes the fine tuning³⁹⁸ — though his *META*physical position on this and related topics demands rebuttal (see [Appendix B: No singularity, no initiator?](#), and in [Appendix C: UNspecial universe, one of zillions?](#)).

Fine-tuning probability estimates

Astronomer Hugh Ross has for several years 1) compiled the increasing quantity of published universe-and-earth-fine-tuning features^{219, 220} and 2) estimated the probabilities for each. See a 2006-vintage summary of these probabilities^{221, 222} in [Table 3](#) below:

Table 3 Fine tuning summary (as of 2006)

Life requirements	Number of observed fine-tuning features	Probability that all features fall in required range
Temporarily sustain bacteria (for ≤ 90 days)	501	$\frac{1}{10^{333}}$
Permanently sustain unicellular life (e.g. for 3 billion years)	676	$\frac{1}{10^{578}}$
Sustain intelligent physical life in a globally distributed high-technology civilization	816	$\frac{1}{10^{1054}}$

Ross's probabilities are written in scientific notation. For example, 10^{1054} is the same as 1 followed by 1054 zeros. For perspective, note that the number of protons and neutrons in the entire observable universe is roughly 10^{79} (1 followed by 79 zeros).

For the benefit of readers who might not trust Ross's probability estimates, I'll shortly discuss a **drastically** 'conservatized' probability (relative to Ross's numbers) — still ultra-low — in [Are you far more conservative \(more optimistic\) than Ross?](#) and endnote ²²⁴.

A bit more about Ross's probability estimates

The total probability for a combination of independent events is the product of the individual-event probabilities. Accordingly, Ross first calculated *uncorrected* probability values that way and then subsequently corrected them for parameter interdependencies and timing factors.

Long-term unicellular life probability

Ross multiplied the individual fine-tuning probabilities together to arrive at an *uncorrected* probability of $1/(10^{859})$ for the coincidence of all 676 fine-tuning features needed to permanently sustain unicellular life (e.g. for 3 billion years). *However*, to correct for interdependencies between some of the fine-tuning features, he multiplied $1/(10^{859})$ by a "dependency factors estimate" of 10^{303} , resulting in a much lower *corrected* probability of $1/(10^{556})$. But the need to keep all

parameters within specific limits over the total time span required to support life on a planet introduces additional fine-tuning constraints. Therefore Ross multiplied $1/(10^{556})$ by a “longevity requirements estimate” of $1/(10^{22})$, thereby arriving at the number in [Table 3](#): $1/(10^{578})$.

High-tech advanced life probability

Ross similarly arrived at a *preliminary* probability of $1/(10^{1333})$ for the combined existence of all 816 fine-tuning features needed to sustain intelligent physical life in a globally distributed high-technology civilization. After multiplying that number by a dependency factors estimate of 10^{324} and a longevity requirements estimate of $1/(10^{45})$ he ended up with the number in [Table 3](#): $1/(10^{1054})$.

Are you far more conservative (more optimistic) than Ross?

Were Ross's probability estimates adequately conservative?

In a 2001 publication listing his probability estimates for the far fewer fine-tuning parameters

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known at the time, Ross said, "Although I have tried to be optimistic (that is, conservative) in assigning the probabilities, I readily admit that many of the estimates may need to be modified."

However, also note that in the midst of a 2008 debate, Ross mentioned that *he'd asked other astronomers for their estimates as well* for fine tuning probability values, which, unsurprisingly, varied — resulting in overall probability differences of no more than "...ten or twenty zeros" (factors of 10^{10} or 10^{20}). Such variance sounds enormous — and in everyday terms it is: ten zeros represents 10 billion and twenty zeros represents 100 million trillion! *But even twenty-zero uncertainty is small relatively to the exceedingly tiny probability of fine tuning.* That will become obvious in following subsections.

*First, let's **conservatively totally neglect multi-cellular life***

In other words, for the rest of this 'Directed fine tuning?' section, let's look **only** at the [Long-term unicellular life probability](#) — ignoring *all* multicellular life, from the simplest animal up to and including us.

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Let's further multiply $3/(10^{387})$ by Ross's "dependency factors estimate" of 10^{303} (to compensate for possible interdependencies between certain constants; recall [A bit more about Ross's probability estimates](#)). We end up with $3/(10^{84})$ — *still* an incomprehensibly low probability for all 676 tuning parameters to be within the ranges needed to sustain unicellular life, considering that the number of protons and neutrons in the entire observable universe is roughly 10^{79} . Were I consistent with Ross's approach, I'd multiply the $3/(10^{84})$ number by his $1/(10^{22})$ "longevity requirements estimate", ending up with a net probability of $3/(10^{106})$. *But I'll just stick with the **more drastically** 'conservatized' $3/(10^{84})$ probability.*

Does this drastically higher probability of fine tuning for primitive life — ignoring much lower probabilities for advanced life— no longer imply design and designer?

A reader-friendly (hopefully) endnote²²⁴ puts a probability of $3/(10^{84})$ in perspective. Summary:

1. Assume a *yet more conservative* probability of $1/(10^{82})$, to simplify mental math.

2. Form a square array of 10^{82} dimes^a, 10^{41} dimes on each side. This dime matrix is *2 trillion known-universe diameters long* and *2 trillion known-universe diameters wide*.
3. *Randomly* select *just one* of the 10^{82} dimes and paint it red. (I'd prefer to give that job to somebody else!).
4. Get a blindfolded super(!) bug to *randomly* fly around over the whole dime array and *randomly* land just *once*.

$1/(10^{82})$ is the probability that the bug lands on the red dime on her first try.

Purely deterministic cause and effect?

Potential objections

I address here a couple of potential objections to directed fine tuning.

Objection 1: Multiverse proposals nullify directed fine tuning

Do **multiverse** proposals truly nullify directive-influence implications of fine tuning? Per one **mul-**

^a...each dime touching its four neighbors.

multiverse proposal, a Big Bang cosmic inflation event created an 'inflaton' energy field that locally collapsed into the matter of our universe. Not a big deal so far, but here's the claim that supposedly nullifies directive-influence implications of fine tuning: untold 'zillions' of inflaton field collapses hypothetically created untold 'zillions' of other universes as well — each potentially with varying degrees of different physical laws and/or constants. According to some multiverse theorists, the physical laws of our universe are just happy accidents for life, serendipity: one or more of the hypothetical untold 'zillions' of universes was statistically *bound* to have the 'just right' conditions for life as we know it. That's why we're here.

A similar hypothesis posits that our universe was a quantum-mechanically-controlled wave function at its inception — *before* cosmic inflation — and that the simultaneous multiplicity of all possible quantum 'paths' to our Big Bang resulted in a 'zillions' of other universes, some with very different laws of physics. (See [Appendix B: No singularity, no initiator?](#)).

Are these valid objections?

IS THERE EVIDENCE FOR A MULTIVERSE?

Clearly we cannot observe a hypothetical multiverse directly. At best, we'd seek indirect evidence. Is that available or likely forthcoming?

- *Multiverse hypotheses are and potentially will remain 'scientifically based philosophical speculation'*

Cosmologist George Ellis, who has co-published with multiverse enthusiast Stephen Hawking on occasion, noted that, "The various 'proofs', in effect, *propose that we should accept a theoretical explanation instead of insisting on observational testing. But such testing has, up until now, been the central requirement of the scientific endeavor, and **we abandon it at our peril.*** If we weaken the requirement of solid data, we weaken the core reason for the success of science over the past centuries... Nothing is wrong with scientifically based *philosophical speculation, which is what multiverse proposals are.* But we should name it for what it is."[227](#) <Emphases are mine.>

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- *Some ballyhooed 'evidence' probably isn't*
In May 2013, the U.K. 'Daily Mail' proclaimed "Evidence of the existence of 'multiverse' revealed for the first time by cosmic map," citing the proposal of UNC physicist Laura Mersini-Houghton and Carnegie-Mellon physicist Richard Holman that an enormous 'cold spot' in the cosmic microwave background may have been caused by the influence of a nearby other universe(s).²²⁸ Other public proclamations of this proposal foolishly included the word 'proof', which doubtless Mersini-Houghton and Holman would have disdained. The speculative proposal has not been widely accepted. Moreover, more recent proposals appear substantially less speculative. Most notably, an April 2015 article cites *evidence* that the enormous 'cold spot' is caused by a phenomenon called a '*supervoid*',²²⁹ which has nothing to do with a nearby multiverse. An earlier, April 2014, article even suggested that the 'cold spot' may simply be an artifact of the complex analysis required to interpret and display Planck space-telescope data.²³⁰

- *What might even qualify as evidence?*

Given that prominent multiverse hypotheses propose other universes with different physical laws and constants, I posed the following relevant question on the Q&A forum Quora in Fall of 1015, requesting answers from two physicists, including most-viewed physicist Richard Muller (>58 million views as of this writing): "*What observation(s) in our universe, if any, would ultimately qualify as a strong empirical evidence for the existence of other independent universes, each with unique arrays of physical constants and laws?*" Response? *Silence*. The single 'answer' I got, from elsewhere, was yet more conjecture from an enthusiast of fractal cosmology — a fringe branch of cosmology that rejects the Big Bang. [225](#)

'ZILLIONS' OF UNIVERSES WITH DIVERSE PHYSICS BASED ON OUR UNIVERSE'S PHYSICS?

Again, in more detail, note that prominent multiverse hypotheses are based on one of the following: 1) Per inflationary Big Bang models: fluctuations in 'inflaton' fields happened 'zillions'

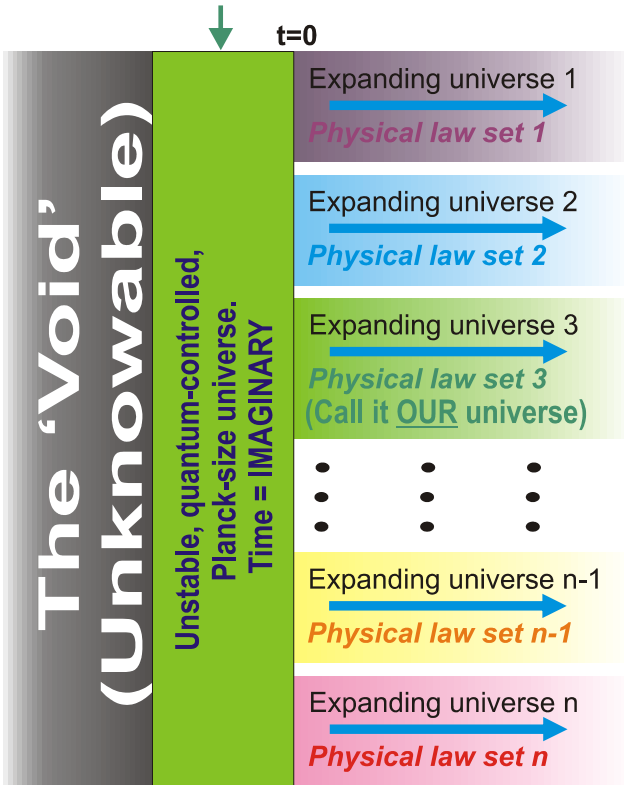
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of times, spawning 'zillions' of individual universes having unique physical constants and — often assumed — unique physical laws. 2) Per 'no boundary' proposals (e.g. Hartle-Hawking): **quantum fluctuations** in an ultrasubmicroscopic Planck-length-sized incipient universe spawned 'zillions' of individual universes having unique physical constants and unique physical laws.

A problem with both proposals: they inevitably assume OUR laws of physics and OUR physical constants. In other words, they assume that processes operating according to OUR physical laws and OUR constants — including **quantum fluctuations** according to OUR quantum physics — spawned 'zillions' of OTHER physical laws and constants. See the [Figure 15](#) below, drawn relative to 'no boundary' multiverse proposals but equally applicable in principle to 'inflaton' multiverse proposals.

Figure 15 Disparate physical laws of the multiverse arose from OUR physical laws, OUR quantum physics?

Quantum behavior per OUR laws (physical law set 3)



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See a more detailed write-up on this topic in [Appendix C: UNspecial universe, one of zillions?](#)

One of the following seems to apply:

- Though scientists have no choice other than to start with what they know, the theoretical assumptions of such multiverse proposals seem ultimately incoherent, *implying that multiverses formed according to these proposals don't exist.*
- If 'zillions' of universes with different physical laws and constants were indeed to exist according to these proposals, OURS would be *exceedingly special* (because OUR physical laws and constants would have been responsible for spawning ALL OTHER physical laws and constants).

NOTE This rebuttal of 'fine-tuning serendipity' applies to ANY and ALL proposed mechanisms for multiverse formation, now and in the future, because ALL proposed mechanisms for multiverse formation MUST be based on OUR known physics. Any suggestions of some alternate type(s) of physics will be pure conjecture.

In either case, wouldn't the widely-accepted evidence of extreme fine tuning of our universe, solar system, and planet for life²³¹ therefore indeed suggest *design* — in *contradiction* to claims that our universe's exceedingly fine-tuned physical laws and constants are actually purely serendipitous for life amidst a multiverse of 'zillions' of different possible combinations of physical laws and constants?²³²

CAN WE EXPERIMENTALLY VALIDATE MULTIVERSE PROPOSALS?

Might a **particle accelerator** like the **Large Hadron Collider** (LHC) ultimately help us to further understand the beginnings of *our* universe? Maybe. However, with regard to a multiverse:

- The accelerator must operate within OUR laws of physics. Again, as discussed above, can OUR physics generate OTHER physics?
- Even with regard to the inception of OUR universe, let alone a multiverse, can particle accelerator experiments truly look back to the very inception of the universe? As of a 2013 publication, apparently LHC scientists will be

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delighted to know more even about events very 'late' in the **Big Bang** (a hundredth of a billionth of a second [10^{-11}]) (See the next-to-last paragraph of the publication referenced in endnote²¹⁴.) That's 'late' relative to the Big Bang **cosmic inflation** events purportedly occurring between 10^{-36} and 10^{-33} to 10^{-32} sec.²³⁵ Moreover, the accelerator must operate within our *present* physical laws which may arguably differ from the physical laws operating at the inception of the universe.

BOTTOM LINE

So, reasoning abductively^a *without worldview bias*, which of the following is *most* reasonable?

- *Directed* fine tuning?
- *Serendipity-based* fine tuning in view of 'zil-lions' of universes with diverse physics?

Objection 2: Life arose fortuitously out of just-right conditions; otherwise, we'd not be here to observe it

Some scientists deny directive implications of the plethora of just-right parameters and constants.

^a...inference to the best explanation...

They think that these factors are not 'fine tuning' at all, just good fortune — the universe didn't know we were coming, and life arose here suddenly and spontaneously (they say) because the conditions and timing just happened to be right. Otherwise we'd not be here to observe and discuss these conditions. We arrived and flourish at the right place at the right time, independent of any **transcendent** directive influence.

NOTE Even if the above objection were correct, arrival of humans on earth at the right time to observe conditions fit for life doesn't rule out *planned* and *directed* arrival of life at the right time, place, and conditions. Perhaps even hardened atheists would agree that the creator God they deny wouldn't be an idiot: he'd not initiate life under wrong conditions. Though that comment doesn't support **transcendent** directive influence, it shows that 'right-place-at-right-time' arguments don't refute it.

'Good fortune' objectors often further assume that our 'just right' *universe* is one of perhaps a near-

infinite group of universes. But I've addressed that objection previously in [Objection 1: Multiverse proposals nullify directed fine tuning.](#)

I suggest that an unfalsifiable appeal to near-infinite chances is philosophical nature-of-the-gaps thinking — substituting 'with God anything can happen' with 'with enough time and opportunity anything can happen'. It categorically excludes or ignores potentially better-supported alternatives.

Borrowing from W. L. Craig:

"...suppose you are dragged before a firing squad of 100 trained marksmen, all of them with rifles aimed at your heart, to be executed. The command is given; you hear the deafening sound of the guns. *And you observe that you are still alive*, that all of the 100 marksmen missed! Now while it is true that you should not be surprised that you do not observe that you are dead [after all, truly dead people can't observe their status] nonetheless it is equally true that you should be surprised that you do observe that you are alive."²³⁶ <Emphasis is Craig's.>

Why should you be surprised? Which of the following explanations is more likely to be correct?

- You survived by random *chance* which, though almost vanishingly small, *is* finite. In a world of near-infinite chances, all 100 marksmen could hypothetically have become distracted and lost their aim in the last split second.
- You survived by *intent* — for example, all 100 marksmen deliberately aimed away from you at the last split second, or the commander loaded the guns with blanks.

Further, suppose you learn that the death-squad commander hates killing people and has previously acted in other ways on behalf of prisoners. Would that affect your choice between chance and **transcendent** directive influence as the better explanation for prisoner survival?

Similarly, with regard to fine tuning, which of the following explanations is *better* (**abductive reasoning**):

- All 676 life-favorable conditions for single-cell life coincide by random *chance*. Though vanishingly small (*ultra-conservatively*, $3/10^{84}$),

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the chance *is* finite. In a world of near-infinite chances, it happened given enough time and opportunity.

- All 676 unicellular-life-favorable conditions coincide by *intent*, by **transcendent** directive influence.

Further, suppose you learn of **transcendent** directive influence in other spheres of existence, such as reported in the [EVIDENCE](#). Would that affect your choice between chance and **transcendent** directive influence as the better explanation for observed fine tuning?

Even *further*, what if:

- Contrary to common assumptions, **abiogenesis** — first life from non-life — may be extremely rare in the universe, [237](#), [238](#) maybe even occurring only once.

NOTE. ...'**abiogenesis**' is first life from non-life without reference to causation. *Period.* In other words, *I make no assumption here that **abiogenesis** was undirected*, contrary to materialistic presumptions.

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- Even if probes ultimately find microorganisms on Mars and beyond in our solar system, they might have originated on/been seeded by earth. [239](#), [240](#), [241](#), [242](#)

Moreover, *recent findings* by the Mars rover 'Curiosity' that high-energy, life-hostile ionizing radiation from space strikes the surface of Mars — far more strongly than on Earth — *suggest a doubtful environment for development of first life on Mars.* [244](#)

Further, evidence for high ionic strengths (high ionic-compound concentrations) in the surface waters over the history of Mars and terrestrial experiments with synthetic Martian brines indicate that such waters were likely uninhabitable for microbial life. [245](#) More generally, the data suggests that the past or current presence of water on a planet does not necessarily mean that the planet once hosted life.

- Even if **abiogenesis** occurs elsewhere, we may be the only sentient beings in the universe. [246](#), [247](#)

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- The *rapid* appearance of first life after the hot-surface Hadean era²⁵⁰ is a mystery²⁵² that has prompted myriad hypotheses and intensive research²⁵¹ but may never be fully resolved.^{254, 255}
- The resignation of some *life-origins* scientists to the idea of panspermia: origin of first life elsewhere, then transported to earth. (But how and where did the 'elsewhere' organisms originate? All such hypotheses do is conveniently move abiogenesis to some potentially unknown and maybe unknowable location.)

Would those factors affect your choice between chance and **transcendent** directive influence as the better explanation for observed fine tuning for life?

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Such accusations of weak-mindedness — apparently applicable to the 95% of Americans who believe in God, a universal spirit, or a higher power¹²⁷ — doubtless often stem from **presuppositions** that science eliminates the need for God. If so, then a significant

percentage of scientists, including some of the scientific elite, must be or have been weak-minded.

Introduction

Oxford mathematician John Lennox noted that...

"...it would be very naïve to write off the debate [between scientists concerning the big questions of life] as the inevitable clash between science and religion. That 'conflict' view of the matter has long since been discredited.²⁴⁸ Take, for example,... Francis Collins^{249 257 258}, the Director of the National Institute of Health in the USA, and former Head of the Human Genome Project. His predecessor as head of that project was Jim Watson, winner (with Francis Crick) of the Nobel Prize for discovering the double-helix structure of DNA. Collins is a Christian, Watson an atheist. They are both top-level scientists, which shows us that what divides them is not their science but their world-view. There is a real conflict, but it is not science versus religion. It is theism versus atheism, and there are scientists on both sides."²⁵⁹
<Endnote citations are mine.>

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The following subsections support Lennox's assertion.

Scientists too smart to believe in God?

What follows are not 'arguments from authority' — not advice for you to believe or not believe because very smart, high-profile persons x, y and z believe(d) or not believe(d). Rather, I'm simply attempting to dispel the notion that only unsophisticated, unscientific, weak-minded people would believe in God generally or the **biblical Christ** specifically.

Historical scientists not the smartest?

Vocal, evangelistic 'new atheists' assert that the smartest and most educated people are the least likely to believe in God. Were some of the greatest scientists in history therefore a bit on the dumber end of the scientist spectrum?

Johannes Kepler, 1571 - 1630

"A key figure in the 17th century scientific revolution, he is best known for his eponymous laws of planetary motion, codified by later astronomers, based on his works *Astronomia nova*, *Harmonices Mundi*, and *Epitome of Copernican Astronomy*. These

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works also provided one of the foundations for Isaac Newton's theory of universal gravitation." [111](#)

Johns Hopkins science historian Lawrence Principe notes that Kepler was "...explicit in saying that his motivation for uncovering the laws of nature was to give glory to their creator. At one point he writes, 'God is praised through my work in astronomy.'" [112](#)

Galileo, 1564 - 1642

In addition to the work on **geocentrism** for which he is most well-known, Galileo wrote on physics, including the strength of materials and the motion of objects. Galileo's theoretical and experimental work on the motions of bodies, along with the largely independent work of Kepler and René Descartes, was a precursor of the classical mechanics developed by Sir Isaac Newton. [133](#) As for **heliocentrism**, such work challenged *not* the Catholic Church itself but the Aristotelian physics with which it unfortunately associated itself. [134](#) [135](#)

Though Galileo exhibited some notably unChristian behavior — arrogance^a in particular and

^aSee [The 'Galileo affair': science vs. religion?](#) on page 313.

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never marrying the mother of his three children¹¹³ — and ended up at odds with key figures in the Catholic Church,^a he “remained a devout Roman Catholic until his death.”¹¹³

Blaise Pascal, 1623 – 1662

¹¹⁴ Pascal was a “mathematician, physicist, inventor, writer and Christian philosopher...*a child prodigy* who was educated by his father. Pascal's earliest work was in the natural and applied sciences where he made important contributions to the study of fluids, and clarified the concepts of pressure and vacuum.” <Emphasis is mine.> The SI unit of pressure, the *pascal* (1 newton/m²), is named after him. He “...wrote in defense of the scientific method...invented the mechanical calculator... [helped to] create two major new areas of research: he wrote a significant treatise on the subject of projective geometry at the age of 16, and later corresponded with Pierre de Fermat on probability theory, strongly influencing the development of modern economics and social science.”

^a...which ultimately reversed its position.

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"In 1646, he and his sister Jacqueline identified with the religious movement within Catholicism known by its detractors as Jansenism" which had some beliefs characteristic of Protestantism, such as justification by faith. Pascal "...ultimately abandoned his scientific work, and devoted himself to philosophy and theology."

Robert Boyle, 1627 - 1691

Although Boyle pursued some 'alchemy' interests, he "...is largely regarded today as the first modern chemist, and therefore one of the founders of modern chemistry, and one of the pioneers of the modern experimental scientific method. He is best known for Boyle's law, which describes the inversely proportional relationship between the absolute pressure and volume of a gas, if the temperature is kept constant within a closed system. Among his works, *The Sceptical Chymist* is seen as a cornerstone book in the field of chemistry."¹¹⁵

With regard to belief, "As a director of the East India Company he spent large sums in promoting

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the spread of Christianity in the East, contributing liberally to missionary societies and to the expenses of translating the Bible or portions of it into various languages." [115](#)

Isaac Newton, 1642 - 1727

Newton, whose name is perhaps as well-known as Einstein's, "is widely regarded as one of the most influential scientists of all time and as a key figure in the scientific revolution. His book *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* ('Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy'), first published in 1687, laid the foundations for most of classical mechanics. Newton also made seminal contributions to optics and shares credit with Gottfried Leibniz for the invention of the infinitesimal calculus." [118](#)

NOTE Contrary to many erroneous statements, Einstein's theories of relativity did NOT *displace* Newton's laws, which are still *widely* used today to calculate most mechanical behaviors. Newton's laws are *special cases* of Einstein's more general 'laws' (or *almost* 'laws', given

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extensive confirmation of special and **general relativity**) and **quantum mechanics**.

Though Newton did not model the faith of Kepler, Faraday, Maxwell, and some other scientific greats (“...by his thirties Newton held a Christian faith that, had it been made public, would not have been considered orthodox by mainstream Christianity...in recent times he has been described as a heretic”), “Newton saw a monotheistic God as the masterful creator whose existence could not be denied in the face of the grandeur of all creation.”^{[119](#)}

Michael Faraday, 1791 -1867

“Michael Faraday contributed to the fields of electromagnetism and electrochemistry. His main discoveries include those of electromagnetic induction, diamagnetism and electrolysis...The SI unit of capacitance, the farad, is named in his honour.”

“Albert Einstein kept a picture of Faraday on his study wall, alongside pictures of Isaac Newton and James Clerk Maxwell. Physicist Ernest Ruther-

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ford stated, 'When we consider the magnitude and extent of his discoveries and their influence on the progress of science and of industry, there is no honour too great to pay to the memory of Faraday, one of the greatest scientific discoverers of all time'."

"Faraday was a devout Christian...Biographers have noted that 'a strong sense of the unity of God and nature pervaded Faraday's life and work.'" [116](#) [...not in the sense of **pantheism**, per my search of the Internet and one article in particular. [117](#)]

James Clerk Maxwell, 1831 - 1879

Maxwell was arguably the father of classical electromagnetic theory, an essential foundation for virtually every high-tech device we use today. "Many physicists regard Maxwell as the 19th-century scientist having the greatest influence on 20th-century physics, and his contributions to science are considered by many to be of the same magnitude as those of Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein. In the millennium poll — a survey of the

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100 most prominent physicists — *Maxwell was voted the third greatest physicist of all time*, behind only Newton and Einstein....Einstein himself described Maxwell's work as the 'most profound and the most fruitful that physics has experienced since the time of Newton.' Einstein kept a photograph of Maxwell on his study wall, alongside pictures of Michael Faraday and Newton." <Emphasis is mine.> [120](#)

Maxwell "...underwent an evangelical conversion in April 1853..." and "...was an evangelical Presbyterian, and in his later years became an Elder of the Church of Scotland." [120](#) Per statements in certain of his writings "Maxwell believes that Christianity is true and is indeed the one true 'scheme', and because of that status can afford to open itself to the most complete examination, even of the most sensitive tabooed spots, in a way that no other system of belief can. The extent to which Maxwell in fact 'ploughed up' his Christian beliefs and put them to the intellectual test, can be judged only incompletely from his writings. But there is plenty of evidence, especially from his

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undergraduate days, that he did deeply examine his faith. Certainly, his knowledge of the Bible was remarkable, so his confidence in the Scriptures was not based on ignorance."¹²¹

William Thompson Kelvin ('Lord Kelvin'), 1824 - 1907

"At the University of Glasgow he did important work in the mathematical analysis of electricity and formulation of the first and second laws of thermodynamics, and did much to unify the emerging discipline of physics in its modern form..." and "...is widely known for determining the correct value of absolute zero as approximately -273.15 Celsius." The 'Kelvin' unit of absolute temperature (abbreviated by the letter K) — based on absolute zero and used generally in the equations of science — was named after him.¹²²

"Thompson remained a devout believer in Christianity throughout his life; attendance at chapel was part of his daily routine. He saw his Christian faith as supporting and informing his scientific work, as is evident from his address to the annual

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meeting of the Christian Evidence Society, 23 May 1889." [122](#)

Max Planck, 1858 - 1947

Max Planck is generally known as the originator of **quantum** theory. "This theory revolutionized human understanding of atomic and subatomic processes, just as Albert Einstein's theory of relativity revolutionized the understanding of space and time. Together they constitute the fundamental theories of 20th-century physics." [123](#)

Though Planck was a deist, not a theist, he clearly expressed his position on God in the following:

"All matter originates and exists only by virtue of a force which brings the **particle** of an atom to vibration and holds this most minute solar system of the atom together. We must assume behind this force the existence of a conscious and intelligent mind. This mind is the matrix of all matter." [124](#)

"...it is no wonder, that the movement of atheists, which declares religion to be just a deliberate illusion, invented by power-seeking

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priests, and which has for the pious belief in a higher Power nothing but words of mockery, eagerly makes use of progressive scientific knowledge and in a presumed unity with it, expands in an ever faster pace its disintegrating action on all nations of the earth and on all social levels. I do not need to explain in any more detail that after its victory not only all the most precious treasures of our culture would vanish, but — which is even worse — also any prospects at a better future.'" [124](#)

Modern scientists too smart to believe in God?

Modern scientists believe in God at substantially lower rates than the general public (around 95% [127](#)), at least in the United States. Does this mean a) that modern scientists' education predisposes them toward unbelief or b) that high intelligence requires unbelief?

As a scientist myself who has dealt with personal skepticism, I'll allow that the average scientist probably thinks more critically and deals with more intellectual challenges than many in the general populace.

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However, I also submit that when scientific theories and findings impact the big questions of life — Where did I come from? Where am I going? Why am I here? How shall I live? — scientists have *interpretation options* and often pick anti-theistic options. As you'll see, psychological and social factors — distributed differently among scientists than among the general populace — influence belief statistics.

Let's look at and analyze two studies of scientist beliefs.

Study #1

A 2009 Los Angeles Times article reported the following:

"According to a survey of members of the American Assn. for the Advancement of Science [AAAS]^a, conducted by the Pew Research Center in May and June this year, a majority of

^aAAAS told me that they don't keep track of general membership qualifications; anyone, even non-scientists, can join if they pay the membership fee. However, the Fellows — at least the 701 members elected as Fellows in 2012 — are overwhelmingly science academicians. [125](#)

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scientists (51%) say they believe in God or a higher power, while 41% say they do not.

Furthermore, scientists today are no less likely to believe in God than they were almost 100 years ago, when the scientific community was first polled on this issue. In 1914, 11 years before the Scopes 'monkey' trial and four decades before the discovery of the structure of DNA, psychologist James Leuba asked 1,000 U.S. scientists about their views on God. He found the scientific community evenly divided, with 42% saying that they believed in a personal God and the same number saying they did not. Scientists have unearthed many important fossils since then, but they are, if anything, more likely to believe in God today."[126](#)

Looking at these results from a glass-is-half-full type perspective, *over half* of these scientists *believe in*

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God or a superior being. Are the unbelieving half smart and the believing half not so smart?

Study #2

In 2005, a somewhat differently-sampled study^{207 208} queried 1646 randomly selected scientists in seven fields from twenty-one *elite* research universities in the United States — including private schools such as Harvard, Princeton, and the University of Chicago and public schools such as the University of Michigan and the University of California, Berkeley. *More than half of the participants in each field were full professors.* The structured survey was followed up by 271 in-depth interviews.

Nearly 34 percent of the respondents were atheists (answering “I do not believe in God”) and another 30 percent were agnostics (answering “I do not know if there is a God and there is no way to find out”). However, quite interestingly:

- “About 52 percent of scientists see themselves as having no religious affiliation”²⁰⁸ — a seeming disconnect with the 64 percent figure (34 percent atheists + 30 percent agnostics).

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Apparently some of these scientists maintain a religious affiliation despite their atheism/ agnosticism.

- "...about 66 percent of the natural scientists and about 69 percent of the social scientists describe themselves as spiritual...over 22 percent of the scientists who are atheists are spiritual. And over 27 percent of the scientists who are agnostic are spiritual."[208](#)

Looking at this data again from a glass-is-half-full type viewpoint, that leaves 36 percent of some of the country's most elite scientists believing in God. If belief in God is so contrary to science, why even 36 percent? That's still over a third...of the *elite*. Are they nuts? Weak-minded?

Might the pro-belief statistics in Study #1 and Study #2 be higher if not skewed by sociological, psychological, or other non-scientific factors?

Might factors *other than science* play into the *dis*-belief percentages?

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MIGHT SCIENTISTS' DISPROPORTIONATE LACK OF RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND NEGATIVELY SKEW BELIEF STATISTICS?

Yes. Per [Study #2](#):

"Those not raised in religious homes, the case for the majority of scientists without religious affiliation, also emphasize their lack of experience with religion...*Childhood religious background, not exposure to scientific education, seems to be the most powerful predictor of future irreligion.*"[208](#)

<Emphasis is mine.> The same bias presumably applies to some of the AAAS respondents queried in [Study #1](#).

MIGHT ATHEISM/AGNOSTICISM AMONG TENURED FACULTY BIAS HIRING, TENURE, AND PROMOTION OF LIKE-MINDED SCIENTISTS AND NEGATIVELY SKEW BELIEF STATISTICS?

Probably, per other data.

A 2005 statistical analysis of 1999 survey data suggests that "...being a conservative, a Republican or a practicing Christian confers a disadvantage in professional advancement greater than any of these other factors [race, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation]".[209](#)

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The reviewer of a different study of academic scholars, done by sociologist George Yancey, while pointing out the study's limitations, appeared at least to nominally agree with its conclusions: "Yancey himself best summarizes the study reported in his book: 'I have substantiated the reality that religious and political conservatives face a level of rejection that other social groups do not experience in academia.'" [212](#)

Recall that over half of the scientists queried in [Study #2](#) were full professors. Might "You've got to go along if you want to get along" apply to university politics as well as to Washington politics, particularly with regard to getting published and promoted? And might atheist/agnostic-majority full professors have disproportionate clout in determining who does *not* get promoted to their level?

MIGHT ANALYTICAL THINKING STYLES TYPICAL OF SCIENTISTS HINDER BELIEF IN GOD?

Possibly. I say *possibly* vs. *probably*, because of the *analytical* thinking styles typical of theologians and theistic apologists — who emphatically DON'T 'park their brains at church doors' (an

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accusation sometimes arrogantly hurled against Christ followers). In fact, analytically delving into arguments and evidence, such as in this book, can *increase* belief — in my opinion (and, I hope, ultimately in yours).

I can safely say that scientists generally think more analytically in a given day than the general populace, simply because science typically *requires* more analytical thinking than most occupations. Studies at Harvard²¹⁰ and the University of British Columbia (UBC) ²¹¹ suggest that analytical thinking negatively influences the extent to which test subjects answer questions affirmatively about belief in God — even after analytical thinking is *artificially induced* by the researchers and even when cognitive ability and personality are controlled. Intuitive thinking — even brief episodes of *induced* intuitive thinking — seem to have the opposite effect.^a

^a**NOTE:** The University of British Columbia authors add this qualifying remark near the end of their paper: “Finally, we caution that the present studies are silent on long-standing debates about the intrinsic value or rationality of religious beliefs or about the relative merits of analytic and intuitive thinking in promoting optimal decision making.”

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How can we explain this apparent effect of analytical thinking? I submit that, on a long-term basis — such as in a scientific career — analytical thinking can become not just a thinking *style* but also a thinking **mindset**. Analytical thinking as a **mindset** may so focus on details as to discourage belief — e.g. by promoting **reductionism** — while missing big-picture perspectives that, on balance, encourage belief.^a For example, an analytical **mindset** could predispose a skeptical reader of this book to determinedly *seek* flaws in one or more *individual EVIDENCE* account and thereby perceptually miss a general ring of truth and dismiss strong evidence in the *overall* multi-account collection.

I suggest that an analytical **mindset** can promote a sort of tunnel vision that proverbially misses the forest while inspecting the trees. I further suggest that a healthy balance of analytical and intuitive thinking intuitively first sees the overall health and value of the forest and only then analytically picks out potentially dead trees.

^aConsider [How about 'refusal to speculate' about big questions?](#) on page 307 and [Science is objective?](#).

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Based on personal experience as well as formal definitions, analytical (Type 2) thinking is more conscious, detailed, focused, critical, and **reductionistic**, whereas intuitive (Type 1) thinking is more subconscious, broad, and **integrative**. We need both types. Certainly the greater precision and, in certain cases, greater reliability of analytical thinking is *essential* to the details of science. However, the two types in balance best address the big-picture facets of existence, on which analytical thinking alone can stumble: *Where did I come from? Where am I going? Why am I here? How shall I live?*

Moreover, if a **transcendent** personal God exists who sometimes prompts people through mental impressions — a position I support biblically and experientially — then too much analytical thinking may block important inputs to spiritual enlightenment and development. That's not hypothetical for me. My tendency to think analytically sometimes impoverishes my own spiritual development, which focuses on issues of truth while sometimes faltering on relational aspects of following the **biblical Christ**.

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MIGHT PRIOR GENERATIONS OF AGNOSTIC/ATHEIST PROFESSORS HAVE INFLUENCED THE PRESENT GENERATION OF SCIENTISTS AGAINST BELIEF WHEN THEY WERE STUDENTS?

Possibly, by inference. It seems logical that anti-belief attitudes from science faculty would explicitly or implicitly get transmitted to students, thereby potentially biasing future scientists toward unbelief — whether for ostensibly scientific reasons or personal philosophical reasons.

Further, my personal experience suggests that exposure of students — any college/university students, not just science students — to modern philosophical biases during higher education may influence their beliefs as much as training in science. My study of modern philosophies and theologies reveals the huge spectrum of often contradictory positions since Descartes — the majority either marginalizing to belief in a personal God or hostile to it.

MIGHT INTELLECTUAL PRIDE AND PEER PRESSURE BE A FACTOR?

Based on my experience, I suggest *possibly*, at least in some cases. To make a sweeping generalization would be unfair. However, wouldn't...

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- The unrealistically elevated status given to scientists by some of the public...
- The high educational and intellectual achievements of many scientists...
- The desire/pressure to appear sophisticated among peers and to the public;^a avoidance of ridicule; avoidance of accusations of being weak-minded...

...result in greater temptation for peer-pressure/pride-based unbelief in the **supernatural** — at least *professed* unbelief — for scientists than for the general public?

Pride of self and fear of peers are enemies of *legitimate* faith in a **transcendent** God — *faith* being *necessary* at some point per the *definition* of **transcendence**. Transcendence unequivocally *implies* superior knowledge, perspectives, powers, etc. that we must accept *without* experiential certainty — albeit with *sufficient* information.

^a...particularly in view of the findings in [Might atheism/agnosticism among tenured faculty bias hiring, tenure, and promotion of like-minded scientists and negatively skew belief statistics?](#)

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(Recall my Pascal quote at the beginning of the book.)

HOW ABOUT 'REFUSAL TO SPECULATE' ABOUT BIG QUESTIONS?

I'd say *probably*. [Personal admissions of scientist bias](#) on page 329 quotes four contemplative atheist/agnostic/materialist scientists whose candor I admire: astronomer Robert Jastrow, biologist Richard Lewontin, physicist Paul Davies, and science historian Michael Ruse. All allude to a seemingly *subjective* avoidance of the **supernatural** by some scientists and/or a kind of a religion in science itself. Some excerpts:

- Jastrow¹³⁸ —

"There is a kind of religion in science; it is the religion of a person who believes there is order and harmony in the universe...*every event must have its cause; there is no First Cause.*" <Emphasis is mine.>

- Lewontin¹³⁹ —

"To appeal to an omnipotent deity is to allow that at any moment *the regularities*

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of nature may be ruptured, that miracles may happen." <Emphasis is mine.>

- Davies [140](#) —

*"As a scientist I don't **like** the idea of a god who will intervene from time to time in the workings of the universe." <Emphasis is mine.>*

- Ruse [142](#) —

*"Evolution is promoted by its practitioners as more than mere science. Evolution is promulgated as *an ideology, a secular religion* — a full-fledged alternative to Christianity, with meaning and morality." <Emphasis is mine.>*

Context: Though an ardent evolutionist himself and defensive of that science in his article, Ruse nonetheless takes some of his fellow evolutionists to task.

Is such thinking implicit to science, or is it the product of late modernity? Certainly it was not a problem for the scientific greats I profiled in "[Historical scientists not the smartest?](#)" starting on page 285.

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Perhaps many late-modern scientists simply fear to think about 'big' questions. Jastrow refers to [modern] scientists sometimes 'refusing to speculate' about the implications of unanswered tough questions. When Davies asks colleagues why the laws of physics are what they are, they typically respond with answers like 'That's not a scientific question,' 'Nobody knows,' and 'There is no reason they are what they are — they just are.'

Why might some scientists 'refuse to speculate'? Perhaps because, in allowing for anything beyond known or discoverable principles, they must submit to the unknowable and in so doing lose control. Regarding implications of the **Big Bang** and what physicist Brian Greene still referred to in 2011 as "the knotty issue of how the universe began"²¹³ Jastrow noted:

"This religious faith of the scientist is violated by the discovery that the world had a beginning under conditions in which the laws of physics are not valid, and as a product of forces or circumstances we cannot discover. When that happens, the *scientist has lost control*...As usual when faced with trauma, the mind reacts by ignoring the implications — in

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science this is known as 'refusing to speculate.'" <Emphasis is mine.> [138](#)

HOW ABOUT TENDENCIES OF MANY SCIENTISTS TO EMBRACE SCIENTISM?

The self-refuting worldview of **scientism** says that science ultimately has the last word on all knowledge — self-refuting because science cannot establish the validity of that position. Therefore, **scientism** has no tolerance for **transcendence** — a defining attribute of God. That intolerance is based *not* on *science* but on *philosophy*. (Recall [The problem with scientISM](#).) Consider also how **scientism** might support the mentality discussed in the recent subsection [How about 'refusal to speculate' about big questions?](#)

I suggest that scientists who embrace scientISM consciously or subconsciously reject God with the following logic:

1. Science is the ultimate source of/authority on all knowledge.
2. Therefore, science implicitly excludes **transcendent** knowledge.

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3. God by definition is **transcendent** and thereby has **transcendent** knowledge.
4. Therefore, science excludes God.

Though the logic is properly constructed (conclusions follow from premises), premise #1 is self-refuting as discussed in [The problem with scientISM](#).

However, I suggest that many scientists embrace the following more subtle form of scientISM; premise #1 in the logic below implicitly embodies self-refuting premise #1 in the logic above:

1. Science is driven by the *theoretical* ability for scientists to *ultimately* understand everything.
2. Admitting to **transcendent** knowledge, forever unavailable to science, is therefore harmful to science and unacceptable.
3. God by definition is **transcendent**.
4. Therefore, God is unacceptable. (Or, at least, God must be compartmentalized — put into a separate 'box' forever isolated from science, as discussed subsequently in [Just animals?](#).)

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Examples? You'll read some [Personal admissions of scientist bias](#) a few pages hence.

I submit that scientists should instead seek TRUTH, regardless of the search mechanism or the consequences. That's impossible when looking through the blinders^a of science alone, thereby excluding other avenues of truth.

So, what's the bottom line?

The data and analyses in this subsection suggest that science (in contrast to some *scientists*) is *not* implicitly anti-God and that many psychosocial factors may contribute to the greater proportion of unbelief among late-modern scientists than among the general population. Are the best scientists implicitly too smart to believe in God? I don't think so.

^a'Blinders' is one name for the eye shields that horse riders/drivers put on horses to restrict their field of vision.

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Historical scientific rejections of belief?

The 'Galileo affair': science vs. religion?

Sadly, the so-called 'Galileo affair' is widely and *erroneously* cited as proof that science triumphs and the **supernatural** must move to the back of the bus.

Firstly, the decline in respect for religion after Galileo stemmed mostly from *rejection of associated Aristotelianism*, not from rejection of Christianity. Starting in the 13th century, philosophers/theologians, including Thomas Aquinas, entangled Christianity with Aristotelian thinking. Copernicanism and later science challenged *Aristotelian physics*, not Christianity.¹³⁴ (Copernicanism was not the only issue. For example, Aristotle posited that a heavier object falls faster than a lighter object; when Galileo simultaneously dropped a cannon ball and a musket ball from the leaning tower of Pisa, they both reached the ground at the same time.¹³⁵) *Guilt-by-association* has prevailed ever since, though modern people are largely unaware of those roots.

It's true that *some* in the Catholic Church held, as literal, biblical *phenomenological* statements like "The

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sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises" [Ecclesiastes 1:5], but such statements are similar to modern weather scientists' (meteorologists') equally unscientific but universally accepted *phenomenological* statements like "The sun will rise at 6:42 AM tomorrow and set at 8:17 PM." The sun, of course, does no such thing; the earth rotates such that a given area is exposed to the sun during that area's day and is unexposed during that area's night.

However, beyond the rigidity of some officials and the guilt-by-association rejection of Aristotelianism, much of this flap was sociopolitical and had little to do with science or religion. Firstly, not all major Catholic Church officials had a big problem with Galileo; in fact some were quite friendly, though one influential — and friendly — official ***appropriately*** asked Galileo not to take an 'it's proven' position on heliocentrism. Galileo's telescopic observations *were consistent with Copernican heliocentrism but did not prove it*. "Galileo's telescopic 'proofs' — the Jovian satellites and the phases of Venus — are inconclusive. Galileo's favored 'proof' — that the tides are caused by the motion of the Earth — is completely wrong." [328](#)

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Even popes were not initially hostile to his position, though the Protestant Reformation complicated the situation, causing the Catholic Church to be unusually resistant to doctrinal challenges. Also, a power struggle may have affected the situation, with Dominican influence in the Church being displaced at that time by Jesuit influence; Galileo's detractors were heavily Dominican.³²⁸ Finally, Galileo was sometimes arrogant. "Galileo had a penchant for making people who disagreed with him look like fools, a practice that earned him quite a few enemies, including some important and powerful figures in the Catholic Church."³³² (Confirmed by Principe.³²⁸) At the end, a key factor that led to Galileo's downfall was a satirical document that was egregiously insulting to the pope (Urban VIII), who previously was his friend and admirer.

Despite all that, Galileo "remained a devout Roman Catholic until his death."¹¹³

Did the Enlightenment toss the baby with its bath water?

Wikipedia provides the following "...good example of a standard, intellectual definition of the Enlightenment:"

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“Enlightenment was a desire for human affairs to be guided by rationality rather than by faith, superstition, or *revelation*; a belief in the power of human reason to change society and liberate the individual from the restraints of custom or arbitrary authority; all backed up by a world view increasingly validated by science rather than by religion or tradition.” <Emphasis is mine.> [329](#)

I'll start by acknowledging some pre-Enlightenment horror stories of fear, ignorance, and superstition; of seeing demons and witches behind every tree and behind every negative phenomenon; of the witch hunts and the Inquisition that fear and superstition spawned^a; of the abuse of 'revelation' by those who should have eminently known better but instead followed their own self-inclined, foolish, and sometimes outrageous distortions. These were blatantly contrary to biblical scripture, and nobody needed a theology

^aThe outrageousness of the Salem, MA witch hunts notwithstanding, the handful of executions therein was dwarfed by the tens of thousands in Europe, some of which were accompanied by horrible, pitiless torture, in contrast to the 24 *hangings* in New England.

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degree to know that. *I can understand* that the newly emerging age of science — the 'age of reason' — was embraced as a way to bring 'Enlightenment' out of ignorance and superstition (some of which continued in parallel into the 18th century).

But, sadly, I must also acknowledge human tendencies to *indiscriminately* discard good with bad. I submit that the Enlightenment included *overreaction*: sometimes rejection of *all supernatural* in general — and *supernatural evil* in particular — as superstition. That's the *irrational* side of the so-called 'age of *reason*', perhaps stemming in part from intellectual pride.

I've surveyed dozens of modern philosophies and theologies since Descartes though the Enlightenment to the late 20th century.^{[330](#)} Though some of the philosophies surveyed have posited helpful ideas, all have certain characteristics in common: all have stemmed from fallible human thinking (brilliance does not equate to wisdom), all in varying degrees conflict with each other — sometimes enormously, and all reject *transcendent* revelation. Interestingly, in the mid-20th century, *postmodern* pragmatist Richard Rorty came along and said essentially that

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the prior modern philosophies had *all* been wrong — that there's no truth to search for.

All of these philosophies have relied on human wisdom — obviously *fallible* human wisdom, given the gross discrepancies between many of the philosophies.

I suggest that one of the two statements that follow must be correct:

1. *One* of these philosophies since Descartes is true, or most true, and all others are in varying degrees false.
2. *None* of these philosophies since Descartes are true.

Could statement 2 be correct, and might the seemingly universal rejection of revelation in modern, post-Cartesian philosophies and theologies be a huge mistake?

What influenced both ancient and modern Christ-followers in the midst of hostility to willingly face death in return for teaching about the truth of which they were confident? During two instances of second and third century plagues, in which pagans fled, what

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influenced Christ-followers to stay behind at great risk to help the sick and dying — both their own and pagans?^{[331](#)}

On general principles, which of the following kinds of wisdom is more likely to be correct?

- Wisdom and understanding of reality by fallible human beings influenced exclusively by their own fallible thinking?
- Wisdom and understanding of reality by fallible human beings influenced by a **transcendent** God, as well as by their own fallible thinking?

Is it possible that — in the pride of scientific advances, rejection of superstition, and resistance to the Aristotelian associations^a and authority structure of the Catholic Church — the Enlightenment threw out the proverbial baby with its bath water?

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Considering that foundational early scientists and many elite modern scientists have seen no conflict

^aRef: [The 'Galileo affair': science vs. religion?](#), page 313.

between science and belief in God, why do sometimes vehement perceptions of a science vs. religion war persist?

The shoddy background of the science-vs.-God war

[333](#)Well, the science vs. religion war idea was no accident. It was started *deliberately* with books containing distorted and baseless 'history' and fallacious logic, written by two 19th century authors with personal agendas, John William Draper (*A History of the Conflict between Religion and Science, 1874*) and Andrew Dickson White (*The Warfare of Science in 1876* and *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom, in 1896*). Both men had axes to grind, Draper railing against the Catholic Church and White against criticism he received for establishing Cornell University without religious affiliation.

“Besides poor scholarship, these books rely on a central and fallacious assumption: that scientists and theologians formed two separate camps throughout history and that theologians imposed

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their will on scientists... Despite the shoddy character of these publications, they were (and continue to be) widely influential. Their influence stems in part from their success in creating a *myth for science as a religion*, embraced ever since by science advocates." [112](#) <Emphases are Principe's, in his course outline.>

The science vs. religion war, though based substantially on myth, has sadly been aided and abetted by extremists on *both* sides.

Science is objective?

I encounter claims that science is objective and unbiased and theism is subjective and biased — based on superstition and ignorance. In this subsection I'll address the first part of such claims as a question: is science always objective? I've implicitly touched on this question in earlier subsections. Here I add details and address further concerns.

The scientific community is open-minded?

NON-scientific resistance to change

The scientific community is *theoretically* open-minded, and admissions of favoritism toward pet theories and the status quo — and resistance to new discoveries, regardless of merit — are rarely public. Doubtless some such resistance *legitimately* relates to proper scrutiny and avoiding half-cocked notions. However, the resistance sometimes relates to pride and/or turf-protection. It's been said that sometimes whole generations need to die off for new discoveries to get wide acceptance. Max Planck, the father of **quantum mechanics**, once quipped that, "Science progresses one funeral at time".

In a 1961 paper titled *Resistance by Scientists to Scientific Discovery*,³³⁴ Columbia University sociologist Bernard Barber looked at the issue in some detail, discussing examples and reasons. Though in my own career I occasionally became aware of *modern* "Not invented here" resistance to discoveries by outsiders, Barber shows that

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historical scientific greats experienced resistance to their discoveries, including:

Gregor Mendel — Founder of the science of genetics (recognized only posthumously).

Hermann von Helmholtz — A wide contributor to science — and unfortunately a perpetrator as well as a recipient of resistance to discoveries.

James Clerk Maxwell — The father of classical electromagnetic theory

Joseph Lister — A pioneer of antiseptic surgery who put Pasteur's discoveries into practice.

Louis Pasteur — One of the most important founders of medical microbiology.

Max Planck — Father of **quantum mechanics**,

Nicolaus Copernicus — Formulator of the heliocentric model (who encountered resistance from the astronomer-scientists of the time).

Svante Arrhenius — One of the founders of the science of physical chemistry.

Thomas Young — Formulated the **wave** theory of light.

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Barber illustrates reasons for scientist resistance to new discoveries using examples. Here are some:

- Cultural blinders^a
- Mathematical vs. nonmathematical leanings and vice versa.
- Theoretical vs. empirical leanings and vice versa.
- Religious biases.
- Age disparagement of youth.
- School-of-thought rivalries.
- Professional standing and status (snobbery).
- Rejection of in-discipline discoveries by out-of-discipline scientists, regardless of merit ('Not-invented-here' syndrome).

I'll discuss only one example — an egregious one that Barber didn't mention. Some resistance to new discoveries has only dishonored the discoverers and delayed the advance of science. Other

^a'Blinders' is one name for the eye shields that horse riders/drivers put on horses to restrict their field of vision.

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resistance has cost lives. Barber's paper alluded to Pasteur's and Lister's experience with resistance to germ-related theories and practice. But a particularly egregious earlier example comes to mind: the seemingly arrogant resistance by mid-19th century physicians to hand washing, despite clear evidence of its criticality:

"[Physician Ignaz] Semmelweis discovered that the incidence of puerperal fever could be drastically cut by the use of hand disinfection in obstetrical clinics...Puerperal fever was common in mid-19th-century hospitals and often fatal, with mortality at 10%-35%. Semmelweis postulated the theory of washing with chlorinated lime solutions in 1847 while working in Vienna General Hospital's First Obstetrical Clinic, where doctors' wards had three times the mortality of midwives' wards...

Despite publication of *results where hand-washing reduced mortality to below 1%*, Semmelweis's observations conflicted with the established scientific and medical opinions of the time and his ideas were rejected by the

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medical community. Some doctors were offended at the suggestion that they should wash their hands, and Semmelweis could offer no acceptable scientific explanation for his findings [***only hard experimental evidence!***]. Semmelweis's practice earned widespread acceptance only years after his death, when Louis Pasteur confirmed the germ theory and Joseph Lister, acting on the French microbiologist's research, practiced and operated using hygienic methods." [335](#) <Emphases are mine.>

There's no special relationship between scientific prowess and objectivity. And even for those who do display admirable character, "*The best of men are men at best*"^a. That applies to scientists too.

Publication bias

Publication bias relates to preferential treatment of scientific documentation for publication.

"Publication bias occurs when results of published studies are systematically different from results of unpublished studies. The

^a We can indiscriminately replace 'men' here with 'women.'

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term ‘dissemination bias’ has also been recommended to describe all forms of biases in the research-dissemination process, including outcome-reporting bias, time-lag bias, gray-literature bias, full-publication bias, language bias, citation bias, and media-attention bias. We can measure publication bias by comparing the results of published and unpublished studies addressing the same question.”³³⁶

Bias against publication of negative or unpopular findings can have serious consequences, especially when findings relate to the public welfare — for example, in pharmaceutical research.

Publication of false or misleading findings

This is yet more serious than [Publication bias](#). As noted elsewhere in this book, *public* reports of scientific findings are often worldview-biased — *supposedly* in contrast to *professional* reports of such findings. However, the editor-in-chief of *The Lancet*,^a Richard Horton, reported the following

^a One of the world’s most prestigious medical journals.

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after returning from an April 2015 symposium on the reproducibility and reliability of biomedical research:

"The case against science is straightforward: *much of the scientific literature, perhaps half, may simply be untrue.* Afflicted by studies with small sample sizes, tiny effects, invalid exploratory analyses, and flagrant conflicts of interest, together with an obsession for pursuing fashionable trends of dubious importance, science has taken a turn towards darkness.

...The apparent endemicity of bad research behaviour is alarming. In their quest for telling a compelling story, *scientists too often sculpt data to fit their preferred theory of the world.*^a Or they retrofit hypotheses to fit their data."³³⁷ <Emphases are mine.>

We need to keep in perspective that Horton's report from the symposium leaves the other half of

^aMeaning *worldview*? If so, Horton's statement reinforces concerns expressed elsewhere in this book

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research conscientiously done and reported. *Hortons' findings by no means denigrate the fabulous contributions of science and scientists!* Nonetheless, his comments sharply qualify the assumed general objectivity of scientists.

Personal admissions of scientist bias

The following quotes from four agnostic/atheist scholars further illustrate subjectivity in the sciences^a:

Astronomer Robert Jastrow

Commenting on prominent scientists' subjective objections to **Big Bang cosmology**, agnostic Jastrow frankly noted:

"There is a strange ring of feeling and emotion in these reactions. They come from the heart, whereas you would expect judgments to come from the brain. Why? I think the answer is that scientists cannot bear the thought of a natural phenomenon which cannot be explained, even with unlimited time and money. There is a kind

^aExcerpts from these quotes appeared previously in [How about 'refusal to speculate' about big questions?](#) on page 307.

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of religion in science; it is the religion of a person who believes there is order and harmony in the universe. Everything can be explained in a rational way as the product of some previous event; every event must have its cause; there is no **First Cause**. Einstein wrote, 'The scientist is possessed by a sense of universal causation.' This religious faith of the scientist is violated by the discovery that the world had a beginning under conditions in which the laws of physics are not valid, and as a product of forces or circumstances we cannot discover. When that happens, the scientist has lost control. If he really examined the implications, he would be traumatized. As usual when faced with trauma, the mind reacts by ignoring the implications — in science this is known as 'refusing to speculate' — or trivializing the origin of the world by calling it the **Big Bang**, as if the universe were a firecracker." [138](#) <Emphasis is mine.>

The context of the quote above is a full chapter in Jastrow's *God and the Astronomers* book called "The Religion of Science".

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Science has changed since Jastrow published that statement in 1992, but the all-too-human attributes of *scientists* haven't.

Note in the next subsection that a biologist expresses a similar fear: that with the existence of a **First Cause** "...the regularities of nature may be ruptured."

Harvard evolutionary biologist Richard Lewontin

In his review of a Carl Sagan book, atheist Lewontin says the following:

"What seems absurd depends on one's prejudice. Carl Sagan accepts, as I do, the duality of light, which is at the same time **wave** and **particle**, but he thinks that the consubstantiality of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost puts the mystery of the Holy Trinity 'in deep trouble.' Two's company, but three's a crowd.

Our willingness to accept scientific claims that are against common sense^a is the key to an understanding of the real struggle between

^aJoel: Some such willingness is of course *essential* to science; science looks below the surface. However, Lewontin goes on to admit biases that subvert objectivity.

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science and the **supernatural**. We take the side of science *in spite* of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, *in spite* of its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, *in spite* of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our *a priori* adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door... To appeal to an omnipotent deity is to allow that at any moment the regularities of nature may be ruptured, that miracles may happen." [139](#)
<Emphases are in the original.>

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Though in the total context of Lewontin's article this quote is not quite as contrite as it sounds, I think its candor stands on its own merits.

Physicist Paul Davies

Popular author Davies, a materialist with a twist, also doesn't like a possibility 'that at any moment the regularities of nature may be ruptured, that miracles may happen':

*"As a scientist I don't **like** the idea of a god who will intervene from time to time in the workings of the universe. It seems to me that greatest evidence we have for some deeper meaning or purpose in the universe is the existence of natural laws that are capable of bringing the universe into being and life into being, without the need for miraculous intervention."*¹⁴⁰<Emphases are mine.>

In his writings he seems to avoid *personal* meaning to our existence as humans — which seems to me best tied to a *person*, yet he assigns *built in* meaning and purpose to the universe, almost as if the universe has some intrinsic personal charac-

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ter. Notwithstanding, I admire Davies's willingness even to think about such things:

"Over the years I have often asked my physicist colleagues why the laws of physics are what they are. The answers vary from 'that's not a scientific question' to 'nobody knows.' The favorite reply is, 'There is no reason they are what they are — they just are.' The idea that the laws exist reasonlessly is deeply anti-rational. After all, the very essence of a scientific explanation of some phenomenon is that the world is ordered logically and that there are reasons things are as they are."¹⁴¹

Though Davies does not like answers beyond the material, he's at least willing to ask big questions.

Philosopher of science Michael Ruse

In an article titled *How evolution became a religion: creationists correct?*, Ruse says:

"Evolution is promoted by its practitioners as more than mere science. Evolution is promulgated as an ideology, a secular religion — a full-fledged alternative to Christianity, with meaning and morality. I am an ardent evolu-

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tionist and an ex-Christian, but I must admit that in this one complaint — and Mr. Gish is but one of many to make it — the literalists are absolutely right. Evolution is a religion. This was true of evolution in the beginning, and it is true of evolution still today... Evolution therefore came into being as a kind of secular ideology, an explicit substitute for Christianity.”¹⁴²

In context — in the bulk of his article — Ruse in one sense rebukes his colleagues for that position, while affirming his high opinion of the science behind those views. (At times he contrasts some *inaccurate* views of Christianity.)

This was not a one-time outburst. In an address several years ago to the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, Ruse forthrightly referred to [macro]evolution as a kind of secular religion.

As a scientist myself, I understand scientist tendencies toward **reductionistic** thinking — trying to analyze every whole as the sum of its parts, reducing everything to *our* terms, *feeling the need to be able to explain everything*. However, I suggest that deep down we all know that we, our families, and our friends are

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much more than complex assemblies of body cells, neurons, chemicals, electrochemical impulses, atoms, **electrons**, **quarks**, and maybe **strings** — thrown together totally without purpose or meaning. But intellectual pride resists the **transcendent**.

Theistic belief is subjective?

First I deal here with *false* (pseudo) associations with theism, then acknowledge warranted and unwarranted subjective beliefs, and finally point to treatments in the rest of this book that argue for theism as substantially objective.

Pseudo-Christian subjectivity

Let's first dispense with the *false*, the **pseudo-Christian**. I acknowledge again that irrational and patently evil subjectivism has at times perversely *piggy-backed* on theism, *while inexcusably **contradicting** biblical Christian theistic principles* and causing outrageous behaviors — like the Inquisition and the witch hunts between 1480 and 1750 AD, which resulted in an estimated 40,000 to 60,000 executions, some torturous. [143](#)

However, consider that those falsely-associated and horrific events were **contradictory to biblical Chris-**

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tian teachings. By contrast consider the following millions of non-combatant deaths (numbers in parentheses) perpetrated or politically caused by individuals whose ideologies were **consistent with** teachings that resist a moral-law giver and deny intrinsic human worth beyond deterministic cause-and effect: Mao Ze-Dong (49 to 78 million), Adolf Hitler (12 million), Joseph Stalin (7 million), Pol Pot (1.7 million), Kim Il Sung of North Korea (1.6 million).¹⁴⁴

Christian subjectivity

Having exposed subjective sides of science and scientists, I'll likewise acknowledge degrees of *warranted* and *unwarranted* subjectivity in theism — **biblical Christian** theism being the primary focus of this book.

Warranted subjectivity

Some **Christ-follower** beliefs are *necessarily* subjective. If a personal **transcendent** God exists, then Christ-followers, and everybody else, cannot — per the definition of **transcendence** — understand everything that God understands.^a There-

^aOtherwise God wouldn't be **transcendent**, but just like us.

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fore, we *must* accept some things about the existence and nature of God by *faith*.

NOTE Also keep in mind that scientists sometimes accept mysteries and unexplained knowledge gaps by *faith*, assuming that science — a ‘science-of-the gaps’ — will ultimately explain everything.

Much of this book is analytically oriented to prospectively help analytically minded people. However, Christ’s admonition to accept him with the faith of a little child (e.g. Mark 10: 15) — a largely subjective act available for anyone — has resulted in great good, as supported in Alvin Schmidt’s book, *How Christianity Changed the World*¹⁴⁵ and demonstrated in some of this book’s [EVIDENCE](#).

Unwarranted subjectivity

I’ll also acknowledge *unwarranted* subjectivity. Most people, including many theists, aren’t naturally very analytical and sometimes uncritically accept ideas and too readily accept patterns of thinking that detract from truth. (Well, quite frankly, doesn’t *everyone* sometimes do that?

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Even the smartest humans can be astoundingly ingenious at rationalization and general self-deception. (Recall [Science is objective?](#)) Though some such thinking patterns are relatively harmless, others result in unattractive attitudes and problematic behaviors.

However, note that certain *culturally*-unattractive positions of Christian theists relate to legitimate truth commitments that simply run counter to cultural norms. These are non-negotiable. (So, seemingly, are cultural counter-positions.)

Christian objectivity

This [THINKING FURTHER](#) part of the book up to this point hopefully mitigates for you myths about theistic and Christian subjectivity, scientific objectivity, and theistic/scientific incompatibilities. The remaining chapters focus more proactively on the reasonableness of the **supernatural** in general and **biblical Christianity** in particular.

Supernatural = superstition?

Miracles are illogical and violate nature?

I included evidence for miracles in the [EVIDENCE](#). Here is a bit of supplementary thinking fodder.

Hume's anti-miracle argument: valid?

Some people categorically reject miracles supposedly purely on logical grounds. One of the most famous of such arguments follows.

Two centuries ago, skeptic David Hume posited his main argument against miracles, which I understand many folks still uncritically accept. Norman Geisler summarizes Hume's logic as follows: **131**

1. Natural law is by definition a description of a regular occurrence.
2. A miracle is by definition a rare occurrence.
3. The evidence for the regular is always greater than that for the rare.

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4. A wise man always bases his belief on the greater evidence.
5. Therefore, a wise man should never believe in miracles.

Firstly, Geisler points out, premise 3 is false. To show that it's false we need only one counterexample, and here are two: the following happened for sure and happened only once — the origin of our present universe and the origin of the first life. The evidence that these *rare* events have occurred is as solid as the evidence that any *regular* events have occurred. Secondly, Hume confuses believability with possibility. Thirdly, Hume confuses probability with evidence — which must be considered on its own merit, not relative to regularity.

John Earman, Professor of the History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Pittsburgh — and an agnostic — discusses the failure of Hume's argument against miracles in great detail. In his book *Hume's Abject Failure, The Argument Against Miracles* Earman analyzes Hume's argument extensively and summarizes his findings in Chapter 1 as follows:

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"Section X ('Of Miracles') of *Hume's Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* is a failure. In philosophy, where almost all ambitious projects are failures, this may seem a mild criticism. So to be blunt, I contend that 'Of Miracles' is an **abject failure**. It is not simply that Hume's essay does not achieve its goals, but that his goals are ambiguous and confused. Most of Hume's considerations are unoriginal, warmed over versions of arguments that are found in the writings of predecessors and contemporaries. And the parts of 'Of Miracles' that set Hume apart do not stand up to scrutiny. Worse still, the essay reveals the weakness and the poverty of Hume's own account of induction and probabilistic reasoning. And to cap it all off, the essay represents the kind of over-reaching that gives philosophy a bad name."
<Emphasis is mine.>

Miracles violate nature?

Hume and others have rejected miracles as *violations* of nature. Are they?

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Miracles TRANSCEND nature

I suggest that genuine miracles *transcend* (not violate) nature and so *transcend* the domain of our science; science has nothing legitimate to say about them. I posit that miracles are implemented through a dimensional and physical-law SUPERset that transcends the one-time-dimension, three-space-dimension, physical-law SUBset that defines the essence of our universe^a, start-

^aA ***very inadequate*** but maybe helpful parallel to SUPERset vs. SUBset of MULTIPLE laws is *general case vs. special case of ONE* law. For example, quantum mechanics is a more *general* case of ONE physical law/theory, and Newtonian physics is arguably a *special* case of the same. Quantum mechanics reduces to Newtonian mechanics for everyday objects — enormous assemblages of tiny particles that collectively behave with finite but negligible uncertainty. Certain events impossible in Newtonian mechanics, such as ‘tunneling’ through potential-energy barriers, are possible in quantum mechanics.

What if even quantum mechanics were a *special* case of a *yet MORE general* case with *yet MORE possibilities* that are 1) *inaccessible* within the normal constraints of our universe, but 2) *accessible* to an *initiator* and still-involved *overseer* of that universe? (Our space-time universe would NOT be a closed system to the physical law SUPERset of such an entity — whom, of course, I’d posit as God.)

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ing at the Big Bang. What is impossible through our limited SUBset of dimensions and physical laws might reasonably be possible through a much more general SUPERset of physical laws and dimensions, most elements of which are forever inaccessible to the internal operation of our universe — and to the scientists who examine it.

I posit that this SUPERset logically must have been available to a **transcendent** initiator of the Big Bang *before* our universe, including our time dimension, existed — who initiated the universe at some point in a second time or time-like dimension available only to the initiator.^a As such, though our universe may be 'closed' within our SUBset of physical laws and dimensionality, there's no reason to think it's closed to a **transcendent** Big Bang initiator possessing a SUPERset of physical laws and dimensionality. (See also [Supernatural in extra spacial dimensions?](#).)

Miracles MUST transcend natural understanding

Suppose you accept that God is the initiator of the universe and probably does have a SUPERset of laws

^aConsider also [Big Bang initiator?](#) and [Extra time dimensions and God?](#).

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and dimensionality with which to operate. But you struggle with the concept of his present-day involvement in human affairs. That's not an uncommon problem, especially in view of the horrible behaviors and events that we often read/hear about and sometimes experience personally. (See also [God? Then why this mess?!](#)) Logic does nothing for the *emotional* aspects of those concerns. Nonetheless:

- If you have a **deistic** predisposition, then perhaps you resist not what God *can* do but *does* do. I hope that the foregoing [EVIDENCE](#) has at least kindled questions about whether God only created the world and then walked away forever.
- For readers who accept the possibility/probability of a more involved God, IF...
 - ...he truly exists and is truly **transcendent**...
 - ...he created the universe and its laws...
 - ...he is logically more capable THAN those laws (just as engineers and programmers must be more capable THAN the truly 'dumb' computers they design and program¹³⁰)...
 - ...he was and is involved — if we behaviorally modern humans are not simply the product of

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chance and purely mechanistic cause and effect (consider [Just animals?](#) and [Just stuff?](#))...

- ...he *cares* for those whose true humanity came about through his direction...

...THEN how can we question the reasonableness of God implementing ANY actions that transcend the norm he established for our spacetime — within his **transcendent** and therefore superior (and substantially unknowable) perspectives?

The supernatural is irrational?

Some have answered the title question affirmatively, especially certain scientists and modern theologians who felt/feel that considerations of the **supernatural** insult their sophistication. But is that really legitimate?

Big Bang in the Bible?

Some imagined science vs. God conflicts stem from folks at one extreme interpreting the Bible as THE authority on all physical reality — as though it's a sci-

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ence textbook. By now you should realize that's not my position. That said, some concepts relatively new to physics appear interestingly old to the Bible. Am I contextually stretching the following ancient vs. modern comparisons? You decide.

Non-eternal universe?

Einstein's **general theory of relativity** is now extremely well established **338, 339** (except for systems so small that **quantum mechanics** must apply — though modern theoretical physics is actively trying to harmonize **general relativity** and **quantum mechanics**). Extensions of the theory by Ellis, Hawking, and Penrose showed that even our dimension of time had a **Big Bang** beginning. **339**

That's *recent* to science — which until the 20th century had posited an eternal universe, but now measures its age at ~13.8 billion years.

That's arguably *old* to the Bible: • “No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory *before time began*”. (1 Corinthians 2:7-8, NIV) • This grace was given us in Christ Jesus *before the beginning of time*,... (2

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Timothy 1:9b, NIV) •...in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised *before the beginning of time* (Titus 1:2, NIV). [Context of all these verses: God's **prescience**.]

Out of what time frame did our time begin?

Per an accepted version of the **Big Bang**, it initiated our dimension of time specifically and the universe generally from a **singularity** in an undefined 'Void'. This suggests — per the law of causation — that creation of our time dimension must have started at some point in a second time, time-like, or timeless dimension. (Refer to [Extra time dimensions and God?](#) on page 365.) Again, the concept of another timeless or time dimension is *new* to science but *old* to the Bible: "But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord *a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.*" (2 Peter 3:8, NIV) [Context: God's time frame for understanding and action, with implications that God knows the future.]

As noted in [Appendix B: No singularity, no initiator?](#), attempts to eliminate the need for a **singularity** at the

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start of our universe, via **quantum physics**, unsuccessfully eliminate such considerations.

A stretching universe?

The expanding nature of our universe — first derived mathematically by Georges LeMaitre in 1927 and observed by Edwin Hubble in 1929 — has been confirmed by multiple types of observations, including the existence of cosmic background radiation and virtually perfect observational-to-theoretical agreement of its temperature signature. But that the idea of cosmic expansion — stretching of the dimensions of the universe — may be biblically old. Moving to the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) for a bit, the context of each of the following NIV verse segments is God's *power*:

- "...stretches out the heavens...(Job 9:8); ...stretches out the heavens like a tent (Psalms 104:2); ...who created the heavens and stretched them out... (Isaiah 42:5); ...who alone stretched out the heavens... (Isaiah 44:24);... who stretched out the heavens... (Isaiah 51:13); ...who stretches out the heavens... (Zechariah 12:1)."

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The preceding verses use the 'Qal active participle' form of the Hebrew verb *natah*, which implies continual or ongoing stretching.³⁴⁰

- "My own hands stretched out the heavens (Isaiah 45:12); my right hand spread out the heavens... (Isaiah 48:13); ... stretched out the heavens by his understanding... (Jeremiah 10:12); and stretched out the heavens by his understanding (Jeremiah 51:15); ...who stretches out the heavens..." (Zechariah 12:1).

The preceding verses use the 'Qal perfect' form of *natah*, meaning that the stretching of the heavens was completed or finished some time ago.³⁴⁰

- "He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent." (Isaiah 40:22).

This verse uses both 'Qal' forms of *natah*, meaning that the heavens both have stretched out (past) and are continuing to stretch out (present and future)³⁴⁰ — consistent with known past and continuing cosmic expansion.

God's potential involvement in the *expansion* of the universe per these verses is consistent with argu-

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ments for God's role in *initiation* and *fine tuning* of the universe, as discussed in [God?](#).

More around than we perceive?

Consider a bit of pure thinking fodder.

Per considerations discussed in [Big Bang initiator?](#), I've argued that an uncaused **First Cause** can exist *beyond* our **spacetime**. Moreover [EVIDENCE](#) arguably shows **supernatural** activity *within* our **spacetime**. Is such activity inconsistent with what we presently know about our **spacetime**?

Even before the implications of dark matter, dark energy, and **quantum mechanics**, Einstein upset our perceptions of the world with his now strongly supported general theory of relativity — the latter of which views our space and time *integrally* as a **space-time fabric**. Is that fabric, even in the vacuum of space, truly empty? Many scientists today think not.

- Even my grad-school electricity and magnetism professor remarked decades back that, though physics had long ago tossed the hypothesis of 'aether', then why is the **characteristic impedance** of a vacuum finite and approximately the same as

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the **characteristic impedance** of air? What's doing the 'impeding'?

In fact, a new kind of 'aether' concept is now gaining acceptance. In *The Fabric of the Cosmos*, popular theoretical physicist Brian Greene discusses "discoveries that transformed the question [of whether our space is real]...by redefining the meaning of 'empty', envisioning that space is unavoidably suffused with what are called **quantum fields** and possibly a diffuse uniform energy called a cosmological constant— modern echoes of the old and discredited notion of a space-filling **aether**."³⁴¹

- But, more relevantly, what about the 'dark matter' in our universe, the estimated percentage of which (~27%) is over five times the estimated percentage of visible matter in all the stars, galaxies, stars, and planets. We presently know it exists only by its gravitational *effects*. Scientists pursue answers. Will we one day have an *empirical, falsifiable* materialistic explanation? Or could there be a whole dark-matter *world* that we'll never see or truly understand, interspersed with our light-matter world? (A *Discover* article asked that ques-

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tion.³⁴²) If so what — and maybe *who* — exists therein and what goes on?

- Further, what about scientifically serious considerations that extra dimensions might exist in our spacetime as well (see the next subsection)?

Can we cavalierly dismiss the possibility of yet *more* in the apparent emptiness of our universe that we're unaware of — including unknown entities? I suggest a need for *humility* in our thinking.

Again, these questions constitute *only thinking fodder!* But if we manage to eschew anti-supernatural bias, can the mysteries of our universe accommodate the possibility of normally-invisible (to us) intelligent entities — even extra-dimensional entities — operating in our universe? Might the thought experiment that follows justify further consideration of the *rationality* of *supernaturality*?

Supernatural in extra spacial dimensions?

Perhaps consideration of extra spacial dimensions (beyond the three that we experience) will make the **supernatural** seem a bit more plausible.

A Google search on “search for extra dimensions” showed that this topic is rather active. I recommend

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viewing Harvard physicist Lisa Randall's brief, popular-level online video³⁴⁴ as an introduction to the concept of extra dimensions.

Extra dimensions in our universe?

Substantially funded theoretical physics research posits the existence of *extra* spatial dimensions (six for **string theory** and seven for **M-theory**). Some scientists question the validity of string and M theories as only mathematical constructs without supporting experimental evidence — or without even the *possibility* of supporting experimental evidence, ever. However, experiments with the **Large Hadron Collider** (LHC) *could* eventually support the existence of extra dimensions for different reasons. CERN, the agency that runs the LHC, said that:

“Extra dimensions may sound like science fiction, but they could explain why gravity is so weak...One possibility is that we don't feel the full effect of gravity because part of it spreads to extra dimensions. Though it may sound like science fiction, if extra dimensions exist, they could explain why the universe is expanding faster than

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expected, and why gravity is weaker than the other forces of nature."³⁴⁵

CERN proposed high-energy **particle** experiments that could test for extra dimensions. As of this writing, I'm unaware of any LHC test evidence for extra dimensions. However, the LHC was shut down for a while for upgrades to enable even higher-energy experiments than heretofore possible. It reopened on 3/25/2016 (just two months before I completed this sentence). Stay tuned.

The main point of the 'what if' subsections that follow does not depend a) whether string and M theories are correct or b) whether extra dimensions correctly account for gravity as the weakest of the four fundamental forces. The main point is rather that...

- Many scientists consider possible extra dimensions **rational**, *NOT superstitious*.
- Therefore, I submit, mathematically-valid application of possible extra dimensions to reported supernatural events is **rational**,^a *NOT superstitious* — prejudices notwithstanding.

^aConfirmed via consultations with a PhD mathematical physicist.

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What capabilities might ACCESS to extra dimensions confer?

What if entities were to exist with *access* to extra spatial dimensions? What advantages might extra-D access confer to such entities?

Preliminary considerations

Consider the following:

1. For the sake of argument, let's assume that the following hypotheses/theories of some scientists are correct:
 - Our universe indeed *does* contain extra dimensions
 - At least some of those dimensions are large or even infinite, as some scientists consider — not exceedingly tiny, as others consider.
2. Let's further consider only *three* large extra dimensions (vs. six in string theory and seven in M theory) — enough for the purposes of the thought experiment that follows.

Cube-'being' thought experiment

348 Again, consider our universe having a total of

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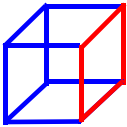
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six spacial dimensions — the three dimensions that we can access and three extra that we can't. Then consider a cube 'being' that, unlike us, **can** access all of those six dimensions. Let's call the cube 'Carrie'. [Figure 16](#) illustrates three things that Carrie can do that we can't:

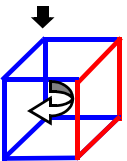
1. Disappear by accessing the hidden three extra dimensions — by rotating herself such that her three axes align with the axes of those extra dimensions.
2. In her extra-dimension-aligned state, pass through matter in our three dimensions as an infinitesimal point in our 3D material reference frame.
3. Reappear by rotating herself so as to align her three axes with our three axes.

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Figure 16 Axial rotation of Carrie the cube into three extra dimensions of space. (The reverse applies also.)



Carrie the cube as we see her normally in our 3D reference frame. I've colored one side red to facilitate visualizing what's happening in subsequent steps.



Carrie rotates such that one of her dimensions (shown in blue) aligns with dimension 4 — the first of three extra dimension that we don't have — thus making her depth dimension disappear.



Carrie is now just a rectangle in our 3D material reference frame.



Carrie again rotates such that another of her dimensions aligns with dimension 5 — the second of three extra dimensions that we don't have. What was once her width dimension disappears.



Carrie is now just a line in our 3D material reference frame.



Carrie again rotates such that the last of her dimensions aligns with dimension 6 — the third of three extra dimension that we don't have. Now her height dimension disappears.



Carrie is now just an infinitesimal point in our 3D material reference frame and can pass through physical objects in our world without interference.

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General applicability of this thought experiment

Though [Figure 16](#) illustrates the **transcendent** capabilities of a simple geometric shape (a cube) having access to three extra dimensions, those capabilities would apply to *any* 3D entity with access to three extra dimensions, no matter how complex — including a **transcendent** human body. (Not an oxymoron, as I'll argue later in the book.)

How might ACCESS to extra dimensions relate to supernatural claims?

Hopefully the following extension of the Carrie-the-cube thought experiment will help you to think 'outside the box' — if only to illustrate one reason why NOT to regard the supernatural as superstition. (*It does not, however, represent a theological position!*)

Preliminary considerations

1. Regardless of your belief/unbelief in the **super-**natural, can we agree that *by definition* any **transcendent** entity would have **superior** capacities? Otherwise it wouldn't be **transcendent**.
2. Let's assume (or agree, depending on your perspective at this point) a) that a **transcenden-**

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dent God exists, per the evidence in [EVIDENCE](#) and elsewhere in this book, and b) that this God initiated our universe, per the arguments in [God?](#). Then the following logic applies:

- a. The *transcendent* God who initiated the universe implicitly initiated every extra dimension that our universe contains.
- b. The initiator of extra dimensions must have access to those extra dimensions.
- c. Therefore the *transcendent* God has access to every extra dimension in our universe.

Implications of that extra-dimensional access

If the *transcendent* God has access to three extra dimensions of the universe, then this God has the same extra-dimensional capabilities as Carrie the cube, per the illustration in [Figure 16](#). Therefore,

- This God can simultaneously be invisible to us and fully in our presence, by keeping his axes aligned with the axes of the three unseen dimensions.
- This God, so aligned, can pass through physical objects in our material reference frame.

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- This God can make himself visible to us, and physically interactive with us, by rotating his dimensions into our 3D material reference frame such that his axes align with ours.

Consequently, the **transcendent** God could ostensibly visit humanity in human form, appear to and disappear from humans at will, and — when his axes are aligned with the three hidden extra dimensions — move unimpeded through physical objects in our 3D material reference frame.

Prospective implications of extra-D access for one ancient account that some might call 'superstition'

If a **transcendent** God, via access to extra dimensions, could visit us in human form, appear to and disappear from us at will, and move unimpeded through 3D material objects, might the sudden appearance of Christ in the following verses now make more sense?

- “On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, **with the doors locked** for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you!’” <My italics.> [John 20: 19]

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- “While they [the eleven apostles] were still talking about this [the resurrection], Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” [Luke 24: 36-39]

Could a **transcendent** Christ have a) initially aligned himself with three *hidden* extra dimensions, b) passed unhindered into the locked room as an infinitesimal point, c) appeared to the apostles by aligning with *our* dimensions, and then d) physically interacted with them?

Prospective implications of extra-D access for other ancient accounts that some might call 'superstition'

Again assume (or agree, depending on your perspective at this point) that a) a **transcendent** God exists, per the evidence in **EVIDENCE** etc., b) that this God initiated our universe, per the arguments in **God?**, and c) has access to three extra dimensions as discussed above. Then, I suggest, the

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existence of other beings with access to those three extra dimensions — if **created** by that same God — is not illogical. (I prefer to avoid the word ‘angels’ because of false connotations that have arisen in our culture,³⁴⁷ but that’s what I refer to.) If so, might the sudden appearance of ‘angels’ in the following ancient accounts now make sense as well?

- “There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone^a and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow.” [Matthew 28:2-3, NIV]
- “Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense.” [Luke 1:11, NIV]
- “Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up.” [Acts 12:7, NIV]

Contextually, all three ‘angels’ appeared out of nowhere, and two interacted physically. What if such

^aThere’s no reason to assume that ‘angel’ strength limits would necessarily correspond to ours.

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entities were *normally* aligned with *hidden* extra dimensions and thus invisible to humans, but in these events appeared to the observers by realigning themselves with *our* dimensions?

Prospective implications of extra-D access for modern accounts that some might call 'superstition'

Recall the accounts I summarize in [Help from...?](#). For example, recall how my friend Bud Thayer a) slid into a snowbank on a remote and deserted road section, with no way to call for help; b) was strangely approached by two big men who pushed his car back onto the road; c) rolled down his window and looked back to thank...nobody.

Could the two beefy 'men' have a) initially aligned themselves with three *hidden* extra dimensions, b) appeared to and physically helped Bud after aligning themselves with *our* dimensions, and then c) disappeared by realigning themselves with hidden extra dimensions?

Similar considerations apply to the disappearing tow truck and driver and the rip-tide rescuer — and optionally to the cops with guns and the white-out ski guides.

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And what about the "...too many of you..." who frightened away Indian attackers in [Whose army?](#)

In all such cases, of course, access to extra dimensions would need to include an ability of transcendent entities to align their 'stuff' — e.g. clothing, skies, car, truck, etc. — with extra dimensions.

Extra time dimensions and God?

Time (or, more accurately, the time dimension of *our spacetime*) is a bit mysterious when we try to analyze it. That said, considering an extra time dimension — say in the 'Void' from which our universe prospectively came — could at least *hypothetically* defog a few conundrums. (*NOTE: Again, what follows is again 'what if' thinking fodder, not theology!*)

Our time dimension

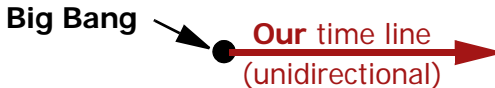
The *spacetime* theory of *general relativity* specifies that *our* dimension of time began at the start of the

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Big Bang. ³³⁹ [Figure 17](#) below represents this dimension of time.

Figure 17 Our time line



One reason *our* 'arrow' of time is *unidirectional* potentially relates to **entropy** considerations: as time increases (or, more correctly, as **spacetime** expands), the net **entropy** of our universe increases, presumably irreversibly: we can't go backward.

A second time dimension?

Would such limitations apply to a **transcendent** God? Consider the following logic:

1. If our time dimension *began* at the **Big Bang** — per the **spacetime** theory of **general relativity**, at what time did our time begin? Certainly not at a time on our time line! (You may need to read those two sentences again if they sound a bit like 'Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers...'). Answer: the **Big Bang** arguably had to start at some point on *another* time line (or time-like line)

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- in a different, *external* time dimension (or time-*like* dimension).
2. Given that our universe was not around at the **Big Bang**, it had to be initiated from *outside* our universe — prospectively in the '**Void**'.^a Therefore the **First Cause**'s extra time (or time-like) dimension is also prospectively in the '**Void**'.
 3. Further, if my arguments in [God?](#) on page 229 are correct, and God initiated the **Big Bang** from a second time dimension, he must have access to *our* single time dimension^b as well. He certainly can't initiate a time dimension for our universe that he can't access himself.
 4. If God is the uncaused **First Cause** — timeless by definition — then the extra time dimension from which he initiated the **Big Bang** must be infinite and bidirectional. We tend to think of our "arrow of time" as unidirectional, but the laws of physics do not *theoretically* so restrict even our dimension

^a...though some physicists hypothesize that universes can spawn others. But, if we wish to avoid an **infinite regress**, there must be some beginning to it all.

^bNOTE: A second time dimension that's intrinsically *part of* our universe might screw up *operation of* our universe. **350**

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of time. The unidirectionality of our time dimensions may relate to irreversibly increasing **entropy**. However, there's no reason to think that a non-entropic **First Cause**'s time dimension would be so-restricted. **351**

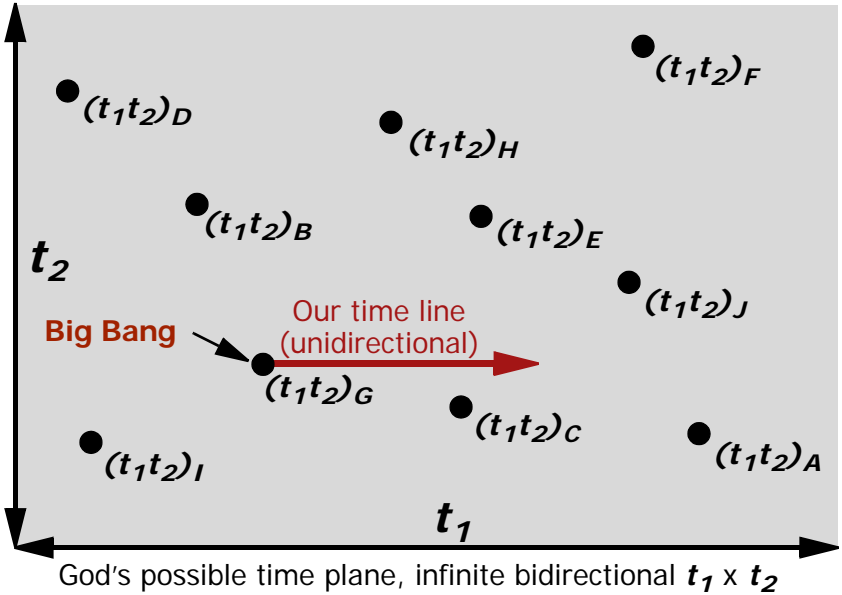
5. Similarly, there's no reason that the time dimension corresponding *our* time dimension — necessarily available *to* the **First Cause** — would be directionally limited *for* the uncaused **First Cause** either. The **First Cause** would not be constrained by unidirectionally-increasing **entropy** — a property of *our* finite spacetime.
6. Therefore, in view of *both* dimensions of time noted above, consider that the **First Cause** can operate on a *two*-time-dimension plane (or possibly even in more than two time dimensions or time-*like* dimensions). [Figure 18](#) illustrates this concept, where $(t_1, t_2)_A, (t_1, t_2)_B, \dots, (t_1, t_2)_I, (t_1, t_2)_J$ show points on a two-time-dimension plane, *randomly* 'visitable' by God. **352** The **A, B, C ... H, I, J** subscripts represent the alphabetical **sequence** of points observed by the **First Cause**. Note the observational flexibility. For example, observation **A** of **OUR** future could occur before

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observation D before the Big Bang — before our universe existed.

Figure 18 *One finite time dimension for us out of possibly two infinite dimensions for God?*



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Extra time dimensions and prayer?

Does prayer make sense?

Relating extra time dimensions and prayer is irrelevant if prayer doesn't make sense. Might the answers to prayer, such as in [EVIDENCE](#), support prayer sensibility? I address this question in some detail in [Talking to the wind?](#) on page 512.

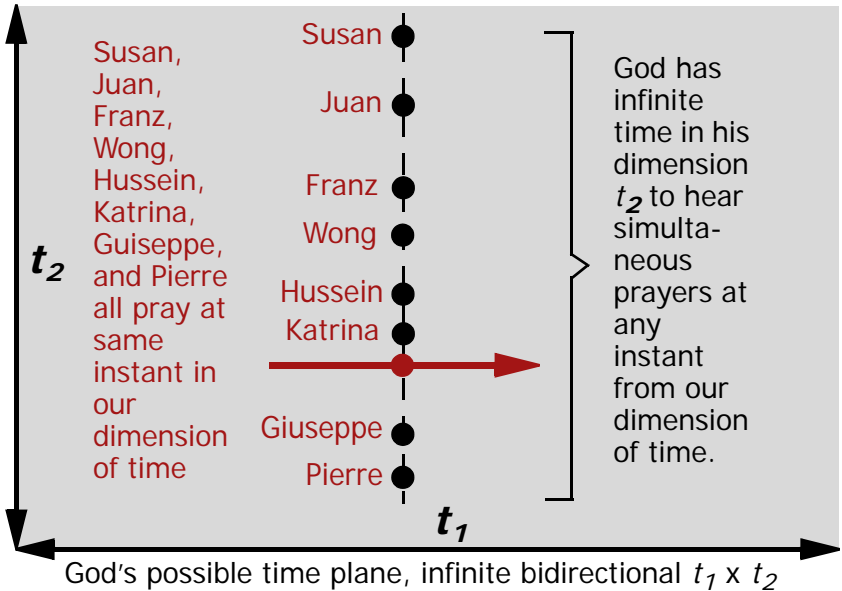
If prayer DOES make sense, then how could God hear millions of prayers simultaneously?

If God exists on an infinite 2D time plane, then he can 'go' to *any* t_1, t_2 coordinate. If he chooses to move along with our time arrow, then he has infinite t_2 time to hear infinite simultaneous prayers. See [Figure 19](#).^a

^aI recognize that even two dimensions of time might limit what God can do simultaneously — beyond just hearing simultaneous prayer. *Three* dimensions of time might substantially overcome such limitations. In his book *Beyond the Cosmos*, astronomer Hugh Ross speculates about the extended possibilities open to a God having *three* time/ time-like dimensions.³⁵³ There's no reason why God could not have more time dimensions than two. However, I have no [Big Bang](#) basis on which to argue for more than two.

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Figure 19 *God's way to hear simultaneous prayers?*



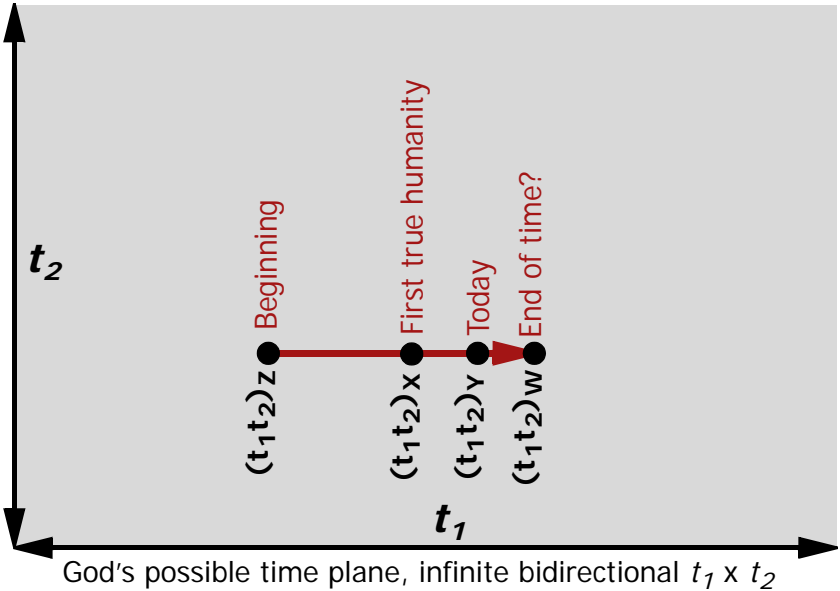
Extra time dimensions and foreknowledge?

Some mindsets dismiss **prescience** — in God himself or as revealed to his prophets. However, if God has a two dimensional, bidirectional time plane, then he can randomly 'go' to *any* t_1 , t_2 coordinate and can look ahead or backward to any point on our 1D time line. See [Figure 20](#).

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Figure 20 *God's means for involvement and knowledge at any time?*



Assuming events w , x , y , and z occur in alphabetical sequence, note that the diagram shows the concept of God 'visiting' *our* future $(t_1t_2)_w$ before today $(t_1t_2)_y$ and visiting *our* past $(t_1t_2)_z$ after visiting *our* future $(t_1t_2)_w$.

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To this point, much of the discussion has focused on God and the **supernatural** generally. However, the **EVIDENCE** and this book focus ultimately on **biblical Christianity**^a, and a few passages have already been quoted from its foundational reference: the Bible generally and the Christian scriptures (New Testament) specifically. Therefore, I'll narrow the discussion to briefly defend its validity.

The Bible is a roadblock for some people,^b sometimes because of what it *does* say but often because of what detractors *falsely claim* it says. Perhaps this chapter will help set the record straight on a few

^a...an important distinction I make frequently in this book, because some religions identify with the term 'Christianity' yet flatly dismiss or deny the spiritual and historical underpinnings defined by Christ and the early Church.

^bSee also [Prayer about BIBLES?! Many critical WORLD issues!!](#) on page 527.

issues — and perhaps create a bridge or two for honest skeptics

A few remarks about general reliability

So, is the Bible reliable? I address that issue in more detail for the New Testament in [New Testament is fundamentally unreliable?](#) But here are a few preliminary remarks about general Bible reliability.

As an analytical person, I cannot deny that a small percentage of the content is unclear to me (and possibly always will be) and some bothers me — as it appropriately should in certain cases, given my need for correction and discipline. But I consider it as God's fully adequate communication of what he wants us to know, regardless of his use of imperfect human agency to transmit that truth and regardless of some ambiguities that make it fall short of a perfect, verbatim email from him.

I reiterate the Blaise Pascal paraphrase quoted at the beginning of this book:

“God has given us evidence sufficiently clear to convince those with an open heart and mind, yet

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evidence sufficiently vague so as not to compel those whose hearts and minds are closed."

So much is abundantly clear to me that I'm not going to lose sleep over the parts that confuse or bother me. I think that the Bible, especially the New Testament, abundantly makes sense of the cause of, the solution to, and the destiny of the human condition — however unacceptable to our culture. I'll subsequently try to capture the sense of that — in non-religious, non-biblical terminology — in '[God? Then why this mess?!](#)'

Though the Bible isn't a book of science — and efforts to evaluate it that way are misguided — I share one tiny thing with some of the early scientific greats: they saw and I see most of the Bible as complementary to science; I suggest that all real truth is ultimately God's truth. I even suggest **prescience** in the Bible for 20th century discoveries (ref. [Big Bang in the Bible?](#)). I see truth as a unified whole, *not* separated into opposing camps (ref. [The supernatural is irrational?](#) on page 346) nor into what the late Stephen Jay Gould called "non-overlapping magisteria."

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General approaches to the Bible

At the risk of gross oversimplification, I suggest that most people who take the time to study the Bible tend to do it one of following *general* ways:

1. *Exegesis* (from the Greek for 'to lead out') — interpreting a text or portion of text by trying to understand what the author intended to communicate.
2. *Eisegesis* (from the Greek for 'into') — interpreting a text or portion of text in such a way that it introduces one's own presuppositions, agendas, and/or biases into and onto the text.

Which of these two approaches is most likely to arrive at truth (pleasant or unpleasant)?

Not all parts of the Bible are crystal clear — and evidence suggests that the text, while *inordinately* reliable relative to other ancient books, is not a verbatim dictation from God. However, I suggest that we can *legitimately* only do *exegesis*. We need to read it without bias, without unwarranted presuppositions — particularly in view of fallible human reasoning, as highlighted earlier in [Did the Enlightenment toss the baby with its bath water?](#)

Examples of eisegesis

However, eisegesis — which has been called “wishes becoming the father of the thoughts” — isn’t uncommon. Critics sometimes assess the Bible with eisegesis, seemingly not to sincerely *find* truth but rather to *avoid* truth they find unacceptable — particularly regarding the biblically-presented Christ. (E.g., see [Motivations for affirming myth?](#)) Three general examples:

All-or-nothing biblicism

Some critics demand that the text must meet unreasonable and unwarranted criteria...or else. This includes expectations that God would have somehow given us the New Testament through dictation — or as through e-mail, had it existed in ancient times; the Bible is expected virtually to be a verbatim transcript of God’s dictation. These critics cannot accept the idea of God communicating his truth by mentally influencing receptive, however imperfect, humans who communicate through normal human modes — through what one New Testament writer referred to as ‘jars of clay’ (symbolizing the ordinary):

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“But we have this treasure [the gospel] in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.” [2 Corinthians 4:7, NIV].

Sometimes, I suggest, this approach promotes BIB-Lianity over CHRISTianity — Bible-focus above Christ-focus. In extreme cases, perceived biblical imperfections can be psychologically catastrophic and result in a domino-effect loss of belief — or, frequently, *excuses* for Bible rejection. The phenomenon includes:

- Dissatisfaction with just *accurate* reporting of essentials and unwarranted insistence on modern Western standards of *precision* — ignoring *general ancient* standards of 'gist' reporting.
- Ignoring even our own *modern* experiences of reporting a given topic multiple times in slightly different ways and sometimes different degrees of detail to different audiences.

In the endnotes, I've discussed and rebutted an example of the second bulleted issue. ³⁵⁴ I'll cover the first bulleted issue later in [Unwarranted expectations](#).

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[Can we trust Bart Ehrman?](#) at the end of the chapter. exemplifies the consequences of such thinking. Popular agnostic Bart Ehrman's path to apostasy appears *partially* to have started from unmet, unreasonable, and unnecessary expectations of the New Testament. Some such critics nitpick about alleged discrepancies while ignoring or rejecting the clear and obvious.

Anti-canonical bias

This kind of eisegesis includes discounting or rejecting the Jesus that is described in the **canonical** New Testament accounts by...

- Ignoring that the New Testament books were written when at least some hostile sources with direct knowledge of the Christ and/or the earliest Church were still alive and could have debunked the accounts — but didn't.
- Ignoring that the oral tradition of the day — inconceivable to 'device'-oriented moderns — was effective in preserving informational integrity. Repetition by teachers helped to insure accurate memorization. And listeners with knowledge of the teaching could cross-check the teacher for

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error. *This was NOT AT ALL like the game of 'Telephone'!*

- At the same time *accepting and even promoting **substantially later non-canonical*** documents (including gnostic sources, such as the so-called Gospel of Thomas). These are generally agreed to have been written in the 2nd century or later after everyone with direct knowledge of Christ and/or the earliest Church would have been dead — thereby allowing distortions and myths to propagate unchallenged. Some members of the so-called 'Jesus Seminar' are notable for this bias. (See [Unwarranted biases](#).)

Confusing criticism with skepticism

New Testament scholar Craig Evans calls this problem 'misguided suspicions':

"By misguided suspicions I mean the unreasonable assumption that Jesus' contemporaries (that is, the first generation of his movement) were either incapable of remembering or uninterested in recalling accurately what Jesus said and did, and in passing it on. What we have here is a form of hypercriticism that is all too common in schol-

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arly circles and sometimes seems to arise from confusing criticism with skepticism—that is, thinking that the more skeptical the position, the more critical it is. Radical skepticism is no more critical than is credulity.”¹⁴⁹

Might ‘misguided suspicions’ sometimes stem from • ...intellectual pride? • ...presumed Gospel-author stupidity, similar to the scorn intelligentsia sometimes express for *modern* Christ-followers? • ...what psychologists call ‘projection’ — from presuming that the Gospel authors were as biased *as they are* (the critics)?^a

Might a once-skeptical scholar’s declaration that Gospel-author Luke “...should be placed along with the very greatest of historians” counter such presumptions? (See [Historicity of the book of Acts](#) and [Historicity of the Gospel of Luke](#)).

^a The late scholar CH Dodd might have concurred, per his comments supporting John A T Robinson’s early dating of the New Testament — in contrast to fellow liberals’ clearly biased late dating. See Dodd’s remarks about bias at the end of [New Testament written long after Christ’s death?](#)

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I'll not elaborate further. But if you're willing to read just one book dedicated to such issues, I recommend Craig Evans's *Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels* [148](#) — a partial antidote to critics' misrepresentations.

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Though admittedly not everything in the Bible is crystal clear, theologian RC Sproul puts the word 'contradictions' in perspective. He acknowledges divergencies — different biblical writers describing the same thing from different perspectives — but questions how many such divergencies are contradictory. Sproul notes that,

"It would be a serious overstatement to say that all discrepancies within the biblical text have been easily and satisfactorily resolved. There are serious discrepancies that have not yielded full and satisfactory resolutions. But these problems are few and far between."

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Unwarranted biases

Sproul once heard a seminary student assert that, “The Bible is full of contradictions.” Sproul challenged him to find 50 violations of the **Law of Noncontradiction** over the next 24 hours and discuss them the next day, at that same hour — a prospectively easy job if the Bible, a large book, truly were *full* of contradictions as stated. The student agreed.

After working long into the night, the student returned with only 30 contradictions — the most blatant he could find, even after using critical books that listed such contradictions.

Sproul says that the student “went through his list, one at a time, applying the test of formal logic to each alleged contradiction. We used syllogisms, the laws of immediate inference, truth tables, and even Venn diagrams to test for logical inconsistency and contradictions. In every single incident we proved objectively, not only to my satisfaction, but to his, that not a single violation of the law of contradiction^a was made.”

^aWhat I refer to in this book as **Law of Noncontradiction**.

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Sproul adds that, though some biblical discrepancies haven't yet been resolved, the list of such discrepancies diminishes with time as scholars' knowledge of language, text, and context increases. He says,

"There is less reason today [1978, when his book was first published] to believe that the Bible is full of contradictions than at any time in the history of the church. Prejudice and critical philosophical theories, however, die a very slow and hard death." [153](#)

Unwarranted expectations

We must evaluate a biblical text according to the criteria of reliability of *the era in which it was written*. We must not evaluate the validity of an ancient text according to modern standards of *precision*. Jonathan Morrow comments in his brief book *Are the Gospels Full of Contradictions?* that:

"As Craig Blomberg notes, people during that time *did not feel 'that a verbatim account of someone's speech was any more valuable or accurate than a reliable summary, paraphrase, or interpretation.'* They were concerned with accurately reporting what occurred. As New Testament historian Ben

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Witherington notes, 'The modern desire for precision must not be imposed on the ancient authors, who often, though not always, *preferred to write in a generalizing fashion.*'"¹⁵⁴ <Emphases are mine.>

An example for your consideration

Consider the differences between the following accounts obviously of the same event: Mark 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10. Are the differences OK in view of first-century communication standards?

- *Mark 8:5-13 account*

"5 When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. 6 'Lord,' he said, 'my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly.'

7 Jesus said to him, 'Shall I come and heal him?'

8 The centurion replied, 'Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. 9 For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and

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that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it.'

10 When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, 'Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. 11 I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. 12 But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth'

13 Then Jesus said to the centurion, 'Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would.' And his servant was healed at that very hour." [NIV]

- *Luke 7:1-10 account*

"When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. 2 There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. 3 The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. 4 When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, 'This man deserves to

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have you do this, 5 because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue.' 6 So Jesus went with them.

He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: 'Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. 7 That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. 8 For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it.'

9 When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, 'I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel.' 10 Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well." [NIV].

These accounts differ in three ways:

1. Apparently identical information is, in places, *expressed* somewhat differently in Matthew and Luke.

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2. Information appears in the Luke account that's not in the Matthew account, and vice versa.
3. Matthew states that (regarding Jesus) "... a centurion came to him, asking for help" whereas Luke states that "The centurion...sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant."

Let's look individually at these three issues.

1. Apparently identical information is, in places, expressed somewhat differently in Matthew and Luke

Some hypercritics might demand identical expression from two different authors. However, I trust you understand that, even in the modern world, different people express identical information differently — and even a single person often relates the same information somewhat differently on different occasions. We don't normally memorize *scripts* of what we know and/or observe and don't repeat it verbatim. Such criticism is invalid.

2. Information appears in the Luke account that's not in the Matthew account, and vice versa

Again, hypercritics have been known to assert occasionally that details in one account not in

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another indicate fabrication of the details. Yet we moderns express varying degrees of detail on different occasions all the time. Moreover, some folks (like myself) are 'detail' people and others are 'big picture' people. Hopefully an endnote³⁵⁴ convinces you of the silliness of criticizing varying degrees of detail.

3. In Matthew, the centurion comes himself; in Luke, the centurion sends Jewish elders

We can't dismiss this concern as easily. Is it truly a discrepancy that undermines the reliability of the New Testament? Does it fall outside even first-century 'gist-reporting' standards?

Scholars have addressed this concern variably. One author suggests that Matthew may have referred to the centurion — rather than to agents of the centurion — in accordance with his tendency to condense information. Another author suggests that Matthew may have referred to the centurion — rather than to *agents* of the centurion — in the same way that modern journalists may attribute statements to the US president,

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when in fact they were made by his *agents* (e.g. his press secretary).

Suppose, worst case, that a) the above suggestions are inadequate, b) Matthew didn't quite catch the detail that external agents (rather than the centurion directly) communicated with Jesus, and c) Matthew forwarded the information accordingly in his Gospel. Is that significant? Does it invalidate the overwhelming *essence* of what happened — present in *both* accounts?

1. The event took place in Capernaum
2. A centurion's servant was *very* seriously ill.
3. The centurion informed Christ of the problem.
4. Christ responded affirmatively concerning the need for healing.
5. The centurion expressed remarkable humility and faith, virtually in *identical* words in both accounts:

"I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But [just] say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under

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me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

6. Christ commended the centurion for his exemplary faith.
7. The servant ended up healed — *remotely* and *exceedingly* quickly; *far* too quickly for natural processes.

Does this account, as presented in both Matthew and Luke, accurately fulfill the standards of first-century 'gist reporting' — despite differing non-essential details about the 'how' of communications between the centurion and Christ?

You decide.

Marks of authenticity?

Moreover, I suggest that differences in expressing given information by different individuals, or by a single individual at different times, more likely reflect authenticity than verbatim repetitions — sometimes even in modern contexts. An attorney friend noted that, in his professional experience, precise repetition of an account is suspect; it's viewed as contrived

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and/or rehearsed. Ditto for several law-enforcement interviews that I've seen documented: too-detailed, too-precise answers are often viewed as contrived and/or rehearsed. Humans don't normally recount unrehearsed, unmemorized information precisely.

General comments

I certainly respect those who hold very high views of inerrancy. But even within less rigid views of inerrancy, history suggests that everything God *wanted* in the Bible *is in* the Bible, despite any attempts at corruption. Everything we *need* to know is there, and it accomplishes what God intends. It has led to many millions of positively transformed lives — sometimes *dramatically* transformed lives, as illustrated in [EVIDENCE](#) part of this book. Also see [Prayer about BIBLES?! Many critical WORLD issues!!](#) in a later chapter.

I caution against treating the Bible like an idol. Following the Bible should be subordinate to following *Christ*. The validity of the Bible doesn't fall to pieces when somebody finds an inconsequential inconsistency or even when a *very few* verses appear to have

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been slightly 'enhanced' in some later manuscripts. I return to this Pascal paraphrase:

"God has given us evidence sufficiently clear to convince those with an open heart and mind, yet evidence sufficiently vague so as not to compel those whose hearts and minds are closed." ²

God allows imperfection in every other area of life — in keeping, I suggest, with the substantially — *by no means entirely!* — hands-off-free-will policy unwisely chosen by the first humans (see [God? Then why this mess?!](#)). On that basis, it seems unreasonable to demand that the New Testament be like a sterile verbatim dictation from God to the world — however strongly we might prefer that.

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Admittedly we are aware mostly of the *natural*, not the **supernatural** in our lives. The latter doesn't usually stick out — though I suggest that it *sometimes* does, per experience and evidence. Does that mean **supernatural** = myth? Hopefully I've mitigated that notion in [The supernatural is irrational?](#).

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Motivations for affirming myth?

Some who *don't want* the New Testament to be true conveniently claim myths. Such a group today is the 'Jesus Seminar' — who in the '80s created genuineness criteria for Jesus's New Testament statements that were guaranteed to reject or marginalize the statements they disliked. Then they 'voted' for degrees of genuineness with different colored beads, not surprisingly discarding or denigrating the majority of statements. Though the 'Jesus Seminar' name is no longer used today by its present members, those individuals continue to subvert biblical belief.

Norman Geisler noted that,

"By their own admission their goal is to create a new 'fictive' Jesus (see [*Jesus Seminar*] *Forum*, Vol. 1, March (1985) which involves deconstructing the old picture of Jesus in the **Gospels** and reconstructing one that fits modern man."

This biased I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you^a agenda likewise came out in another quote:

^aExhibit B for I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you in [God? Then why this mess?!](#).

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"This new Christianity, says [founder Robert] Funk, would among other things...endorse 'protected recreational sex among consenting adults'."[158](#)

Does scientific sophistication affirm myth?

The idea is not new. Some modern theologians have emasculated the core teachings of the New Testament as myths — useful myths, perhaps, but of no historical significance.^a

Modern theologian Rudolf Bultmann took an antisupernaturalist position, writing in 1941 that "The world picture of the New Testament is a mythical world picture" and "We cannot use electric lights and radios and, in the event of illness, avail ourselves of modern medical and clinical means and at the same time believe in the spirit and wonder world of the New Testament."[160](#) In this *New Testament and Mythology* essay he effectively threw out the **supernatural**, which he assumes offends modern sophistication.

^aPart of that emasculation is broader, regarding human sinfulness and the need for salvation as insulting to sophisticated modern humans.

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Other modern theologians have tacitly or explicitly agreed.

Bultmann's mention of 'electric lights' and 'radio' in his statement is surprising. Even in 1941, a person of Bultmann's stature should have been enough aware of 'quantum weirdness' to be humbled in his assessment of how thoroughly science understands reality. Despite varied unsuccessful attempts to phenomenologically explain quantum behavior well before Bultmann's publication date, scientists didn't know and still don't truly know what happens conceptually — even though they can fabulously create and solve useful and reliable equations. (According to at least one of the quantum mechanics publications I've read, some less conceptually-oriented theoreticians have reportedly said, at least in effect, 'Shut up and compute!'.) Disparate hypothesis have been posited, most seemingly related to wave superposition and wave-function collapse. However, to my knowledge, none have fully resolved the conceptual questions.

I will not address such assertions of Bultmann and his successors here. I've already addressed them implicitly and explicitly in ["The supernatural is irrational?"](#)

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starting on page 346 and implicitly in previous sections. Satisfactorily? You decide.

Ancient pagan parallels: biblical miracles = myth?

I argue NO: parallels in ancient pagan miracle account do **not** disqualify biblical miracles as real. Bultmann and others, having seen pagan-miracle-story parallels with biblical-miracle accounts, summarily dismissed them *all* as myths — thereby throwing out the proverbial baby with its bathwater. There of course **MUST** be some common reporting elements in ALL miracle accounts. However, despite parallels, the New Testament miracle accounts typically differ in critical ways from pagan miracle accounts.

“There are aspects of Jesus' mighty deeds that are dissimilar to those attributed to various contemporary exorcists and healers, both among the Jewish people of Jesus' time and among Christians and non-Jews a generation or two later. In other words, if the New Testament Gospel stories reflected invented tales, we should expect them to reflect what people usually experienced. But

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this is not the case. For example, unlike a few well-known exorcists and healers in the approximate time of Jesus, Jesus does not pray and ask for healing or make use of paraphernalia to cast out unclean spirits."¹⁵⁰ I highlight some further differences in [Table 4](#)

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Table 4 Differences between New Testament-claimed miracles and some pagan-claimed miracles

Christ	Pagans
Universally for compassion, to encourage faith, or to meet situational needs.	Sometimes for selfish gain or power. ¹⁶²
Most accounts show "'matter-of-fact restraint' vs. amplification" ¹⁶¹	Includes claims such as changing to animal forms, flying (no jetpacks!), love magic, a 57 year nap, golden thighs. ¹⁶³
Miracles never tied to specific places.	Some miracles tied to special shrines/temples. ¹⁶⁴
Christ unfeared and often sought. ^a	People often <i>feared</i> magicians as malevolent evildoers ¹⁶⁵
Miracles are "...an intrinsic part of his proclamation of the kingdom (or rule) of God. The mighty deeds and the proclamation must go together; neither can be understood without the other." ¹⁵¹	Not applicable to any.

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Table 4 (Continuation) Differences between New Testament-claimed miracles and some pagan-claimed miracles

Christ	Pagans
Miracles "...viewed by Jesus and others as fulfillment of prophetic Scripture. His miracles were in step with what was expected of God's Messiah." 152	Not applicable to any.
"Nowhere else do we find a charismatic miracle worker whose miraculous deeds are meant to be the end of an old world and the beginning of a new one." 168	Not applicable to any.

^a In extrabiblical literature, hostile Jews unsurprisingly accused Christ of being a sorcerer — so from *their* viewpoint he was an evildoer. [203](#) However, that wasn't the typical public response. Moreover, such remarks, though derogatory about the *source* of Christ's *supernatural* power, *independently confirm that he displayed it.*

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Moreover, some ancient *post*-biblical miracle accounts, however fallacious, unsurprisingly *emulate* biblical accounts — just as some non-**canonical** 2nd-century gnostic writings borrow from **canonical** 1st-century New Testament writings. As noted before, 2nd-century gnostic writings occurred long after witnesses of New Testament events were alive to confirm or rebut such accounts.

In scholar Craig Keener's comprehensive book, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*, he has extensively discussed the uniqueness and validity of Christ's miracles. Based on his research, he concludes that, despite Western culturally-conditioned doubts against the **supernatural**,

“...most scholars publishing historical research about Jesus today grant that Jesus was a miracle worker, regardless of their varying philosophic assumptions about divine activity in miracle claims.” [166](#)

Modern parallels: biblical miracles = real?

I argue YES: **modern** miracle accounts **affirm** the genuineness of New Testament miracles. Medically-

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attested miracles of healings today strongly parallel New Testament healing miracles (today's *physical* absence of Christ aside) and put myth assertions to the lie. In [Miracles impossible?](#) I provided three medically-attested miracles — as well as three others without medical attestation, but from reliable individuals. I submit that these are only a proverbial drop in the bucket relative to the actual number that could be reported, were I to know of *and* have access to the information. If God does miracles today, there's every reason to think he did 2000 years ago.

OLD-Testament myths?

My comments in this subsection focus almost exclusively on the New Testament. However, though the New Testament is primary for Christian theism, it by no means discards the so-called Old Testament (Jewish scriptures).

I'm in no position to generally address issues that a reader might have about the Old Testament — which in any case have been addressed extensively elsewhere. However, I can make one thing clear. In our technological age/information age, when we rely on

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and can access enormous amounts of data with the click of a mouse or tap of a finger — or even from a traditional printed book — we can't comprehend the idea of oral tradition. But ancients relied on it. Some rabbis were famous for *memorizing* large sections of the Old Testament. Knowledge was refreshed by retelling to groups and was checked for errors then by others who also had memorized the information. In that way, information could reliably be passed orally through generations. Further, when written documents were copied, the copies were scrupulously checked for errors by others.

As I'll remind you again later, *oral tradition is **not at all** like the game of 'telephone'!*

Similar considerations apply as well to the New Testament oral tradition.

For discussions of Old Testament reliability, consider McDowell's *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*.[157](#)

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New Testament is fundamentally unreliable?

Let's look at the *undergirding* reliability of the New Testament documents.

New Testament written long after Christ's death?

Ironically, while accepting much later gnostic writings, some people claim that the New Testament was written so long after the events as to be unreliable.

However, most scholars today, even many liberal scholars, agree that the New Testament was completed before the end of the first century — *when surviving witnesses could have rebutted it and didn't*. The lack of verbiage about Jerusalem's 70 AD destruction anywhere in the New Testament (except for a few nonspecific *prophecies* of coming destruction) supports early authorship. This fact was not lost on John A T Robinson, who shocked his fellow *liberals* in 1976 by publishing *Redating the New Testament*, declaring:

“One of the oddest facts about the New Testament is that what on any showing would appear to be the

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single most datable and climactic event of the period - the fall of Jerusalem in ad 70, and with it the collapse of institutional Judaism based on the temple - is never once mentioned as a past fact."¹⁴⁶

Moreover, in an appendix to his book, Robinson published a letter from scholar C H Dodd, who notes that...

"You are certainly justified in questioning the whole structure of the accepted 'critical' chronology of the NT writings, which avoids putting anything earlier than 70, so that none of them are available for anything like first-generation testimony. I should agree with you that much of this late dating is quite arbitrary, even wanton, the offspring not of any argument that can be presented, but rather of the critic's prejudice that if he appears to assent to the traditional position of the early church he will be thought no better than a stick-in-the-mud."¹⁴⁷

Further,

"Even the most critical scholars date 1Corinthians at A.D. 55-56. This places written testimony about the death and resurrection [of Christ] (1Cor. 15:1-6) [I'd add vs. 7-8] only 22-23 years after the event."¹⁵⁵

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Other ancient docs valid? New Testament not?

“The evidence for our New Testament writings is ever so much greater than the evidence for many writings of classical authors, the authenticity of which no one dreams of questioning. And if the New Testament were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond all doubt.”¹⁷⁷

Consider the following:

- **Dating of oldest ancient manuscripts** relative to when the originals were written?¹⁵⁵
 - The New Testament — 25 to 150 years
 - Other key ancient books — About 1000 years average: Homer 500, Demosthenes 1400, Herodotus 1400, Plato 1200, Tacitus 1000, Caesar 1000, and Pliny 750.
- **Number of ancient manuscripts?**¹⁵⁵
 - New Testament — 5686 handwritten Greek manuscripts^a

^aThe 5686 number — referenced here and elsewhere in this subsection — does not include 19,000+ manuscripts in languages other than Greek.

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- Other key ancient books — Maximum of 643 and typically 20 or fewer: Homer 643, Demosthenes 200, Herodotus 8, Plato 7, Tacitus 20, Caesar 10, and Pliny 7.
- **Accuracy of copying?** (determined by comparison of manuscript copies) The overall consistency is *very good*, as clarified and elaborated below.
 1. Let's first dispense with some serious misunderstandings.¹⁵⁵ The *total* number of claimed manuscript 'errors' today (200,000) seems huge but is *very* misleading.
 - The overwhelming majority of errors are trivial. They're mostly variant readings — mostly grammatical copy errors (e.g. punctuation and spelling errors).
 - Secondly, as noted previously, the sheer number of **extant** New Testament manuscripts dwarfs the **extant** manuscript counts for all other ancient documents. The 200,000 'errors' are spread over 5686 documents, "...so that a variant spelling of one letter of one word in one verse in 2,000 manuscripts is counted as 2,000 'errors.'"

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2. Very few of these variants are significant and *none* have doctrinal consequence.
3. Even back in the late 19th century, when we had fewer manuscripts, and therefore fewer 'errors', Protestant theologian and Church historian Philip Schaff noted that:

"Only about 400 of the 100,000 or 150,000 variations materially affect the sense [400/100,000 = 0.4%]. Of these not more than about fifty are really important for some reason or other [50/100,000 = 0.05%]; and even of these fifty not one affects an article of faith or precept of duty which is not abundantly sustained by other and undoubted passages, or by the whole tenor of Scripture teaching." [179](#)

4. The late scholar Bruce Metzger, considered by some as the greatest New Testament textual critic of the 20th century, confirmed the inconsequentiality of the few significant variants in an interview: [31](#)

Interviewer: "'How many doctrines of the church are in jeopardy because of variants?'"

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Metzger — "'I don't know of any doctrine that is in jeopardy,' he responded confidently."

Interviewer — "'None?'"

Metzger — "'None,' he repeated. 'Now, the Jehovah's Witnesses come to our door and say, 'Your Bible is wrong in the King James Version of 1 John 5: 7-8, where it talks about "the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." They'll say, 'That's not in the earliest manuscripts.

And that's true enough. *I think that these words are found in only about seven or eight copies, all from the fifteenth or sixteenth century. I acknowledge that is not part of what the author of I John was inspired to write.*

But that does not dislodge the firmly witnessed testimony of the Bible to the doctrine of the Trinity. At the baptism of Jesus, the Father speaks, his beloved Son is bap-

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tized, and the Holy Spirit descends on him. At the ending of 2 Corinthians Paul says, 'May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.' There are many places where the Trinity is represented."

Interviewer — "'So the variations, when they occur, tend to be minor rather than substantive?'"

Metzger — "'Yes, yes, that's correct, and scholars work very carefully to try to resolve them by getting back to the original meaning. *The more significant variations do not overthrow any doctrine of the church.* Any good Bible will have notes that will alert the reader to variant readings of any consequence. But again, *these are rare.*'"

<Emphases are mine.>

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Authors fabricated stories about beloved leader?

There was a substantial cost for the authors' positions — perhaps a bit analogous to the costs some Muslims often must pay when they become Christ-followers. (Recall [Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?](#).) Early Christ-followers' proclamations ran counter to what they had grown up with and made them outcasts to many in the Jewish populace (consider the crowds' rejection of the extraordinary Jew whom the apostles followed — Christ — and what they did to him).

Except for John, all New Testament authors — some of whom were eyewitnesses to Christ's life — died for their proclamations, some by torturous means.¹⁹¹ Even the apostle and author John may have survived an attempted horrific murder but definitely suffered exile. If what these men wrote was knowingly false, then all or some would likely have recanted at some point under duress. But none did.

- Some people may die to save others, as military accounts testify.

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- Some people die for a cause they believe is true.
- Some people die for ultimately selfish beliefs, such as Islamic jihadists who kill others and willingly die themselves to gain supposed guarantees of heaven, purportedly including abundant celestial pleasures of a sexual nature.
- However, it's unlikely that anyone would die for a known lie. People may die for convictions but not for concoctions.

A transformed Chuck Colson, of Watergate cover-up infamy, made a similar point about the likelihood of apostles inventing the resurrection — perhaps the most astounding and most resisted account in the New Testament:

“Consider that we were political zealots, among the most powerful men in the world. With all that at stake and with all our power, you would expect us to be capable of maintaining a lie to protect the president. But we weren't...and we couldn't keep a lie for more than three weeks.

What does this twentieth-century fiasco tell us about the first century? One of the most common arguments against Christianity is a conspiracy theory. Critics often try to explain the empty tomb

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by saying the disciples lied—that they stole Jesus body and conspired together to pretend he had risen...But how plausible is this theory? To support it, you would have to be ready to believe that over the next fifty years the apostles were willing to be ostracized, beaten, persecuted, and (all but one of them) suffer a martyr's death without ever renouncing their conviction that they had seen Jesus bodily resurrected. Does anyone really think they could have maintained a lie all that time?...No, someone would have cracked, just as we did so easily in Watergate...But these men had come face-to-face with the living God. They could not deny what they had seen."¹⁹²

Moreover, the New Testament writers sometimes reported embarrassing, unfavorable information — sometimes about themselves — that liars hardly would have included. For example, the prominence given to the resurrection testimony of women was unheard of in that culture, which considered women unreliable witnesses.^a Moreover, the first person to report Christ's resurrection, was not just any woman

^aIn fact, the honor given to women by **Christ-followers** generally *countered* that day's culture.¹⁹³

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but Mary Magdalene — meaning “Mary from Magdala” — a city with a reputation for prostitution. (That information, in association with other passages in the New Testament, has led some scholars to think that Mary Magdalene may once have been a prostitute.) To highlight *her* testimony in the **Gospels** showed political foolishness — unless the authors committed to the truth, regardless of the fallout.

Further, mention of Peter’s failures and gaffes, Paul’s struggles, the two sons of Zebedee’s selfish request, and the recorded instances of apostle dim-wittedness, cowardice, doubting, etc. hardly sound like the fabrications of liars promoting the cause of Christianity.

New Testament is unhistorical?

Though the historicity question relates to other parts of this chapter, it has a slightly different flavor here.

I’ll consider only one New Testament writer, the physician Luke, because his writings transmit a high percentage of the New Testament message and because his historicity has been declared exemplary.

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Historicity of the book of Acts

About Luke's book of Acts, Roman historian A.N. Sherwin-White notes that...

"For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming...any attempt to reject its basic historicity even in matters of detail must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted."¹⁹⁴

Historian Colin Hemer...

"...identifies 84 facts in the last 16 Chapters of Acts that have been confirmed by historical and archaeological research."¹⁹⁵

Moreover, eminent archeologist and New Testament scholar William M. Ramsay¹⁹⁶ noted the following about his early examinations of Acts:

"I may fairly claim to have entered on this investigation without any prejudice in favour of the conclusion which I shall now attempt to justify to the reader. On the contrary, I began with a mind unfavourable to it...but more recently I found myself often brought in contact with the book of Acts as an authority for the topography, antiquities, and society of Asia

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Minor. It was gradually borne in upon me that in various details the **narrative** showed marvellous truth."
<Emphases are mine.> [197](#)

And in a later book, in which Ramsay also examined *Luke's Gospel* — about which he was initially challenged but ultimately satisfied regarding the historicity of a passage about the governorship of Quirinius at the time of Christ's birth — he says this:

"In two books already mentioned^a the result of some years of study were stated; the opinions in the first are much less developed than in the second. In the former it is maintained that the Acts may justly be quoted as a trustworthy historical authority. In the latter the purpose is to show that Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy; he is possessed of the true historic sense; he fixes his mind on the idea and plan that rules in the evolution of history; and proportions the scale of his treatment to the importance of each incident. He seizes the important and critical events and shows their true nature

^a*The Church In the Roman Empire before A.D. 170* (1892) and *St. Paul the Traveller* (1894). Ramsay wrote both.

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at greater length, while he touches lightly or omits entirely much that was valueless for his purpose. In short, *this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians.*"¹⁹⁸ <Emphasis mine.>

Historicity of the Gospel of Luke

Luke also authored the **Gospel** of Luke. It seems reasonable to assume that if Dr. Luke took the necessary pains to be historical in Acts, he likewise took pains to be historical in his **Gospel narrative**. In fact, per William Ramsay's initial but ultimately resolved concerns about a passage in Luke's **Gospel**, I think he would agree:

"If an author can be guilty of such perversion of history as has been attributed [by others] to the writer of Luke II 1-3 he cannot deserve the rank and name of a historian....Bad history and good history cannot come from the same author. No rest was possible until I had reached some definite conclusion about the **Gospel** as well as the Acts...We cannot, however, be content with any such conditional correctness as Dr. Plummer argues for. In this matter either Luke is correct, or he is untrustworthy...It is all or nought."¹⁹⁹

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But Ramsay ultimately concluded that,

“Discovery confirms the correctness of all the facts that Luke mentions regarding the census and its manner and its date.”[200](#)

Again, it seems reasonable to assume that if Luke took the necessary pains to be historical in Acts, he likewise took pains to be historical in his **Gospel narrative**. Indeed, having overcome a key concern about Luke’s **Gospel**, Ramsey seems to have restored confidence that, as quoted in the previous subsection, “...this author [Luke] should be placed along with the very greatest of historians.”

I suggest that the foregoing supports Dr. Luke’s following claims of authenticity:

“Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they *were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses* and servants of the word. With this in mind, since *I myself have **carefully investigated** everything from the beginning*, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so

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that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught." <Emphases are mine.>
[Luke 1:1-4, NIV]

Extra-biblical confirmations

Note that *extra*-biblical, non-Christian ancient sources confirm some biblical statements about Christ and the early Church — despite the bafflement and/or hostility of these sources in most cases. Here are a few examples:

Pliny the Younger

Pliny the Younger was governor of Bithynia-Pontus (now part of Turkey) at the time of the letter below — about 112 AD²⁰¹. His 96th letter of book 10 (he collected his letters) asks the Roman emperor Trajan for counsel on dealing with Christians, whose private gatherings and refusal to worship the standard Roman gods and the emperor were considered civil offenses.

"To the Emperor Trajan"

"...the method I have observed towards those who have been denounced to me as Christians

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is this: I interrogated them whether they were Christians; if they confessed it I repeated the question twice again, adding the threat of capital punishment; if they still persevered, I ordered them to be executed...There were others also possessed with the same infatuation, but being citizens of Rome I directed them to be carried thither. [Roman citizens had to be tried by the emperor.]

...Those who denied they were, or had ever been, Christians, who repeated after me an invocation to the Gods, and offered adoration, with wine and frankincense, to your image, which I had ordered to be brought for that purpose, together with those of the Gods, and who finally cursed Christ — *none of which acts, it is said, those who are really Christians can be forced into performing...*

They affirmed, however, the whole of their guilt, or their error, was, that they were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn **to Christ, as to a god**, and

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bound themselves by a *solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up*; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble to partake of food — but food of an ordinary and innocent kind [in contrast to false rumors that their communion involved ritual murder and drinking of the victim's blood].... I judged it so much the more necessary to extract the real truth, with the assistance of torture, from *two female slaves, who were styled deaconesses*: but I could discover nothing more than depraved and excessive superstition."²⁰² <Emphases are mine.>

We can discern the following from this letter:

- Christ-followers (*early* Christ-followers): Pliny wrote in **112 AD** that Christ followers *considered Christ God* — "...they sang a hymn... **to Christ, as to a god**..." — negating false claims that Christ's divinity was an invention that appeared much later (cf. [Da Vinci Code deceit #1.](#))

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- Some who had once identified as Christians (and perhaps never were) or falsely accused of such indeed capitulated to Roman demands. However, Pliny correctly assessed that true Christians would not capitulate, despite the death penalty, and many died. This is not stubbornness. Several New Testament admonitions urge Christ-followers to routinely submit to civil authority, for the sake of peace and order. But when such authorities require denial of God's authority, then Christ-followers have no choice but to disobey.

We have abundant examples in modern times of similar steadfastness against compromise, despite persecution and death threats. Recall, for example, [Christ-followers show love to their torturers](#) and [The cost](#). As I write this sentence in June 2016, Open Doors estimates that an average of 322 Christ-followers die for their faith every month.⁴¹⁹ Are Christ-followers nuts, or is something special going on?

- The Christians exhibited exemplary behavior (see also [Lucian](#)), which was uncharacteristic of the times and apparently misunderstood

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and resented, doubtless contributing to the persecution.

- Pliny verified, by torture, that nothing was wrong with the Christians other than meeting holding to beliefs intolerable to the Romans (as well as losses of emperor worship, refusal to bow to Roman gods, loss of temple attendance and sales of animals for sacrifice — the latter two implied in parts of Pliny's letter I've not quoted, for brevity).
- That female slaves served as deaconesses — whom Pliny tortured for information — verifies the uncharacteristically high regard for women and relative equality of those in the Christian community.¹⁹³

Talmud

In the Jewish Talmud, 'Sanhedrin 43a' notes that:

"On the eve of the Passover Yeshu was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, 'He is going forth to be stoned because he has **practised sorcery** and enticed Israel to apostasy.'²⁰³ <Emphases are mine.>

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This statement seems obviously to reference Christ, given the name “Yeshu” (the modern Hebrew equivalent to Jesus), to execution on the day before the Passover as recorded in the New Testament, the claims of sorcery — manifestations of **supernatural** power, and the implicit assumption of misleading teaching (from a Jewish perspective). Thus even an apparently hostile source maintains that Christ was involved in *manifestations of supernatural power* — albeit assuming an evil source, not God. (Consistent with hostile Jewish statements in the New Testament accusing Christ of demon possession or devil empowerment in Matthew 12:24, Mark 3:22, and Luke 11:16.)

Though the New Testament does not explicitly note the “40 days” of anticipation of Christ’s execution, it’s consistent with Jewish practice and earlier recorded threats.²⁰⁴ Quotes below are from the NIV:

- “John 8:58-59 — “Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!” At this, they picked up stones to stone him,

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but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds."

- John 10:31-33 — "Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, 'I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?' 'We are not stoning you for any good work,' they replied, 'but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.'"
- John 10:39 — "Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp."

The phrase "...to be stoned..." reflects the *intended* (Jewish traditional) method of execution, confirmed in the verses above. The Talmud statement "...Yeshu was hanged..." reflects the *actual* method of execution. Note also that the New Testament also uses 'hanged' (as well as 'crucified') at places to describe the execution of Christ (Greek *kremamenos* in Galatians 3:13) and the criminals hanging on either side of him (*kremastheton* in Luke 23:39), executed by the same

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method — apparently *hanging* on a cross: from nails, vs. by the neck.

Lucian

The Greek satirist Lucian, who wrote the following as ridicule around 169 AD, inadvertently compliments Christian character:

“The Christians, you know, worship a *man* to this day [understandable from Lucian’s perspective] — the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account...You see, these misguided creatures start with the general conviction that they are immortal for all time, which explains the contempt of death and voluntary self-devotion which are so common among them; and then it was impressed on them by their original lawgiver that they are all brothers, from the moment that they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the crucified sage, and live after his laws. All this they take quite on trust, with the result that they despise all worldly goods alike, regarding them merely as common property.”[205](#)

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Again...

- We have confirmation that the early Christians considered Christ to be God — negating false claims that Christ's divinity was a much later invention. (Cf. [Da Vinci Code deceit #1](#)).
- We see evidence of exemplary behavior in response to the teachings of Christ (however foolish such behavior may have seemed to Lucian). The last sentence confirms early-Church Christ-followers unselfishly sharing things in common, as reported in Acts 4:32-37.

Dan Brown corrects history?

Author Dan Brown has not been the first and will not be the last to invoke second-century gnostic writings and other distortions purportedly to 'correct' Christian doctrine. However, because of the enormous popularity and influence of his *Da Vinci Code* book and movie, I'll comment here on his deceptions.

The *Da Vinci Code* claims to repudiate the objectivity and factuality of orthodox Christianity. Though author Brown does this in a novel, he has publicly asserted

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that the historical claims of the novel are factual. That's the deception — and he has deceived many. Brown relied on counter-factual claims as well as gnostic writings written in the 3rd century, well after the New Testament was finished and after all eyewitnesses were dead — making writings of that period susceptible to myth.

I'll expose just a couple of key *Da Vinci Code* lies. An abundance of books expose more.

Da Vinci Code deceit #1

Brown's book

"My dear," Teabing declared, "until *that* moment in history [The Council of Nicea], Jesus was viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet... a great and powerful man, but a *man* nonetheless. A mortal."

"Not the Son of God?"

"Right," Teabing said. "Jesus' establishment as 'the Son of God' was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicea."

"Hold on. You're saying Jesus' divinity was the result of a *vote*?"

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"A relatively close vote at that," Teabing added. [169](#)

<Emphases are Brown's.>

The facts [171](#) [172](#) [173](#)

- Brown's "...viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet..." lie relates to the so-called Arian controversy. Arius claimed that Christ *was* the Son of God, but only as a creature, not divine. Only 22 of the bishops at the Council of Nicea initially supported Arius — very much the minority at the start — and most of these 22 later recognized Arius's claims as blasphemy.
- Of the approximately 300 who voted, *all but three* (that number apparently including Arius) *ultimately voted YES* for the Nicene creed, which unequivocally affirmed the deity of Christ.^a Hardly a 'close' vote!

^a "At first, seventeen Arians refused to support the new statement, but after further discussion, the number was reduced to five. This number was further reduced to two [plus Arius, presumably], after the dissenting bishops were threatened with the loss of their positions." [172](#) We can't count votes under pressure as legitimate; nonetheless, even with five dissenters the proportion of legitimate affirmative votes was still ≈98%. Not 'close'!

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- Per Brown, 'Until *that* moment in history Jesus viewed by followers as mortal prophet'??? **NO!** "...the Creed of Nicea expressed what the great majority of bishops at the council found to be traditional, Biblical, and orthodox of the Christian faith"¹⁷¹ — i.e. what the Church generally believed. See a confirming statement by [Lucian](#).

Da Vinci Code deceit #2

Brown's book

Teabing says that "Constantine commissioned and financed a new Bible, which omitted those **Gos-**
pels that spoke of Christ's human traits and embellished those Gospels that made Him god-like. The earlier Gospels were outlawed, gathered up, and burned."¹⁷⁰

The facts

Even most liberal scholars today agree that the complete New Testament was written before 100 AD — and a very liberal scholar thought most of the New Testament was written before AD 70, because the Roman destruction of Jerusalem is not mentioned anywhere in the New Testament.

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(Ref: [New Testament written long after Christ's death?](#) on page 404.)

The so-called **canon** started unofficially taking shape not long thereafter:

"At a very early date it appears that the four **Gospels** were united in one collection. They must have been brought together very soon after the writing of the **Gospel** according to John. This fourfold collection was known originally as 'The **Gospel**' in the singular, not 'The Gospels' in the plural; there was only one Gospel, narrated in four records, distinguished as 'according to Matthew', 'according to Mark', and so on. About AD 115 Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, refers to 'The **Gospel**' as an authoritative writing, and as he knew more than one of the four 'Gospels' it may well be that by 'The Gospel' *sans phrase* he means the fourfold collection which went by that name"¹⁷⁴

The **canon** resulted unofficially by agreement in the early Church as to which writings were authoritative:

"The only books about which there was any substantial doubt after the middle of the sec-

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ond century were some of those which come at the end of our New Testament. Origen (185-254) mentions the four **Gospels**, the Acts, the thirteen Paulines, I Peter, 1 John and Revelation as acknowledged by all..."¹⁷⁵

The 'official' **canon** was an acknowledgement of what unofficially had already been accepted as authoritative:

"One thing must be emphatically stated. The New Testament books did not become authoritative for the Church because they were formally included in a **canonical** list; on the contrary, the Church included them in her **canon** because she already regarded them as divinely inspired, recognizing their innate worth and generally apostolic authority, direct or indirect. The first ecclesiastical councils to classify the **canonical** books were both held in North Africa—at Hippo Regius in 393 and at Carthage in 397—but what these councils did was not to impose something new upon the Christian communities but to codify what was already the general practice of those communities."¹⁷⁶

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The late internationally-acclaimed textual critic^a Bruce Metzger would have agreed:

"In discussing the **canon**, [Bruce] Metzger identifies three criteria 'for acceptance of particular writings as sacred, authoritative, and worthy of being read in services of worship...', criteria which were 'generally adopted during the course of the second century, and were never modified thereafter', namely, orthodoxy (conformity to the rule of faith), apostolicity, and consensus among the churches. He concludes that, 'In the most basic sense neither individuals nor councils created the **canon**; instead they came to recognize and acknowledge the self-authenticating quality of these writings, which imposed themselves as **canonical** upon the church.'" [178](#) <Emphases are mine.>

Can we trust Bart Ehrman?

Popular agnostic Bart Ehrman, who once identified as Christian, studied under renowned textual scholar Bruce Metzger, quoted above. However, Ehrman now

^a "Many considered him the finest NT [New Testament] textual critic of the 20th century." [184](#)

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markedly departs from that scholarship^a and attacks the Bible and the biblical Christ with popular books, courses, and lectures. Bart's critics sometimes report patches of valuable and accurate information/instruction in his engaging public writing and speaking. However, much of what Ehrman writes and says popularly is misleading. Even a glance at some of Bart's provocative popular-book titles suggests that he has an agenda to profitably sabotage biblical belief and reinforce unbelief — in a populace generally ill-equipped to recognize and defend themselves against his strong biases and misrepresentations.^b

^aAnother eminent textual critic, Daniel Wallace, in a remarkably balanced critique of Ehrman¹⁸¹, noted that, "Misquoting Jesus is dedicated to Bruce Metzger, whom Ehrman describes as 'the world's leading expert in the field [of New Testament textual criticism]'" (Misquoting, 7). Yet Metzger would fundamentally disagree with Ehrman's thesis in this book." Wallace also noted elsewhere¹⁸⁴ that "...on the essentials of the faith, it's hard to take issue with him [Metzger]. He was adamant about the deity of Christ and his bodily resurrection."

^b...including negative misstatements and misuse of what are called 'authenticity criteria'.¹⁸⁸

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Erhman's popular publications and teachings are numerous — as are appropriate rebuttals, both online and in published books. *Some* of Bart's biases and misrepresentations — now read and heard by hundreds of thousands of individuals — are relatively obvious and rebuttable with minimal skill. Others are more sophisticated, more deceptive, and not easily detectable or rebuttable by the average reader/hearer; they require rebuttals of equal sophistication and sometimes substantial page space. The best I can do is to fire a warning shot:

- I recommend checking out these four layman-digestible illustrations [180](#), [181](#), [182](#), [183](#) (one of which [181](#) I cite multiple times in this section).
- In the remaining paragraphs of this section I briefly highlight Erhman's *public* position on the reliability of the New Testament text. That position underlies much of his approach to the Christ of history in his *public* writings, teachings, interviews, etc. It sufficiently exemplifies his biases.

The following statement, in the introduction to *Misquoting Jesus*, summarizes misleading assertions stated later in the book:

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"In some places, as we will see, *we simply cannot be sure that we have reconstructed the original text accurately.* It's a bit hard to know what the words of the Bible mean if we don't even know what the words are!"¹⁸⁵ <Italics are mine.>

Is that an intellectually honest statement? Philosopher, theologian, and apologist W.L. Craig notes that,

"The *scholarly* Bart *knows* that the text of the New Testament has been established in 99% accuracy. The *popular* Bart misrepresents this to unsuspecting laymen by innuendo and implication so as to make them think that the text of the New Testament is highly uncertain."¹⁸⁷

Moreover, the remaining 1% does not affect any Christian doctrine — despite misleading Ehrman assertions to the contrary. Recall [Other ancient docs valid? New Testament not?](#), especially the statements by Bart's acclaimed Princeton mentor Bruce Metzger. Also check out the 'Affected by Textual Variants?' subsection of fellow textual critic Dan Wallace's rebuttal in *The Gospel according to Bart*.¹⁸¹

W.L. Craig's report of the following radio-interview dialog affirms the previously quoted assertion that

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Ehrman *knows* that the New Testament documents are far more reliable than he typically implies **publicly**. This dialog ensued after Ehrman had emphasized the thousands of textual variants in the New Testament in an unqualified, misleading way. (As is common even in *modern* in oral discussions, Craig recounts dialog *essentials*, not verbatim quotes — and does so a bit differently on two different occasions. [187](#), [188](#) Therefore, in the interest of disclosure, I quote both versions of Craig's statements, separated with double slashes [//].)^a

Interviewer: Well what you think the original text actually said? // Well, Dr. Ehrman, what do you think the text of the New Testament originally really said?

^a Does this '*gist* reporting', lacking verbatim *precision*, detract from the presumed *accuracy* of Craig's point? Not at all, I suggest, just as the lack of verbatim *precision* in multiple statements of the same New Testament content (e.g. event/principle/doctrine) needs not detract from the *accuracy* of that content. Recall my expansion of this point under [Unwarranted expectations](#).

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Ehrman: I don't know what you mean. // Why, I don't understand what you mean. What are you talking about?

Interviewer: Well, you described all of these changes have crept in over the years as manuscripts have been copied one from another, and all of variants that exist. What do you think the original text actually said? // Well, the text of the New Testament, it's been so corrupted as it's been copied. What do you think the original text actually said?

Ehrman: Well, it pretty much says what the text today says. // Well it says pretty much what we have today. What it says now.

Interviewer: I thought you said there were all these variants. // Why, I thought it was all corrupted.

Ehrman: Right. But we've been able to reconstruct the original text with a high degree of certainty. // Well, we've been able to reestablish the text of the New Testament as textual scholars. [NOTE: that's the *objective* of textual criticism generally and of Bart's work with Bruce Metzger particularly.]

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Notes Craig,

“...the poor interviewer was absolutely baffled, because he'd been given to understand that the text of the New Testament was highly uncertain, when in fact it's not. And Ehrman knows this, despite the misimpression he gives otherwise to laypeople.”

As independent confirmation of this point, note the contrasts between items 1 and 2 below:

1. The unacceptable uncertainties implied in Ehrman's **popular** book *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* — both in the book's title and content, such as in the following and similar pronouncements...

“Not only do we not have the originals, we don't have the first copies of the originals. We don't even have copies of the copies of the originals, or copies of the copies of the copies of the originals. What we have are copies made later — much later. In most instances, they are copies made many centuries later. And these copies all differ from one another, in many thousands of places. As we will see later

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in this book, these copies differ from one another in so many places that we don't even know how many differences there are... In some places, as we will see, we simply cannot be sure that we have reconstructed the original text accurately. It's a bit hard to know what the words of the Bible mean if we don't even know what the words are!"¹⁸⁶

2. The following statement in his **academic** textbook, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*:

"...scholars are convinced that **we** can reconstruct the original words of the New Testament with reasonable (although probably not 100 percent) accuracy."¹⁸⁹ <Emphasis is mine.>

...which is, per another scholar...

"...the same judgment as that of many world-renowned textual critics, including Ehrman's own mentor at Princeton Theological Seminary, Bruce Metzger..."¹⁹⁰

If you read only one published critique of Ehrman, consider fellow textual critic Wallace's discussion of

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popular-Bart's biased and misleading approach at <https://bible.org/article/gospel-according-bart>.

[Accessed 3/2/2015.] Here are a couple of samples:

"Rather, it is in the introduction [of *Misquoting Jesus*] that we see Ehrman's motive, and the last three chapters reveal his agenda. In these places he is especially provocative and given to over-statement and *non sequitur*."

"Unfortunately, the average layperson will leave *Misquoting Jesus* with *far greater doubts* about the wording and teachings of the NT [New Testament] *than any textual critic would ever entertain*." <Emphases are mine.>

Of particular importance in the article, Wallace addresses Bart's false errors-affecting-whole-doctrines claims.

Wallace is respectful, despite these issues, and expresses admiration for Ehrman's *abilities*...

"I grieve for what has happened to an acquaintance of mine, a man I have known and admired—and continue to admire—for over a quarter of a century. It gives me no joy to put forth this review."

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"Bart Ehrman is one of the most brilliant and creative textual critics I've ever known..."

...while nonetheless highlighting Bart's problematic *biases*...

"...and yet his biases are so strong that, at times, he cannot even acknowledge them." <Emphasis is mine>

Again, I highly recommend reading Wallace's comments.¹⁸¹ Though occasional Greek words illustrate points — those parts seemingly addressed more to scholars than to laypeople — his main points are abundantly clear to the average Joe or Jane.

Again, though *Misquoting Jesus* gets most frequent mention in this subsection, Ehrman has not refrained from similarly misleading readers/listeners in other popular books and presentations.

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Doubtless most readers of this book are aware both of amazing, sometimes heroic, examples of selfless good in the world and many expressions of everyday good will. We must not lose sight of those positives in the midst of negatives.

"I'm not interested in blind optimism, but I'm very interested in optimism that is hard-won, that takes on darkness and then says, 'this is not enough.'"

--- writer Colum McCann²⁸⁴

Notwithstanding, the darkness to which McCann alludes is quite apparent to everyone not divorced from or isolated from reality, a key factor leading some individuals to deny God entirely or at least say:

*"If God exists and is all powerful, but **does not** defeat evil, then he's not good. If God exists and is good but **cannot** defeat evil, then he's not all powerful."*

--- some skeptics

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Moving beyond empathy for the emotions of that second statement, is it true? Given honest assessments of *human* nature and the often grave consequences of selfish *human* quests for **autonomy** and power, is that statement even logical? Can we reasonably hold God accountable for not righting or mitigating for the wrongs we see perpetrated in society generally and by *ourselves* particularly?^a The perspective presented in this chapter offers a challenge.

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EVIDENCE raises unanswered questions. Though preceding chapters of **THINKING FURTHER** help undergird the rationality of the **supernatural**, and therefore help undergird the validity of the accounts, many questions remain. Life and living are complex and dif-

^aI end the referenced **Just animals?** subsection with some human-positives examples, of which there are many. But unless we've lived totally isolated from society, with no communications whatever, we're painfully aware of human negatives — sometimes extreme human negatives. Moreover, I suggest that even if we lived in total isolation, times of candor would force us to admit our failings — *OUR* failings, not God's — and our suffering therefrom.

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difficult. No human-authored book can fully address all issues — especially issues of evil and suffering.

Even if such were *intellectually* possible, mere words can't ultimately salve issues of *emotions* and *will* (volition). In varying degrees, depending on temperament and inclination, don't we all — even the toughest and most cerebral of us — live our lives substantially through emotions? If you're like me, you'd like emotional confirmation that God exists and cares in the face of evil and suffering. The intellectual alone — heavily this book's focus — doesn't cut it.

Some 'what if' thinking fodder

Yet, might big-picture *intellectual* considerations of the past, present, and future of humanity nonetheless impact *emotional* perspectives on evil and suffering?

1. What if *indeed* we're more than [Just animals?](#) — not products of deterministic material causes and effects but rather of intentional *transcendent directive influence*? How might that influence personal meaning and significance? How might that influence emotions amidst life struggles?
2. What if the *potential* for evil were *partially implicit* in a morally neutral and even necessary

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physical *law* of our universe, and yet a *potential* for *goodness* were nonetheless ***spe-***
cially given to behaviorally-modern humans?

3. What if *transcendent* directive influence at the *very beginning* of behaviorally modern humanity initially sequestered the *negatives* of that law and allowed *only* good choices save *one: a choice to have bad choices* (i.e. the choice to *reject* the directive influence needed for *only* good choices)?
 - Might **EVIDENCE** of *limited transcendent* directive influence *today* be consistent with *much-more* directive influence *then*, at least initially?
 - Might *rejection* of *transcendent* directive influence *today* correlate with *rejection then*?

How might such a scenario affect our perspectives on evil and suffering — emotionally, not just intellectually?

4. What if the *core* of me, as well as the *core* of you, is *more than* **Just stuff?** — *more* than a hyper-developed, **deterministic** organism that simply reverts to 'star stuff' at the end of life? If the *cores* of 'us' were to endure, how might that influence long-term perspectives and hope?
5. Moreover, how might *more-than-Just stuff?*' cores of us affect our perspectives on seemingly unfulfilled

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justice? Might much justice simply be *delayed*? Might Hitler's cowardly suicide *ultimately* get replaced with *real* justice? Might ISIS *ultimately not* 'get away with it'? Might __, __, etc. *ultimately* get perfect justice? Might **ultimate** justice address the accusation below?

"If God exists and is all powerful, but **does not** defeat evil, then he's not good. If God exists and is good but **cannot** defeat evil, then he's not all powerful."

6. What if *ultimately*-fulfilled justice were to apply to *everyone*, not just to moral monsters? Could we legitimately sort life offenses into two compartments — A: 'Big Offenses', deserving justice, and B: 'Little Offenses', immune from justice? What if ALL justice needs to be served — either **by** each 'defendant'...or **for** each 'defendant'. (*Keep those last three worlds in mind for later!*) How might such a perspective affect our views of the future?

Chapter focus

This chapter, in combination with partner chapters 'Just animals?' and 'Just stuff?', presents a kind of *model* that expands on and *supplements* the above 'what ifs' in a hopefully helpful, thought-

provoking manner.^a In the preceding 'what ifs', I cross-referenced three sections of this book that provide independent, *non-theological* evidential and logical support. I'll continue addressing such considerations in non-theological terms (except for the word 'God'). However, theologically-sensitive readers may recognize that the forthcoming model is harmonious with biblical concepts.^b

Does the model *reasonably* make sense of reality? You'll decide.

^aIf you' struggle *right now*, 'thought-provoking' may not 'cut it' *now*. But perhaps you'll find the perspective helpful later.

^bIf you *don't* recognize that harmony and find this chapter sounding a bit unconventional, please have patience and charity, recognizing both a) my objectives to present truth in logical but mostly *nontheological* terms and b) a legitimate place for explanatory and interpretive elbow room. Kindly read it fully before judging it. In particular, if you're uncomfortable with my proposed *contributions* of **entropy** to evil (next major subsection), *note that the **validity of the overall model** proposed in this chapter, however enhanced by **entropic** considerations (primarily thinking fodder), **doesn't depend on them.***

Thoughts on the foundations of evil

The likely CONTRIBUTION of entropy

Though evil arguably can never be fully understood from a *nontranscendent* perspective (ours), some philosophers and theologians suggest that it's *not a thing* but rather the **absence of good**; something like this:

1. God brought the universe and life into being.
2. God is good.
3. Therefore God cannot create evil.
4. But the universe contains evil.
5. Therefore:
 - a. God did not create evil in the universe.
 - b. Evil represents *absence* of the good he created.

Though I think statement 5a is correct, statement 5b seems inadequate. Though evil is itself **not** a created 'thing', might evil partially **arise out of a created 'thing' that is not intrinsically evil and is even necessary for our universe: entropy?** For those who've heard of **entropy** but not seen definitions relevant to the issues at hand, consider the following:

"Entropy is a measure of the disorder of a system. That disorder can be represented in terms of

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Some thoughts on foundations of evil

energy that is not available to be used. *Natural processes will always proceed in the direction that increases the disorder of a system...All natural processes are irreversible. All natural processes tend toward increasing disorder.* And although energy is conserved, its availability is decreased. *Nature proceeds from the simple to the complex, from the orderly to the disorderly, from low entropy to high entropy...The more highly ordered the configuration of a system, the less likely it is to occur naturally - hence the lower its entropy."*³⁰⁹ <Emphases are mine.>

"Entropy is also a process of '**degeneration**', marked variously by *increasing degrees of uncertainty, disorder, fragmentation and **chaos***, up to the terminal stage in the life of physical, social or cultural systems or structures." <Emphases are mine.> ³¹⁰

We *need* entropy, but might it's *degenerative* tendencies drive path-of-least-resistance negatives as well as positives, regarding both human morality and nature? Doing the right thing means *resisting* negative entropic tendencies, and that requires compensating net inputs of *positive energy*. Avoidance of evil requires net of input of **effort**. Read more in **Appendix D: Some entropic perspectives on evil.**

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The NECESSITY for entropy

Consider that **entropy** is arguably *necessary*...

1. ...for a Big Bang universe to form in the first place and for subsequent environmental processes.
2. ...for both human and non-human organisms to reproduce, grow, and die, according to the **thermodynamic** mechanisms implicit in all biochemistry.
3. ...for both positive and negative free choice to exist. This once included, I propose in the next subsection, two foundational options for the first humans regarding evil:
 - a. *Only good* behavioral choices and squelched natural negatives, arguably under **transcendent** control.
 - b. *Both good and evil* behavioral choices (some negatives *temporarily* pleasurable) and *unsquelched* natural negatives.

The GOODNESS of God

I propose (elaborated in the next three subsections) that:

1. As argued/evidenced elsewhere in the book: God exists, initiated the universe, is active today in humanity, and logically was active at the beginning.

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2. God gave *option 3a* above to first-humanity as the *declinable* default — *only good* behavioral choices and squelched natural negatives, under his *control*.
3. First-humanity *rejected* option 3a and chose option 3b: both good and evil behavioral choices — arguably focused on temporarily-pleasurable negatives — and *unsquelched* natural negatives.
4. Once freed, evil thinking — like pathogenic microbes in an uncapped jar — spread and multiplied in the human psyche and can't be put 'back in the box'.
5. Therefore *human*-experienced evil reflects past and present *human* choice, **not** a deficiency in God's *goodness*.

Reasonable proposal? No? Might you still think a *good* God would make everything good, *today*? Well, suppose that, unlike dispersed pathogens, existing evil thinking **could** be stuffed 'in a box', and a good God would be willing to do the stuffing. Considering that...

- Uncompensated entropy tends to drive everything, likely even *future* thinking, in the direction of chaos.
- Some type of **transcendent** (superior, beyond-human-capability) *control* is therefore *essential* for *only good* choices and *retention* of evil in the 'box'.

...would you *welcome* that **transcendent** control in your life?

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Foundations of goodness

Yet, *despite* much evil in the world and personal selfishness in us, can we agree that substantial sacrificial '*agape love*' exists in the midst thereof — particularly [Unselfish, even sacrificial, love for strangers](#). Where did that come from? Could such love have evolved, undefined, out of an unbridled entropy-driven environment? Did *agape* love exist in a vacuum?

What if love and relationship existed long before the **Big Bang**, *outside* of our space-time, in a *non-entropic* environment? What if love and relationship *pre*-existed in a *non-entropic* one-WHAT/three-WHOs God? Can we dismiss **transcendent triality** while accepting wave-particle **duality**? To me, [A one-WHAT/three-WHOs God seems reasonable](#).

I propose that God extended such existing love and relationship by proactively creating behaviorally-modern humans for relationship with him and between themselves — ultimately forever^a — using mechanisms and processes he deemed best.^b I pro-

^aI argue for 'forever' in [Just stuff?](#)

^bPlease thoughtfully consider [Just animals?](#)

pose that he implanted and maintained his goodness in the first humans — including both the ability to love and to desire justice, for example — *and, initially, he sequestered badness*. Under this arrangement, humans had **enormous free choice but only in good things**.³¹⁴ I.e., God *initially* squelched everything bad,^a including the **entropic** negatives of nature. I suggest that...

- People behaved very well at the very beginning, because *this* God squelched evil thinking — including the **negative path-of-least-resistance** effects of human **entropy** — by positively influencing the **minds** of the **first** humans. Recall evidence of God's positive influence even today, in **modern** human mind — in **EVIDENCE** and other sections of the book. The model proposes *far* greater such influence at the start of humanity.
- God *initially* — in the '*beginning*' — also sequestered the first humans from the entropic negatives of *nature*, at least locally.³¹⁵ If God is

^a...what the most control-resistant I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you folks ironically sometimes say a God worth his salt would be **bad** for **not** doing.

The only bad thing

transcendent over nature through a SUPERset of physical laws, as suggested by the medically-attested miracles in [EVIDENCE](#) and discussions in [Miracles violate nature?](#), then an ability to modify or sequester *any* natural process follows logically.

The only bad thing

However, I suggest, there was a single, *exceptional* bad option that God did **not squelch** in humans: ***the option to discontinue the only-good arrangement***. The only-good arrangement, however beneficial, *did* imply God's overall *control*. Moreover, the arrangement was part of a love *relationship*. But love and relationship are two-way streets. Relationship requires *mutual* love, and the recipients of God's love — the humans — needed the option *to reject* and *not to return* that love. Real love must be *voluntary*.

Humans liked the bad thing

Humans soon chose the I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you option, with a little encouragement from a previously-existing and powerful I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you 'lobbyist' ³¹⁸ who earlier chose a similar option. So, I pro-

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Humans liked the bad thing

pose, God relinquished much/most (not all!) of his good-only control over humans *and* nature.^a The humans were now freed to do both good and evil, and those freedoms have extended to all generations since.

- God no longer sequesters all evil thoughts, and wrong ways of thinking have become burned into the human psyche.

I suggest that the introduction of evil, like the release of pathogenic microbes from a sealed container, was irreversible. It spread widely, has multiplied, and can't be 'stuffed back in the box'.

- And God allows entropy to exert much (not all!) of its path-of-least-resistance allure.
- Exercise of love and justice, the *capabilities* of which still remain *implanted*³¹⁹, have in varying degrees become overridden by/subordinated to self-interest, personal autonomy, and pride — enormously so in those most wicked of individuals who yield wholeheartedly to their selfish, I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you entropy-influenced tendencies.

^aIs it reasonable to reject optimal *life* control and expect continuation of optimal *environment* control?

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A mixed bag

- Rejection of good-only control of *human* entropy also affects good-only control of *natural* entropy — and we see the negative effects.

A mixed bag

Some humans in every generation have tried hard mostly to resist the bad and do great amounts of good;^a others even *resist* the good, yield almost fully to their path-of-least-resistance negative drives, and do lots of bad; most others are in between. But none of us can fully shake the negative tendencies *in* ourselves *by* ourselves, no matter how we try; they're enslaving. [324](#) Likewise, both the good and bad of *nature* coexist in the human environment.

Lots of good and lots of evil and suffering — good-to-bad ratios varying with where we live, with whom we live and work, and with who *we* are. And the 'lobbyist' [320](#) and his cronies are only too happy to encourage and assist with the evil and suffering part —

^aHowever, though front-page news tends to concentrate on world evil, I'm sometimes amazed at the under-reported *unselfish* deeds and efforts on behalf of fellow humans.

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Turn back the clock?

especially with people who welcome such assistance. I strongly suggest not proudly dismissing such influence as unworthy of your consideration. [321](#)

Turn back the clock?

Some people would gladly turn back the clock to the beginning of humanity, start over, and reinstate God's good-only control in their lives and in nature. But, without God's rejected control, the coexistence of good and evil in *this* entropic universe is irreversible. The turn-back-the-clock-please people need to wait for a *complete 'redo'* — e.g. a *new* universe — which next time...

- Presumably won't be entropic and will offer only good options.
- Will include specifically those who have trusted in, relied on and leaned on God and already *long for* a good-choice-only existence. (Those who have denied or rejected him ***don't want*** this good-choice-only option).
- Will exclude the 'lobbyist' and his cronies.

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Turn back the clock?

However, in the meantime, the turn-back-the-clock-please people still struggle with entropic tendencies and the bad in their psyches — sometimes sadly looking like I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you people (we're ALL broken). But their *wills* at the core want God's control of their lives, which they sometimes consciously request and which God honors. So when the complete 'redo' comes, they'll have **pre-chosen** to keep the 'good-only' arrangement — forever.

But the complete 'redo' must wait — a *long* time — because God is social; recall that humans were his idea. He wants a *large* population of turn-back-the-clock-please people. The wait allows for generations of I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you people (*all* of us at some point) to change their minds and become turn-back-the-clock-please people — which God *actively* encourages^a but never forces, and which folks know deep down that they need (for some people, unfortunately, VERY deep down).

^a... a LOT, but some people are figuratively deaf — either willfully or because of the 'lobbyist's and the culture's loud and appealing background noise.

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The clock keeps running

Tough wait, though, because both we and God must watch LOTS of bad stuff occur in the interim — from natural evil, from people who more or less max out their options to do evil, and from the rest of us. And I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you people don't like the unpleasant consequences any more than anyone else. (Humans like to 'have their cake and eat it too'.) God could intervene a lot — and I'm sure he emphatically wants to, being undoubtedly *much* more unhappy about our bad choices and our experiences of natural evil than we are: he sees it ALL and grieves! ³²³ But **lots** of intervention would effectively nullify **lots** of personal autonomy — the subconscious or conscious desire of the majority. (Consider relevant comments in [Why would God need/want prayer to do ANYTHING?](#))

What about justice?

In view of the above, what about justice — both in our experience and in God's? Because of our entropic tendencies and the mix of good and evil in our psyches,

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What about justice?

we've *all* screwed up — a lot. That includes turn-back-the-clock-please people, who — despite their more-than-average openness to God's positive influence — still struggle with badness. And *all* turn-back-the-clock-please people have at one time been I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you people — sometimes *really bad* I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you people (exhibit A: ***Before-Christ*** Tass Saada in [Jew-hating PLO sniper strives to reconcile Arabs & Jews](#) on page 128).

We like justice

We like justice. (Even infants like justice; see [Sense of justice](#).) So why shouldn't God like justice? In fact, I suggest, the concept of justice comes from God. People have done megatons of bad things. Should God let them off the hook? Would WE let them off the hook? Mao (49 to 78 million deaths)? Hitler (12 million deaths)? Stalin (7 million deaths)? Enver, of Ottoman Turkey (2.5 million deaths)? Pol Pot (1.7 million deaths)? Kim Il Sung (1.6 million deaths)?¹⁴⁴...The hacker who trashed your computer? The repair guy who swindled you? The scammers who robocall your phone several times a day? The _____ (you fill in the blank)?

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What about justice?

What's good for the goose is good for the gander

As of the 3rd edition I am 73 years old (yeah, a certified, card-carrying geezer). If I've failed to meet just my *own* standards^a (footnote on next page) — let alone God's higher standards — only ONCE each day (fat chance), my rap sheet looks pretty bad: $1 \times 365 \times 73 = 26,645$ (Considering wrong thoughts and attitudes, as well as wrong actions, that number cuts me a lot of slack!). If I had to face a perfectly just judge for these failures, would he/she let me off the hook? (Well, MAYBE, if the judge were willing to pay my 26,645 penalties instead of me — *and I accept the arrangement.*)

How old are you?

^aI refer to moral wrongs, not mistakes due to limited information, intellectual ability, etc. E.g., some folks who make information mistakes out of ignorance or mental slipup say "I lied," but that's not truly lying; lying is intentional distortion of truth, not inadvertent error. Misinformation consequences of lying and error can be identical, but the reasons behind them are typically quite different (though sometimes subconscious motivations may trip us up).

God? Then why this mess?!

What about justice?

Let's assume that God is perfect. Let's also assume — per previous arguments in this book — that he's the creator. If so, then his standards are THE standards. I'll irreverently paraphrase an ugly form of the 'Golden Rule' (He who owns the gold makes the rules): "He who owns the universe makes the rules." If so, then like it or not, God is THE standard of good...the standard against whom justice is measured. A bit higher than our standards, yes? Just a bit? So if we get ticked when people violate *our* standards, just think how God must get ticked when we violate *his* standards. So how can even the very best turn-back-the-clock-please people qualify for the new-world 'redo'?

They can't.

The dilemma

But if God created humans for perfect relationship, and if perfect relationship requires love, then he is the reference point for love. After all, he started it all. God is perfect *justice* AND perfect *love*? Seemingly a BIG problem.

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But recall *my* minimum of 26,645 transgressions against *my* standards — let alone *perfect* standards? I said that MAYBE I could get off the hook if the *judge* were willing to pay my 26,645 penalties instead of me — *and if I accept the arrangement*. You might say to me, “Gimme me a break! Most of your failures are probably minor. God should forgive and forget.” OK. Let’s **very** generously say for argument that only 0.1% (1 in every 1000) are significant enough to warrant penalties — that’s a pretty wild assumption relative to *perfection*, especially given that 26,645 is *way* too low. But even if 26,645 *were* correct, that would leave 26.6 (≈ 27) that are significant measured against only *my* standards. Should God let me off the hook for 27 really *significant* offenses by paying them himself? Would any human judge do that? Even for his/her own child?

The Population Reference Bureau estimated that, as of mid-2011, roughly 108 billion people have lived on earth since the dawn of behaviorally modern humans³¹⁶ (at roughly 50,000 years ago per [Just animals?](#)). If we average the life-expectancies estimated for the eleven eras spanning that period,³¹⁷ we calcu-

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late an apparent average life expectancy for humanity of roughly 32 years. Assume that 1) each person has violated his/her own standards only once per day — even *God's* standards only once per day (abbreviated 'd') and 2) only one in a thousand of those violations (abbreviated 'viol.')

count as 'significant': deserving penalties. Then behaviorally modern humans have committed 1.2 trillion 'significant' violations — deserving penalties:

$$1 \text{ viol./d/person} \times 356 \text{ d/yr} \times 32 \text{ yr/life} \times 1/1000 \\ = 11 \text{ 'significant' violations per person}$$

$$11 \text{ 'signif.' viol./person} \times 108,000,000,000 \text{ persons} \\ = 1,200,000,000,000 \text{ 'significant' violations}$$

If you were God, you saw them all. How'd you feel about that? Would you cover over a trillion significant offenses by somehow paying the penalties yourself? (Perspective: counting to a trillion at a rate of one number per second would take ~32,000 years.)

The solution

Two millennia ago he did it. Once for all time, present and past, for over a trillion 'significant' violations over the history of humanity to-date (my one violation per

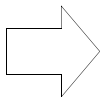
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day per person assumption and 1 in 1000 definition of 'significant' violations being **extremely** generous in the favor of humanity!) With unfathomable personal sacrifice — the only way to reconcile perfect love and perfect justice. Part of him suffered locally beyond human comprehension and all of him suffered generally. In addition to physical suffering, by a method still recognized as one of the most torturous known processes of death, imagine how you'd feel carrying the penalty for over a trillion violations — violations that you didn't commit.

Justice has been paid for, and love has triumphed.

**PERFECT
JUSTICE**



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JUSTICE
ACCEPTANCE**

NOTE Emotionally, we'll never have fully satisfying answers to the 'whys' of suffering. However, if you can accept evidence of unmitigated **God-suffering** — voluntarily withholding presumed preemptive power — how might that help you

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in the face of sometimes-unmitigated or *seemingly*-unmitigated, **human** suffering?

But the solution is **conditional**. The transaction is **global**, but acceptance is **individual**. It's not automatic, and it's not forced on anyone. Acceptance is an act of human *volition* (will), requiring:

1. Recipient humility — perhaps the biggest stumbling block; pride is a hallmark characteristic of 'I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you' people.
2. Acknowledgement both of a) the **need** for reconciliation between God's justice and love and b) God's *actions* that bought that reconciliation.
3. Acknowledgement of and apology for an I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you stance — the core of the human problem and attendant consequences.
4. A sincere will to trust in and lean on God and do right. This means '**repentance**' — a turnaround. 'Sincere will to trust in and lean on God' is unfortunately antithetical to an 'I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you' mentality.

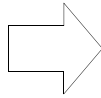
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Acceptable terms?

These are acceptable terms for turn-back-the-clock-please people.^a

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Critical bonus: 1) Trusting in and leaning on God starts internal transformations and results in his essential *help* to do right *even now*; after all, turn-back-the-clock-please people *want* God's influence in their lives. 2) Trusting in and leaning on God gets his '*ear*' when asking for some things he righteously wants to do but might not do when allowing I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you freedom. (Such instances effectively exercise *human* choice in human affairs vs. God's choice in human affairs.^b)

^a...but *this is all ultimately a God thing*; NOBODY would accept these terms without God's influence. In the final analysis, some people respond to his influence and some don't. Sincere responses are and must be intrinsically *voluntary*.

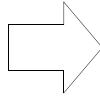
^bSee my elaboration of this point in [Why would God need/want prayer to do ANYTHING?](#) on page 535.

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But these requirements are impossible terms for entrenched I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you people.

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God keeps prompting these folks — when they'll listen — and some I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you people *do* change their minds. (We've ALL been I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you people at some point! At the bare minimum, consider when we were toddlers in our 'terrible twos'.) However, perhaps based on observation and **prescience**,^a God acknowledges the impossible for some I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you people and stops prompting them.

Effects

All of us understand cause-and-effect relationships. We routinely expect and experience them.

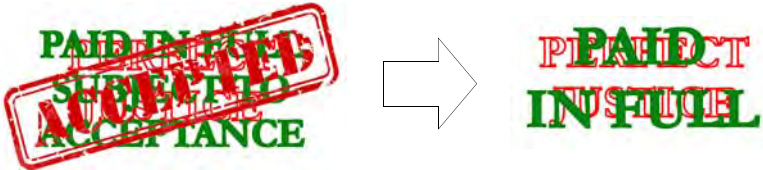
^a...per [Extra time dimensions and foreknowledge?](#)

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Happy effects

At points nobody can know, God says “Enough already!”, then declares, “I’ve sufficient turn-back-the-clock-please people for the ‘redo!’” (both currently living and *physically* deceased^a), and finally does the ‘redo’. Each turn-back-the-clock-please person gets what they’ve waited for.



Not-happy effects

But what can God do with I’ll-do-it-my-way-thank-you people (living and *physically* deceased^a)?

- They emphatically *don’t want* a ‘redo’ world where humans have enormous free choice *but only in good things* — where God squelches everything bad and promotes everything good; where **God** is *in control*. That’s why they’ve chosen to remain I’ll-do-it-my-way-thank-you people.

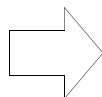
^aConsider [Just stuff?](#) on page 599.

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- For the same reason, they are *unqualified* for a 'redo' world.
- Most critically, they have implicitly or explicitly rejected God's reconciliation of love and justice — rejecting even the *need* for that reconciliation.

So what's left?



**PERFECT
JUSTICE**

...perfectly corresponding to each person's 'rap sheet.'^a What else can God do? [325](#), [326](#)

^a[We like justice](#), remember?

God? Then why this mess?!

Christ? Why?

The preceding [God? Then why this mess?!](#) chapter — particularly the [What about justice?](#) subsection — implicitly addressed part of the chapter-heading question. However, it now deserves broader focus, especially in view of present cultural thinking.

I've generally addressed this book's evidence and thinking fodder especially to honest skeptics — those who may struggle with doubt but nonetheless believe in the existence of objective truth, want and seek truth, and are willing to follow it after finding it.³ However I particularly address the first part of this chapter to those strongly influenced by today's popular [postmodernism](#), relativism, and *extreme* multiculturalism/pluralism. Those modes of thinking may hinder some readers from considering the book's primary premise: the rationality of faith in God generally and in a historical, [biblical Christ](#) specifically.

Introduction

Adherents of popular **postmodernism**, relativism, and *extreme* multiculturalism/pluralism — whether or not they've heard of, formally embraced, or thought through those philosophies — will typically call a Christ-is-truth statement arrogant. Their denial of objective truth or, at best, denial that any one belief system is truer than any other, fosters hostility toward any belief system that proclaims truth. Probably no such proclamation has drawn more hostility than the truth claims of Christianity — or, more correctly, those of *Christ*, who said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."^a

So who's right? Relativistic culture or Christ?

Can ANY belief system be true or most true?

Some people say no. The thinking described below rejects ANY belief system as ultimately true.

1. Some **postmodernists** and all relativists deny the existence of objective truth — an overarching

^aJohn 14:6-7, NIV

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'**metanarrative**' that 1) applies to all people regardless of local differences and 2) is true whether people believe it or not. Naturally, such folks *categorically* reject all belief-system claims of truth as only local enculturations.

2. Extreme multiculturalists/pluralists similarly reject the notion of *any* belief system as *uniquely* true, at least in part for one or more of the following reasons:
 - a. Abhorrence and avoidance of cultural and religious offense (and conflict).
 - b. A belief that all religions are fundamentally the same and only superficially different.
 - c. Eastern 'Both/And' (dialectical) thinking, in which even fundamentally contradictory belief systems and practices are equally true and of equal value. This thinking implicitly or explicitly rejects 'Either/Or' thinking (i.e. the **Law of Noncontradiction**^a).

Let's further consider such denials of truth.

^aContradictory statements can't both be true in the same sense at the same time. Example: the propositions "A is B" and "A is not B" are mutually exclusive. [Wikipedia]

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Objective truth doesn't exist?

Let's first address categorical denial of objective truth. The philosophy of **postmodernism** (at least per some theorists) and relativism denies the existence of objective truth — truth that universally applies whether individuals know or accept it. But doesn't that denial itself constitute a universal truth claim that applies to all people at all times? Is not such a position — a universal truth claim that all universal truth claims are false — implicitly self-refuting?

More technically, **postmodern** theorists like Jean-François Lyotard (1924 - 1998) deny objective truth by denying the existence of any '**metanarrative**' — any overarching, self-legitimized **narrative** (story), such as claimed in some belief systems — saying there are only *local narratives*. This position likewise implies that there's no overarching universal **Truth**, only *local truths*. But isn't such a claim itself a universal truth claim — itself a **metanarrative**? "Lyotard himself has ironically spoken of [his pronouncements as] 'the great **narrative** of the end of great narratives'."⁴¹¹ If so, is not such a rejection of metanarratives ultimately self-refuting?

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Taking the idea of 'local' to its ultimate endpoint — each individual — relativism sometimes gets expressed in statements like “that’s true for you but not for me,” or “everything is relative,” implicitly denying objective truth for *anyone*. However...

“To be consistent the relativist must say, ‘Nothing is objectively true—including my own position. So you’re free to accept my view or reject it.’ [But] Normally, when the relativist says, ‘everything is relative’, he expects his hearers to believe his statement and embrace his view of reality, and he expects his statement to pertain to all statements except his own.”[412](#)

Coherent?

Relativism takes a similar position in the moral realm, denying any objective, universal standard of morality: no moral truth claims are universally valid. Yet ultimately no relativist can practically live with such a position. If you rob him, rape his daughter, or punch him in the nose, he will suddenly become an absolutist: “That’s wrong!” Is such a pronouncement of wrong — *absolute* wrong — in the face of grievous

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offence only *local* to one culture or *universal* to all cultures at all times?

Equalizing truth claims avoids conflict?

People understandably want to avoid religious conflict, given numerous historical examples of such conflict. However, have those so-called religious conflicts mostly pursued *truth*? Or *turf*?

Moreover, does claiming equal validity for all truth claims solve the problem? Can we safely ignore the differences? Will willful ignorance truly avoid conflict, or might such ignorance harmfully deny reality?

Let's for the moment look at a few everyday truth claims: 'that substance is poisonous'...'a hot stove will burn you if you touch it'...'a saw will badly cut your hand if you put it against the blade'...'some Websites install malware', 'jumping off tall buildings will kill you', etc. We can choose to believe these truth claims or reject them and suffer the consequences.

More relevant to the question at hand, suppose one truth claim says that we should love our neighbors and another says that we should eat them. Suppose a second truth claim teaches that we should love our

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enemies and another teaches, that we should persecute, subjugate, lie to, and even kill not only enemies but even friendly people who don't subscribe to our belief system.^a Suppose a third truth claim states that we can never amend enough of our many offences to reach God but that God himself has made sufficient amends at his own expense, subject to our humble acceptance; a contrasting truth claims states that we must do good works, perform rituals, and/or suffer cycles of **karma** to reach God or other **transcendent** being/state.

Is it then appropriate to make yet another truth claim — our own — that the differences between the contradictory truth claims above don't matter? That they all have equal value and validity? That by ignoring and equalizing them we'll avoid conflict and maximize human welfare, now and forever? Is it appropriate to make still a further truth claim: people who don't accept *our* truth claim are intolerant?

^a...including, for example, even medical personnel who don't subscribe to our belief system but rather another that bids them to selflessly help *us* and our fellow citizens. (This is *not* a hypothetical example.)

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Will extreme multiculturalism/pluralism ultimately avoid conflict? We all know from the 9/11/2001 events that some truth claims are dangerous. Are we to blithely accept, in the name of political correctness, such beliefs — which themselves despise extreme multiculturalism/pluralism — as of equal value to beliefs in freedom and justice.

I suggest that the relativism which drives extreme multiculturalism/pluralism stems from an unwillingness to face reality. Such denial may ultimately result in annihilation of the comfortable freedoms from which these folks often make their pronouncements.

All belief systems are fundamentally the same?

Looking at the same issue a bit more assertively, some folks claim that all belief systems are *intrinsically* fundamentally the same and only superficially different. Does such a claim match the evidence?

Commonalities

First, I acknowledge that *some* commonalities exist between *many* belief systems.

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The commonality of transcendence

Do most people naturally believe in a God, gods, or some **transcendent** entity? Well, at least most Americans do. Neglecting exceptions in some segments of the population (which I've addressed in [Modern scientists too smart to believe in God?](#)), per a 2009 survey 95% of the general American public believed in God, a universal spirit, or a higher power.¹²⁷ In a larger-scale 2011 survey of 23 countries, over half of the respondents did, plus 17% were undecided.¹²⁸

Can we then safely extrapolate that most people, even many well-educated ones, take a substantially non-**reductionistic** view of the world, haven't lost all sense of wonder and awe of nature, and perceive **transcendent** influence in the universe.? Given the commonality of our humanity, should further commonality in the formulations of belief systems surprise us?

The commonality of ethics

Is it surprising that so many (though not all) belief systems have some degree of ethical commonality? Is not the so-called 'Golden Rule' — "Do to others as you would have them do to you"

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(however expressed)^a — inherently logical to a rational mind that retains *some* of God's influence and often *wants* to do the right thing.^b Should a common 'treat others well' ethical component in many religions surprise us?

Further, if indeed a good **transcendent** God exists and has left any residual influence at all in humanity that moves it beyond 'nature red in tooth and claw' (per [Just animals?](#) and [God? Then why this mess?!](#)), then wouldn't the 'Golden Rule' be all the more ethically logical and implicit in many belief systems?

The commonality of works

All but one non-atheistic/non-agnostic systems:

- Specify a need to *earn* favor with a **transcendent** being(s)/power(s) or to earn the ability to ultimately merge with some great unity.

^aSome belief systems express this idea non-proactively (i.e. negatively): e.g., *don't* do to others what you *don't* want them to do to you. [129](#)

^b...disregarding the painfully obvious exceptions throughout the course of history.

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- Specify procedures/rituals/good works to address that need.

Given cause and effect relationships in much of life, this may seem logical.^a The mentality of “♪ Something comes from something. Nothing never could....I must have done something good ♪” expressed in the *Sound of Music* seems to make sense and seems only ‘fair’. In particular, most belief systems recognize our inability to always do right, especially with regard to the Golden Rule. In some belief systems, this recognition dictates the need to keep a favorable balance of right vs. wrong, hoping that God, gods, or other **transcendent** entity will be satisfied.

Is that realistically possible?

Irreconcilable differences?

The common beliefs stated above may *seem* fundamental to humans, but who ultimately gets to define what’s ‘fundamental’: 1) the inventors of religions or

^a...when we forget about *unconditional* love and/or *undeserved* kindness that most of us sometimes experience.

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2) the objects of those religions (God, gods, or other **transcendent** entities)?

Can we reasonably assume that a cognitive God/gods — especially a personal God/gods — couldn't care less about how humans think about or relate to him/ them? Can we reasonably think that contradictory teachings in the multitude of so-called holy books would matter nothing to him/them...that he/they would be so wishy-washy as to be equally satisfied with logically contradictory responses to those teachings?

If you doubt those contradictions, review the differences between the many belief systems summarized in *The Big Religion Chart*.⁴¹⁴ Are they fundamentally the same and only superficially different? Or fundamentally different and only superficially the same?

If you were God/gods...

- Would you consider as superficial whether people thought of/addressed/served you as a loving, just, and involved person (**biblical Christianity**), a permanently absentee landlord (Deism), essentially identical with the universe (**pantheism**, such as in Taoism and in the Supreme Reality of Hindu-

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ism), just one of thousands or millions of deities (such as in Shinto, Falun Gong, and *manifestations* of the Supreme Reality of Hinduism), nonexistent or irrelevant (such as in Theravada Buddhism and Confucianism), or departed ancestors/folk deities (Chinese religion).

- Suppose you personally paid the high price to satisfy justice due those who 1) have failed (all of us) but 2) who humbly acknowledge the need for reconciliation, and 3) who then trust in and lean on you (**biblical Christianity**). Would it be equally acceptable to you if some people instead see you as a God who demands that we pull ourselves above the human condition via our shoelaces? (Most religions.) Would it be equally acceptable if we see you as a multiplicity of gods who demand works and rituals to avoid being reincarnated as vermin for bad **karma**? (Hinduism)
- Would it matter little to you whether people took the time to address you typically in personalized prayer (**biblical Christianity**) or rather in endless rote mantras by recitation, spinning inscribed wheels and cylinders, and erecting colored flags in the wind (Tibetan Buddhism)?

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- Would it be significant to you whether your adherents loved their enemies (teachings of Christ) or hated and sought to kill or subjugate *not only* their enemies but anyone who disagreed with their beliefs (teachings of the Quran and Hadith often emphasized in Salafi/Wahabi Islam)?
- Would you care whether people are variously enslaved or exalted in a caste system (Hinduism) or not (Buddhism — a break-away religion from Hinduism — and most other religions)?
- Would you care whether your adherents' belief systems were *freely chosen* — **necessarily** — and *internalized* (biblical Christianity) or were often *chosen* and *externally maintained* by pressure/force of family, religious police, hostile militants, and sometimes governments (Islam and in some places Hinduism)?
- Would you care whether 1) people considered you one **what** and three **whos**, one of whom (Christ) satisfied justice by paying the exceedingly costly 'fine' for over a trillion offenses of those who accept the deal (biblical Christianity); 2) people considered you a single entity and Christ *only a prophet* who paid no personal price to satisfy jus-

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tice and whose importance was superseded by a later prophet (Islam); 3) people considered you a single entity as in Islam but considered founder Bahá'u'lláh to supersede both Muhammad and Christ (Baha'i Faith)?

Can God simultaneously be a loving, just, and involved person AND an absentee landlord AND a multiplicity of separate gods AND identical with the universe AND non-existent AND departed ancestors/folk deities? Are these irreconcilable differences superficial or fundamental?

It's logically possible for all belief systems to be false. However, in view of the irreconcilable differences discussed above and the **Law of Noncontradiction**, can all belief systems be equally true? Or must one be true (or most true) and the others in varying degrees be false?

Missing the elephant?

Some extreme multiculturalists/pluralists and one-world-religion advocates state that there's one God but multiple, equally acceptable approaches. I propose that the irreconcilable differences pointed out in

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the preceding subsection falsify that idea. However, given potential reader exposure to a related 'elephant' argument, let's examine one version:

Four blind men examine an elephant. One feels the tail and thinks it's a rope. Another feels a leg and thinks it's a tree trunk. A third one feels the ear and thinks it's a fan. The fourth feels the trunk and thinks it's a snake. Analogously, conclude the arguers, the 'faiths' of the blind men simply focus on different parts of the same animal; really, they just understand and approach the same being in different ways.

However, all four men are wrong and blind to the truth — it's an *elephant*: not a rope, tree, fan, or snake; all of those descriptions seriously miss the mark. The blind men fail to correctly perceive *physical* reality — a failure that could ultimately result in *physical* harm (e.g. trampling). Similarly, blindness to *spiritual* reality may result in *spiritual* harm.

To help the *physically* blind 'rope, tree, fan, or snake' adherents to understand the *physical* reality of the 'elephant' wouldn't be arrogant or intolerant; it would be the loving thing to do — even if the blind men

resented that challenge to their erroneous opinions. Likewise, I suggest, helping *spiritually* blind people to perceive *spiritual* reality isn't arrogant or intolerant but loving — even in the face of resistance or resentment.

Under the best of conditions, blind men can't fully understand the nature of an elephant.^a More emphatically, a limited human can't fully understand the nature of a **transcendent** God.^b However, a hypothetical talking elephant could identify and describe itself *sufficiently*, though hardly exhaustively, to a physically blind person. Similarly, a communicative **transcendent** God could identify and describe himself *sufficiently*, though hardly exhaustively, to a spiritually blind human — and, I suggest, *has*.

But a spiritually blind human sometimes needs to sort through a maze of ingrained and ongoing enculturation, information overload, disappointments, and (emphatically) I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you thinking

^a...assuming that the men in the illustration are blind from birth; otherwise they might have some recollection of an elephant from their sighted days.

^bThe definition of **transcendence** so dictates.

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to properly read and/or hear that communication — necessarily, I submit, with God's help and prompting.

Contradictory belief systems are equally true?

Suppose you agree that most belief systems are fundamentally different and only superficially similar. Some readers might then think, "'Both/And' (dialectic) logic solves that problem. Even contradictory belief systems can all be true. My Eastern way of thinking denies the **Law of Noncontradiction**."

Perhaps you find 'Both/And' thinking a subjectively comforting way to avoid certain conflicting thoughts and promote inner peace — perhaps a boon to Eastern religious practices that promote relaxation and ward away unpleasant realities.

However, try as you might, you cannot escape the 'Either/Or' logic of the **Law of Noncontradiction**. You need it to deny it. To illustrate this point, suppose you argue for 'Both/And' thinking vs. 'Either/Or' logic as follows:

- You say, for example, that **Both** irreconcilable belief systems or truth claims **A And B** are *equally* true.

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- You maintain that it's *wrong* to say that ***Either A Or B*** is true or most true. In other words, you say that 'Either/Or' logic is false.

However, note that...

- You *implicitly* and *legitimately* argue that the '*Both/And*' view of A and B *and* the '*Either/Or*' view of A and B cannot ***both*** be true in the same sense at the same time.
- In other words, you *implicitly* say that we must choose ***EITHER*** the '*Both/And*' view ***OR*** the '*Either/Or*' view but NOT BOTH.

That is, you must ***use*** '*Either/Or*' logic to ***reject*** '*Either/Or*' logic.

Like basic mathematical relationships, the **Law of Noncontradiction** is discovered, not invented. We discover it early in life and depend on it. It's possible to get an A or an F on an exam, but not both; to do well, a student must know the difference and study accordingly. A car parked in front of a New York City apartment can either be locked and alarmed or unlocked and unalarmed, but not both; to avoid theft the owner must know which. A person's meal cannot both be fatally poisoned and safe to eat at the same

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time; to survive, that individual must understand the distinction. A stove burner cannot simultaneously be both burning hot and cool; failure to acknowledge that distinction can result in injury.

Eastern-born apologist Ravi Zacharias has quipped that, "Even in India we look both ways before we cross the street. It is either the bus or me..."⁴¹⁶

Failure to acknowledge broader distinctions also has consequences. In efforts not to offend anyone, many folks avoid any statements that are exclusive. Exclusivity, they say, is bad. However, though the perceived kindness in such avoidance may be commendable in some contexts, truth is *implicitly* exclusive; it excludes that which is contradictory and false. The old adage, 'Ideas have consequences' — negative or positive — is evident. For example, compare the irreconcilable *exclusive* truth claims behind the compassion of Mother Theresa, the events of 9/11/2001, and the horrors of the Third Reich (which were substantially influenced by Nietzschean philosophy). Though we should speak the truth in love, we nonetheless need to speak it. Failure to confront untruth is ultimately not kindness at all.

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Bottom line

Here's a brief recap of the preceding points:

- We cannot deny the existence of objective, universal truth without making universal truth statements or contradicting or excepting our own positions. Therefore, relativism and relativistic constructs in **postmodernism** are self-refuting.
- Extreme multiculturalism/pluralism is relativistic, denies reality, and cannot ultimately avoid conflict.
- The multitude of belief systems tend to be fundamentally different in irreconcilable ways and only superficially similar.
- Using '*Both/And*' thinking to dismiss irreconcilable differences in belief systems does not work. '*Both/And*' thinking cannot deny the incompatible **Law of Noncontradiction** in the same sense at the same time without using it. The Law of Noncontradiction is discovered, not invented, and we cannot escape it.
- It's logically possible for all belief systems to be false. However, in view of irreconcilable differences between the belief systems and the **Law of Noncontradiction**, it's *impossible* for *all* belief systems

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to be equally true; one must be true (or most true) and the others in varying degrees false.

I implore you to take the existence of truth seriously. I suggest that almost any institution of evil you can name, including the Third Reich, ISIS, and communist totalitarianism, is built on a foundation of lies. I further suggest that much of the more common evil we encounter is supported by lies — between us and within ourselves.

Once truth goes, *anything* goes.

If a belief system can be true, why biblical Christianity?

Can ANY belief system be true or most true? I've argued for YES by the end of the previous subsection. Moreover, unless *all* belief systems are false, **one** belief system *must* be true or most true. But which one?

My position on **biblical Christianity** is contextually obvious. So I'll primarily state my reasons/arguments for affirming **biblical Christianity** as true or most true **one**, with minimal reference to other belief systems and substantial reference to the evidence and argu-

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ments in previous sections of the book:

- ***My reasons?*** — I can't dogmatically cram Christ down anyone's throat. I'll simply go through my reasons/arguments. Will any or all them make sense to you? Hopefully, but maybe not, depending on your **presuppositions**.
- ***Minimal reference to other beliefs?*** — Banks train tellers to recognize counterfeit currency by intimately familiarizing them with *true* currency. Analogously, I'll focus primarily on why I think **biblical Christianity** is true rather than why others are counterfeit.
- ***Substantial reference to evidence and arguments in previous sections of the book?*** — Previous sections of the book have implicitly or explicitly described parts of my reasoning.

Here are the reasons/arguments I'll discuss:

1. A **transcendent**, personal, active God exists.
2. A one-WHAT/three-WHOs God seems reasonable.
3. Christ as one of the WHOs seems reasonable.
4. Christ's offer of grace makes sense.
5. The acceptance of that grace makes sense.

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I'll now elaborate on the above-listed items under same-named subheadings.

A transcendent, personal, active God exists

I think my [Arguments and evidence](#) for God are sound. I think the [EVIDENCE](#) shows that God is personal and active in humanity. In [Supernatural = superstition?](#) I think I've shown enough hypothetically possible explanations for a few specific **supernatural** phenomena to suggest 1) that belief in the **supernatural** and God's **supernatural** involvement in [EVIDENCE](#) is not irrational, and 2) the miracles in the New Testament — which I've defended — warrant respectful consideration. Moreover, I think that science-as-a-religion — worshipping not God but human reason as ultimate — irrationally denies its own limits in the face of reality.^a

Moreover, nature in general and life particularly seems more than sum of its parts. LIFE seems more

^aThe biased, sometimes selfish thinking common to the human condition applies to brilliant scientists just as to everyone else, as illustrated in [The scientific community is open-minded?](#) and [Personal admissions of scientist bias.](#)

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than quarks and electrons clumped together to form atoms; atoms bonded together to form chemicals; chemicals clumped together to form body and brain cells; body and brain cells, with their amazingly complex genes, clumped together to form organisms; organisms somehow functioning as deterministic, cause-and-effect, morally-mechanistic beings. I cannot look at my family and friends that way, can you? (And I show, in [The cognitive uniqueness of human free will](#), that some staunch determinists cannot either and so struggle with **cognitive dissonance**.)

Materialistic **reductionism** seems grossly inadequate to explain life's complexities and intangibles like personality, sacrificial love to strangers, esthetics, intelligence and creativity far beyond survival needs, and the mysteries of human consciousness and its potential. Are we really [Just animals?](#) and, in the final analysis, [Just stuff?](#) Or much more?

I see the influence of **transcendence**.

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A one-WHAT/three-WHOS God seems reasonable

I find the concept of one **what** and three **whos** — though perhaps not intuitive — consistent with the God for whom I present evidence and arguments:

- I suggest that one **what** and three **whos** is a *rational* concept. Interestingly, even [Harvard evolutionary biologist Richard Lewontin](#) seemingly found a fellow atheist's acceptance of **wave-particle duality**^a yet patent rejection of 'one **what**/three **whos**' **tr**iality a bit prejudicial.
- If indeed we're capable of unselfish, sacrificial love for people who have zero connection to us — such as modeled by Mother Theresa and thousands of others — where does that come from? 'Nature red in tooth and claw' or something greater? If love comes from God, did he give it to us out of a vacuum — or did it already exist before humans came on the scene, such as between three **whos**?
- The same applies to deep relationship, for which we've seemingly been wired. Out of a vacuum or

^a...part of 'quantum weirdness'.

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in existence between three **whos** before we arrived?

- Of course the Christian Scriptures (New Testament), which I've defended briefly in [Mythical foundations?](#), explicitly speak of three **whos**.

Christ as one of the WHOs seems reasonable

Christ, specifically, is arguably involved in some of the [EVIDENCE](#) — especially in [Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?](#).

Moreover, per the New Testament I defended in [Mythical foundations?](#), Christ explicitly claimed to be one of the three **whos** and often spoke of relationship to a second **who** called the *Father* and a third **who**, called the *Holy Spirit* (or *Advocate*):

- “‘My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.’ For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.” [John 5:17-18 NIV]
- “‘Very truly I tell you,’ Jesus answered, ‘before Abraham was born, I am!’ At this, they [some

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Jews, who fully understood the impact of his claim] picked up stones to stone him..." [John 8:58-59 NIV]

- "I and the Father are one."... "We are not stoning you for any good work," they replied, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God." [John 10:30 and 10:33 NIV]
- "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." [John 14:6-7, NIV]
- "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. [John 15:26, NIV]

In view of such claims, CS Lewis has logically posited three, and only three, reasonable options for these claims,⁴¹⁷ often summarized as 'Lunatic, liar, or Lord' or 'Madman, bad man, or God-man'. Anyone making these claims must be one of the following:

- *Crazy*, like psychotic patients who claim they are the president or just about anything else imaginable.
- *Evil*, perpetrating a fraud (the claim of Jewish leaders, who — expecting and not getting a con-

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quering messiah — declared blasphemy, demanded an *illegal*^a execution, and got it.)

- *As claimed.*

'Good teacher' is not one of the options. So which is he?

I've come across counterclaims that there are really *four* choices, which might be stated as: 'Mad man, bad man, God-man, or *invented* man' or 'Lunatic, liar, Lord, or *legend*' — the counterclaimants of course favoring the latter word in each case, saying that these claims in the New Testament are not Christ's words but fabrications.

Really?

Firstly, recall [Authors fabricated stories about beloved leader?](#). Did the authors risk death to create lies?

The **biblical Christ**'s most dramatic claims, including the ones quoted above, are in John's **Gospel**. Don't trust John's Gospel? Then look at two claims in the **Gospel** of Luke, who's been lauded as an accurate

^aEven the Roman prefect Pilate — a man with past blood on his hands — declared Christ innocent before capitulating to mob demands.

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historian (recall [Historicity of the book of Acts](#) and [Historicity of the Gospel of Luke](#)).

- At the end of Christ's illegal trial — culminating in him being lead before the Roman prefect Pontius Pilate with requests for his crucifixion — Christ said:
 "...from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God." They all asked, "Are you then the Son of God?" He replied, "You say^a that I am." Then they said, "Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips." [Luke 22:69-71 NIV]
- Christ frequently referred to himself as the *Son of Man*, which at least the Jewish leaders doubtless referenced to the God-figure in Daniel 7:13-14. However, in Luke 6:5 Christ pointedly links 'Son of Man' and 'Lord of the Sabbath' in a single sentence...
 "Then Jesus said to them, 'The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.'" (NIV)

^aThough "you say" seems indirect, the last sentence of this passage shows that the Jewish leaders *clearly* understood!

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...in context clearly referring to *himself* and *his* authority to ignore *non-biblical* lists of 'dos and don'ts' invented by accusing Jewish religious authorities.

Moreover, Christ figuratively "put his money where his mouth was" by demonstrating **supernatural** power.

- Are Christ's miracles irrational? Are miracles in general irrational? Recall [Supernatural = superstition?](#)
- Again, even on logical grounds, did all of the New Testament authors and all of the apostles, save one, *die* for their proclamations of these miracles to *defend lies*?
- Recall arguments in [New Testament mostly myth?](#) against claims of myth for biblical miracles.
- If you have trouble with *biblical* miracles, do you also wish to explain away parallel, *medically documented modern miracles*, such as in [Miracles impossible?](#)

Beyond miracles, are dramatically changed lives associated with Christ purely coincidental? Recall the

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accounts I've reported in [Who transformed these lives?](#) (emphatically *not* self-help success stories)...

- Violent Jew hater becomes Jew lover.
 - Vicious murderer of a man's father comes to love the man like his son (and vice versa).
 - Hater of whites becomes a pastor of mostly whites.
 - Christian-hater becomes perhaps the most prominent Christian-advocate in history.
 - Violent drug runner, addict, and jailbird becomes compassionate Christian minister to prisoners.
 - Man goes to extremes to make a joke of Christianity; now embraces and proclaims it.
 - This man's father, a violent drunk for 40 years, never drinks again.
 - Thousands of Muslims experience dreams and visions of Christ and subsequently risk their welfare — and even their *lives* — to follow Christ. (Recall [Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?](#).) Fools? Or have encounters with Christ so changed them that they *can't not risk* their lives?
- A similar point can be made for risk-taking **Christ-followers** around the modern world in the perse-

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cuted Church⁴¹⁸, of whom an average of 322 individuals die for their faith every month.⁴¹⁹ Many others suffer persecution/torture/imprisonment.^a

The **biblical Christ** as one of the **whos** — an active-today one of the **whos** — seems reasonable to me.

Christ's offer of grace makes sense

Arguably **grace** is the unique, most critical characteristic of **biblical Christianity**. It represents the harmonization of perfect love with perfect justice: God sacrificially absorbs the cost of justice — for those who humbly accept the deal — and then works internally in lives of those who trust in and lean on him.

The need for grace makes sense

Despite many good things about us, noted elsewhere in this book, if we're honest we know that: 1) we mess up and do wrong,^{b (next page)} even relative to **our own** standards; 2) we can't consistently **not** mess up, even without circumstances or others to blame; 3) even if we only mess up only once per day,

^a...making the majority of free-world **Christ-followers**, including me, look like wimps by comparison.

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we've done it thousands of times over our lifetimes.

4) As argued in the [What about justice?](#) subsection, that adds up to very many wrongs committed over the course of humanity, even if we count only 0.1% (1/1000) of all wrongs — and only one wrong per day — as significant per *our* standards.

If a trillion significant wrongs have been committed according to *our* standards, how many more according to **God's** higher standards? Consider, for example, humans' I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you rejection of God's benevolent influence in our lives. That may not seem offensive to us, but it's probably the ultimate offense to God (recall [God? Then why this mess?!](#))?

^bI refer here to wrongs of a moral nature, not common mistakes due to limited information, limited intellectual ability, etc. For example, some people who make information mistakes out of ignorance or mental slipup say "I lied," but that's not truly lying; lying is intentional distortion of truth, not inadvertent error. The misinformation consequences of lying and error can be identical, but the reasons behind them are typically quite different (though sometimes subconscious motivations may trip us up).

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The implementation of grace makes sense

So what does God do about it? Here's the deal:

- In perfect *justice*, the perfect judge pronounces the just sentences for a trillion offenses committed relative to his ultimate standards.
- In perfect *love*, the perfect judge effectively walks down from the bench, takes the place of the defendants, and concurrently serves the sentences of all defendants who humbly accept the deal — ***which is not forced on anyone***. *Christ* is the ultimate judge and Christ pays the penalties — in the most torturesome way imaginable.
 - The **biblical Christ** **who** of God temporarily takes on human flesh.^a
 - Innocent Christ unjustly suffers not only one of the cruelest known methods of execution —

^a...easy for a **transcendent** God who I suggest designed and superintended the beginnings of behaviorally modern humans — argued in [Just animals?](#) as the best explanation for the **integrative** combination of paleoanthropological observations and involved-God evidence. If you're an engineer or scientist, can you tweak and repurpose your design? Ditto for a computer programmer? **130**

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but, far worse, suffers an agony that we cannot fathom: *total abandonment* from the other two **whos**.^a (Part of the penalty that *we* will pay if *we reject* this substitute payment?)

Grace doesn't seem fair?

This **grace** doesn't seem fair, right?... Or does it?

- Do we experience and desire *human* grace and mercy, such as undeserved kindness, unconditional love, and 'getting off the hook' for our failures at work/home/highway?
- Does a good mother not *love* — in contrast with *like* — her child, despite behavior? Does a loving mother sometimes even sacrifice her own needs for the needs of her child? Even animal moms sometimes do that. So why can't a **transcendent** personal God, arguably the ultimate author and model of all love, unfathomably *more* model it? (The God of the [Foundations of goodness](#) on page 453, without whose influence, I suggest, society would disintegrate.)

^a Luke, an author cited for exemplary historicity (recall '[New Testament is unhistorical?](#)'), perhaps best reports the event in Chapter 23 of his **Gospel**.

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- Is it reasonable for a soldier to die by deliberately falling on a grenade to save the buddies he loves from *temporal* consequences? (It's happened.) Is it less reasonable for judge Christ to die an undeserved and torturous sentence to save defendant humans he loves from *eternal* consequences?^a

No works?

In all non-atheistic/non-agnostic belief systems, *except biblical Christianity*, works is a *condition for* the forgiveness of God/merging with God or greater power/nirvana — a status uncertain at best or practically unreachable.

In *biblical Christianity*, works *follow* forgiveness and in a sense partially *result from* forgiveness. New Testament writer Paul captures this distinction in the following statements:

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ

^aWhat do I mean by eternal consequences? Consider [The solution](#), [Acceptable terms?](#), and [Effects](#)

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Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do". [Paul's letter to the Ephesians 2:8-10, NIV]

The sequence: made right with God through *grace*; **then** doing *works* that God planned for made-right people. Works? Yes, by all means, but all the more as a *result* of grace, not as a *condition* of grace.

Acceptance of that grace makes sense

As noted above and discussed more in [What about justice?](#), grace isn't forced on anyone. And though it's free to all, it's not cheap

Perhaps some folks resist grace *because* it's free, just as market research has shown that some people resist merchandise if it's free. They sometimes associate *low cost* with *low value*, regardless of actual value. So I'll clarify:

- Grace is *free* in the sense that 1) it's *available* to all seven billion of us, and 2) getting right with God demands no self-effort/works/rituals/mantras/jihads/*karma*/self-flagellation/etc.
- But grace is *not cheap* in the sense that salvation 1) was costly to God and 2) *can* be costly to us in

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terms of self-**autonomy** and attitude. The following conditions of acceptance *can* be costly to us, as already discussed in [What about justice?](#) and specifically in [The solution](#) on page 465:

1. Humility before God, which of course starts with acknowledging his existence.
2. Acknowledgement of a) the *need* for reconciliation between God's justice and love and b) God's *actions* that bought it (when known³²⁶).
3. *Acknowledgement of and apology for* an I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you personal **autonomy**.
4. A sincere will to trust in and lean on God and do right. This means *giving up* I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you **autonomy**.

*Costly...*but immensely worthwhile.

If a **transcendent**, personal, just, loving, active God exists and grace is the means he has established to be in right relationship with him, then humble acceptance of that grace makes sense.

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But what about all the 'Christian' denominations?

But what about all the 'Christian' denominations?

There are indeed many denominations. But at the *core*, **biblical** Christianity is **one** thing; there is widespread agreement on the non-negotiables — the major points about who the **biblical Christ** is, the criticality of **grace**, etc. — *despite* differences on minor points of doctrine and widely varying styles of worship.

By contrast, there are differences on critical *major* points in non-biblical denominations and cults, including those who imply the *name* Christianity and *use* much of the same terminology but often *mean* something different. For example, the Christ of liberalism, Jehovah's witnesses, and Mormonism is good but not God, and God in general is substantially redefined. Some biblical and non-biblical denominations have almost identical names, as illustrated in the various flavors of Baptist and Presbyterian.

Talking to the wind?

I address the *rationality of prayer* in this chapter. Why? Because: 1) instances of answers to prayer appear in [EVIDENCE](#), 2) I speculated about how God could hear multiple prayers simultaneously in [Extra time dimensions and prayer?](#) — irrelevant, of course, if prayer is irrational, and 3) if [biblical Christianity](#) is true, per [Christ? Why?](#), then prayer makes sense as a means of communication with God.

What is prayer?

General definition in Wikipedia: "...an invocation or act that seeks to activate a rapport with a deity, an object of worship, or a spiritual entity through deliberate communication."

Is all prayer equivalent?

Belief-system-specific definitions, objectives, practices, and objects of prayer vary enormously — so enormously that generalizations about the rationality or irrationality of prayer are impossible (except to

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materialists, to whom *all* objects of prayer are mythical, and therefore *all* prayer is nonsense). I submit that the specific practices and object(s) of prayer matter. To make the point, I'll contrast just two types:

- Tibetan Buddhism's mantras to a panoply of gods through wind-waving of prayer flags, manual spinning of prayer wheels, endless verbal repetitions, walking around prayer towers, and juniper smoke rising to the gods.
- Biblical Christianity's focused praise, thanksgiving, and humble requests to a **transcendent** personal God; prayer by turn-back-the-clock-please people, as defined in [God? Then why this mess?!](#), or by turn-back-the-clock-please *wannabes* acknowledging [The solution](#).

The following discussions refer to the latter, which I'll call '**biblical** prayer'.

The rationality of biblical prayer

Many people have been disappointed regarding even **biblical** prayer, wondering whether it's meaningless or

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irrational: is anyone listening? If you've so wondered you're not alone. Thinker Phil Yancey, in his book *Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?*,³⁶⁰ both asks and addresses tough questions about prayer.

Disappointment with prayer contributes to skepticism. Perhaps perspectives that follow will support the rationality of *biblically defined* prayer.

Biblical prayer is irrational?

Analytical people — at least analytical people like me — don't like uncertainty and mystery, except perhaps as a challenge. We like to examine, probe, evaluate, calculate, research, and find concrete answers. But prayer is *implicitly* a bit mysterious because a **transcendent** God to whom one addresses prayer is implicitly a bit mysterious — otherwise he wouldn't be **transcendent**. So prayer involves a degree of *faith*.

Faith seems to some like intellectual suicide — abandonment of one's mind to the unknown and rationally unknowable: a curse to science.

I argue to the contrary.

Biblical faith is irrational?

How could the faith required by prayer — prayer to an ostensibly *unseen* and *unseeable* entity — be rational? Well, doesn't supposedly-rational science^a involve degrees of faith in the unseeable? Doesn't even science often involve drawing conclusions — sometimes wrong conclusions — from the unseeable via *indirect effects*. Has anyone ever *seen* a black hole? Do we not know about black holes *empirically* by observing associated *effects*? Has anyone seen *dark matter* and *dark energy*. Don't we know about these entities by their *effects*? Has anyone ever seen an electron, a proton, neutron, a quark, or a neutrino — and can anyone imagine *ever* seeing these exceedingly tiny particles? Or do scientists discern their existence and properties from their *effects*? Has anyone *observed macroevolutionary* processes? Does *macroevolution* not demand a degree of *faith*?^b

^a...however qualified by scientist biases, as discussed in [Science is objective?](#)

^bAtheist [Philosopher of science Michael Ruse](#) seemingly would agree.

Analogously, we don't see^a God, but can we not discern his existence and 'properties' from his **effects** — as shown in [EVIDENCE](#) and evidenced and argued elsewhere this book.

Oxford physicist Andrew Steane argues for the rationality of faith from a somewhat different angle:

"The truth about science is, then, that it flourishes when scientists show **faith** in their theories: they embrace them because they are beautiful, and they put up some resistance to abandoning them. They take seriously serious counter-evidence, but they require it to prove its credentials. It is not hard to make the case that **faith** is involved when scientists launch out on their voyage of discovery, whether in picking research directions, or intuiting concepts before investing in the effort to elaborate them, and when they publish and promote their ideas. I am not trying to imply that this simplifies the more subtle question of religious faith, only that one should not regard the idea of 'faith'

^aThe New Testament argues that, historically, Christ made God visible for a few years. However, let's bypass the Bible in this discussion and assume eternal invisibility.

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itself as an unworthy part of human nature. *Faith is **not contrary to reason**, nor is it an alternative to reason. Faith, in the sense of engagement and eagerness for the journey, is a **partner to reason**.*

You may have been told that faith is a lazy way of thinking, quite unlike scientific thinking, but, as the song has it, *it ain't necessarily so*, and in fact it is not so. Faith is a part of the set of basic attitudes that are needed for almost anything we value in life, including science and all the arts. In short, ***faith of some kind is not optional; we only get to choose what we put our faith in.*** <Emphases are mine.> [355](#)

I occasionally hear that a child once defined faith as, "Believin' what ya know ain't true." Hopefully the arguments above and evidence in this book help to show that faith in reality is: "rationally grabbin' what ya *can* check out — enuf' ta go on — and then acceptin' what yer human limits ain't able ta grasp."

I hope you'll find this chapter implicitly helpful. However, first reading [Mythical foundations?](#), [God? Then](#)

Evidence for effectual prayer?

[why this mess?!](#), [Christ? Why?](#), and [Just stuff?](#) will make the subject of prayer more meaningful.

Evidence for effectual prayer?

So is there *evidence* that **biblical** prayer is nothing more than an irrational emotional salve or an exercise in futility?

Some accounts in EVIDENCE

See again the accounts in [EVIDENCE](#) for prayer correlated with results. Prayer was explicitly or implicitly involved in several of the accounts. Recall, for example:

- The three-month, 24/7 prayers associated with Tass Saada's major transformation [Ref: [Jew-hating PLO sniper strives to reconcile Arabs & Jews.](#)]
- The prayers associated with Bruce Van Natta's naturally impossible intestinal regrowth in [Unusual means meet unusual ministry needs?](#).

Though I could include many more accounts — and perhaps will in a future edition — I'll settle now for just three more, in the [Prayer for Rome](#) and [Prayer for Istanbul](#) subsections below and in [Encouragement](#)

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Evidence for effectual prayer?

[from the latrine](#) a bit later. However, I'll first summarize data from one double-blind study.

Double-blind studies of intercessory prayer

Is prayer amenable to scientific study — or do the protocols involved interfere with the processes they evaluate, such as in the **quantum mechanical** 'measurement problem' — the poster child for **quantum weirdness**.

The results of double-blind studies on intercessory prayer are mixed, possibly relating to the very different ways the studies were structured and the prayERs^a were chosen. [356](#) But consider the following statistically significant double-blind-study results of intercessory prayer from *biblical Christ-followers* — for coronary care patients, [Table 5.357](#)

^aIn this book, the capital letters ER at the end of the word prayer — i.e. prayER — refer to a *person* who prays, in contrast to the process or practice of prayer.

Evidence for effectual prayer?

Table 5 Effects of biblical prayer on coronary patients

Hospital course score	Prayed- for group (n=192)	Control group (n=201)
Good: no new diagnoses, problems, therapies, or significant morbidity events	163	147
Intermediate: higher morbidity and moderate death risk	2	20
Bad: highest morbidity and death risk	27	44

However, if God exists and prayer is personal communication with him, can we force it into a scientific box? Or even if we do want to speculate about mechanisms, might prayer relate in any way to **supernatural** interactions with the human psyche, such as I briefly touch on in [Just stuff?](#)

Prayer for Rome

But let's focus now on a very different object of prayer — prayer for effective *evangelism*. I submit that God's desire for people's relationship with him generally and Christ specifically is, biblically, unam-

Talking to the wind?

Evidence for effectual prayer?

biguous, regardless of how opposing forces work to thwart these objectives. Though God understandably doesn't routinely answer prayers for miraculous healing, we'd expect him to frequently answer prayers asking him to soften people's 'hearts' toward him.

NOTE Might you feel discomfort with or even scorn for evangelism? Kindly reserve judgment before digesting the bottom-line significance of the account below: does a prayer-responsive God exist? Ditto for the account that follows immediately thereafter: [Prayer for Istanbul](#).

As of 2015, short-term evangelistic teams from my church have visited Rome four summers in a row. These visits included music and art from talented individuals. Though doubtless none of the trips went unprayed-for, the last two were *massively* prayed for. Starting in 2014, my church 'adopted' Rome, asking 504 folks to sign up to pray 20 minutes each week for Rome (504 x 20-minutes = 7 days → '24/7' prayer coverage). Actually, 900 people signed up. This practice has continued in 2015. Results? See [Table 6](#)

Talking to the wind?

Evidence for effectual prayer?

Table 6 Evangelism effectiveness in Rome vs. prayer

2012 and 2013	2014 and 2015
BEFORE implementation of 24/7 prayer	AFTER implementation of 24/7 prayer, over months
Disinterest and sometimes hostility Hardly any conversations about spiritual issues. Absolutely <i>no</i> opportunities to share the gospel. ^a Locals sometimes: • angrily demanded the music stop; • shut their windows; • forced the teams off the piazzas.	Receptivity Crowds flocked to where the teams performed. Spiritual conversations on piazzas, trains, and buses. Ability to share the gospel ^a — 160 times in 2015.

^a How Christ: 1) paid for the justice they deserve, *subject to their acceptance*; 2) can transform their lives; 3) can relate to them.

A fluke? Coincidence? The differences are hardly marginal. Moreover, with two similar 'data points' for

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each condition (two summers each), these observations are statistically unlikely to be 'outliers'.

Does the dramatically increased receptivity merely correlate with an increased *general* Italian receptivity to spiritual things? Church attendance in Italy did increase after Pope Francis arrived in *March* of 2013.³⁵⁸ However, the ministry teams encountered disinterest and hostility in the *summer* of 2013.

Prayer for Istanbul

Cliff Cooper^a is a bold guy who took forty Midwest **Christ-followers** to Istanbul, Turkey to hand out 400 Bibles on the street — an 'officially' legal activity in a 'theoretically' secular state but sometimes treated as de facto illegal by individuals and the increasingly Islamicized government ³⁵⁹ of this 99% Muslim population. Cliff recently recounted the following experience to my pastor friend Joe.

At the outset, the forty **Christ-followers** split up into smaller groups along the main thoroughfare in Istanbul. Each person carried Bibles in a backpack. Even

^aPseudonym, necessary due to socio-political sensitivities.

Evidence for effectual prayer?

after four hours nobody could give away a single copy. Moreover, the group encountered open hostility: passersby sometimes slapped Bibles out of their hands/cursed at them/yelled at them.

After praying that night and the next morning, Cliff sensed guidance^a for the group to walk that same main street all day and just pray — *not* attempting to give away any Bibles; so that's what the group did. He sensed that same need the next morning; again the group just walked and prayed all day on that street. Ditto on the third day.

On the fourth morning after initially trying to hand out Bibles, Cliff still sensed the same guidance during personal prayer: not yet. Notwithstanding, three of

^a**Christ-follower** prayer is ideally two-way, not in the sense of the prayER (the person praying) hearing voices but in terms of distinct and sometimes repeated impressions — sometimes strong, counterintuitive impressions. A skeptic may dismiss such impressions as psychological. However, the following applies to this account, to [The prayer](#) on page 64, and to *many* others not in this book: obedient responses to such impressions — typically sensed during heartfelt prayer to the God of the Bible — have lead to positive, sometimes extraordinary outcomes.

Talking to the wind?

Questions about prayer?

the group decided to hand out Bibles anyway...and ended up in jail. Cliff had to bail them out.

On the fifth morning, Cliff sensed guidance that the right time had arrived. As the full group met on the main thoroughfare, waiting to be dispersed in smaller groups, one guy pulled a Bible out of his backpack. Almost immediately, a passing Turk asked what it was, wanted it, and received it. Another bystander asked the first individual where he got the Bible. That person likewise requested and received one. Thus started a cascade of requests, and the group *very* quickly gave away all 400 Bibles.

Questions about prayer?

I'll first address a few questions prospectively raised by the preceding [Prayer for Istanbul](#) account, some of which have general implications. I'll subsequently address a few other potential questions about prayer.

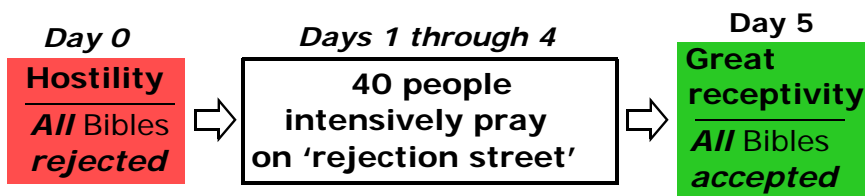
Talking to the wind?

Questions about Prayer for Istanbul

Coincidence in Istanbul?

Here again is the [Prayer for Istanbul](#) scenario:

Objective: give away 400 Bibles on main street of the largest city in Turkey, a 99% Muslim country



Can we *perfectly* rule out coincidence? No, but what are the patently obvious implications? What's your probability estimate for the scenario naturally playing out that way?

If you think, "Maybe 400 **Christ-followers** just happened to be passing by," consider the circumstances. What's the probability that 400 **Christ-followers**, all wanting Bibles (strangely, most not yet having one) would pass by...

- In a 99% Muslim-believer country?
- On that specific day?

Talking to the wind?

Questions about prayer?

- In that specific city?
- On that specific sidewalk?
- At that specific location (presumably on a long sidewalk, being the main street; Cliff's group had no time to disperse)?
- During that specific narrow time window (all 400 Bibles were given away in a very few minutes)?

How could God influence the outcome in Istanbul?

Well, again we can only speculate, given the inescapable mystery about just how a **transcendent** God operates beyond human capabilities. Notwithstanding, recall [Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?](#)

Might God, knowing in advance who would pass by Cliff's group that day,^a have responded to the prayERs by predisposing recipients with dreams/visions?

Prayer about BIBLES?! Many critical WORLD issues!!

Given the gross plethora of unresolved needs and problems in the world, why does this account and

^aConsider [Extra time dimensions and foreknowledge?](#) on page 371.

some others in [EVIDENCE](#) involve *Bibles*, spiritual transformations, and Christian ministry issues — not ‘practical’ issues? In light of pressing *world* issues, why should God consider *Bibles* important?

First things first

Before we lose sight of the thrust of the [Prayer for Istanbul](#) account, does it support an affirmative answer to the question [Evidence for effectual prayer?](#) — regardless of its association with *Bibles*? If NO, then a “Prayer about *Bibles*?!” question is irrelevant. Otherwise, YES.

What if the Bible contains God's directives?

Might a **transcendent** God have a bit broader perspective over space, time, and interconnected events than we do? Might a **transcendent** God actually know a little better what’s best for us than our limited perspectives allow? Might a **transcendent** God have some influence over human minds^a (again consider [Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?](#) and other accounts relating

^aConsider [Just stuff?](#) on page 599. Might our minds NOT be spiritually isolated/insulated?

Questions about prayer?

to visions) — especially minds receptive to him? If so, is it possible that God actually *did* influence the minds of fallible but receptive humans to transcribe some of his wisdom — including teachings offensive to today's cultural relativism? Might [Mythical foundations?](#) influence your answers?

*What if the Bible addresses the **root** of many 'critical world issues' that abound?*

If God did inspire Bible content, might some **transcendent** wisdom address **root** issues behind the “gross plethora of unresolved needs and problems in the world”? If so, wouldn't God want to get the Bible in as many hands as possible — so at least *some* readers will change positively, in response to God being welcomed to work in them (see [Acceptable terms?](#)), thereby mitigating some of the world's problems? Which focus takes higher priority in the long term (which a **transcendent** God arguably can see when we can't): the root of a disease or its symptoms?

Is it possible that those who hold certain biblical teachings in contempt might be mistaken? Is it possible that rejected teachings, however unpal-

Talking to the wind?

Questions about prayer?

atable to relativistic thinking, might be for **every-one's** best? Is it possible that some unpopular teachings, if followed, might ultimately mitigate harmful personal and social consequences for *all* parties? What if the Bible discusses a critical God-caused event — [The solution](#), the implications of which, *if accepted by the reader*, result not only in *knowledge* of good but extra *power* to do it? Putting aside the negatives of [Pseudo-Christian subjectivity](#), caused by ignoring or abusing clear biblical teachings, consider the host of positives noted, for example, in *How Christianity Changed the World*.¹⁴⁵

Priority of a God-directives Bible that addresses the ROOTS of many 'critical world issues'?

If the Bible contains God's directives, if it addresses the **roots** of many critical world issues, and if [The solution](#) it reports is valid, wouldn't *communication* of God's emphatically better perspective and wisdom to humanity take high priority?

Not only comfortable, affluent, minimally-persecuted evangelicals think so. Even *owning* a Bible is a serious offense in many parts of the world —

Talking to the wind?

Questions about prayer?

for example in the former Soviet Union, in some Muslim societies, and especially in North Korea.³⁶² Yet many people in hostile parts of the world have compromised their welfare — sometimes even their lives — to give, get, or own bibles. The Bible is costly for them, in more ways than one. Are those people fools?

ENCOURAGEMENT FROM THE LATRINE

In 1971, seventeen year old Hien Pham interpreted for apologist Ravi Zacharias as he spoke at several locations in Vietnam during the war. Seventeen years later, Hien contacted Ravi and described some experiences after the withdrawal of American troops.

After the fall of South Vietnam, the Viet Cong jailed Hien for having worked with Americans, took away his Bible, and allowed him to read only Marx and Engels. A year under those conditions took its toll, and one day he prayed "'Maybe you don't exist, God. I'm giving up all hope. I don't believe in you. Tomorrow when I wake up, I'm not going to pray.'"

Talking to the wind?

Questions about prayer?

The next morning, the prison assigned Hien to clean the latrines, which he referred to as "...the dirtiest place on earth you'd want to be." As he cleaned the floor (after tying a handkerchief around his mouth!) he noticed a little bin containing excrement-soiled pieces of paper. He further noticed English print on one of the pieces. Without reading the page, he washed it and stuffed it into his hip pocket.

In the dark that night, after everyone else was asleep, Hien secretly read the page with his flashlight. (Recall that he had been an English-to-Vietnamese interpreter.) It turned out to be from Romans 8 in the New Testament, from which he read the following: "'For all things work together for good to them that love God; to those that are called according to his purpose...For who shall separate us from the love of Christ?...Neither things present, nor things to come, nor life nor death.'"

Hien, greatly refreshed and encouraged, thereafter *asked* for the nasty job of cleaning the latrines...and continued to find excrement-soiled

Talking to the wind?

Questions about prayer?

Bible pages, which he washed, saved, and read. It turned out that the prison-camp commanding officer, who had long before received a Bible, now used it as toilet paper.

Hien was eventually released, escaped to Thailand, and now lives in the United States.^{[363](#)}

ONE FOR THIRTY

The late Richard Wurmbrand, a Romanian pastor and former militant atheist, suffered very greatly for refusing to compromise Christianity with communism. In his book, *Tortured for Christ*, he describes a communist-country situation in which two “very dirty” villagers came to his home to buy a Bible, perhaps out of the batch that he said had been “brought in by certain means.”^a The two villagers had taken winter jobs shoveling frozen earth in hopes of earning enough to buy an old, tattered Bible for their *village*. Wurmbrand was able to give them a new one from America, without charge. He notes:

^aBibles typically had to be smuggled into the former Soviet Union. E.g., read *God's Smuggler* by Brother Andrew.

Questions about prayer?

"They could not believe their eyes! They tried to pay me with the money they had earned. I refused their money. They rushed back to their village with the Bible. A few days later I received a letter of unrestrained, ecstatic joy thanking me for the Scriptures. It was signed by thirty villagers! They had carefully cut the Bible into thirty parts and exchanged the parts with one another! It was pathetic to hear a Russian begging for one page of the Bible to feed his soul.

They were happy to exchange a cow or a goat for a Bible. One man traded his wedding ring for a battered New Testament."

Wait a minute! Haven't some people used the Bible to justify bad actions?!

Indeed. I'm not trying to overly simplify critical issues. I know that some Bible owners don't follow biblical teachings¹³ and others distort/misuse them. Selfish people once used the Bible to justify modern slavery.³⁶¹ I'm not naïve about the complexities of human interactions and environments, and I'm aware of the stupendous human capabil-

Talking to the wind?

Questions about prayer?

ity to rationalize and self-deceive. However, I submit that biblical teachings address core issues behind world problems. [God? Then why this mess?!](#) touches on what I'm trying to say here.

Other potential questions about prayer

Hopefully you'll find the comments that follow helpful, however inadequately. For a much broader discussion of prayer questions in general, consider Phil Yancey's book, *Prayer: Does it make any difference?*³⁶⁰.

Why would God need/want prayer to do ANYTHING?

Why doesn't God automatically do the best thing for all people, under *all* circumstances? Why would prayer have importance? For example, per the [Prayer for Istanbul](#) account, if God indeed does want to communicate with people via the Bible, why wouldn't he influence them to want the Bible *without* people needing to pray? Why would anyone *ever* need to pray, in this situation or in any others?

Talking to the wind?

Questions about prayer?

*God sometimes fulfills **our** wills while restraining **his**?*

I suggest that God unilaterally does lots of things on behalf of humanity that go unnoticed. But, concerning prayers, let's consider the human freedom to choose wrongly as well as rightly. Might some prayer ask God for actions he *righteously wants to do but might not otherwise do* to preserve the I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you freedom that humans asked for?^a

To clarify, let's momentarily assume that God indeed minimizes his unilateral intervention in human affairs so as to honor an eons-ago human demand to have negative choices as well as positive. *I as a human have no such honor constraints*; I have substantial human freedom to interact with your human freedom, right? We humans do that all the time — sometimes with light and sometimes with heat.

^aRecall [God? Then why this mess?!](#).

Questions about prayer?

*Possible example of God fulfilling **my** will while restraining **his***

Suppose, for example, I want to exercise *my* God-allowed freedom to interact with *your* God-allowed freedom to flatly reject everything in the Bible (as many passersby apparently did the first day of the [Prayer for Istanbul](#) operation). I could try to convince you otherwise logically, using text or speech. However, logic appeals only to the intellect; moreover even the best such appeals are imperfect. And, further, suppose you reject everything in the Bible on volitional, emotional, or religious grounds, such as with, "I want nothing to do with anything in the Bible, regardless of validity" and/or "The Bible speaks against my life-style, and therefore I hate it" or "I've been hurt by aggressive, insensitive proselytizers, so the Bible can't be right" or "The religion in which I've been steeped since childhood has zero use or tolerance for the Bible." I may waste words, generate anger, and do more harm than good.

However, suppose I ask *God* to influence you:

Talking to the wind?

Questions about prayer?

- Might God choose to preserve your freedom to reject by *not* acting *unilaterally* according to **his** will?
- However, might God **not** so constrain **his** will when expressing it as an agent of **my** will — the will of another human with freedoms equal to yours?

Might God then influence you in ways that I can't?

- Speaking to you in dreams and visions (such as in [Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?](#))?
- Beneficially bringing **ultimately beneficial** difficulties into your life, causing you to be more reflective about big questions? C. S. Lewis once appropriately noted that "pain is God's megaphone."[410](#)
- Causing you to 'accidentally' stumble on a Bible and opening your mind to read it in a new light?
- Influencing a compassionate **Christ-follower** to minister to your aggressive-proselytizer-caused emotional injuries, potentially causing you to reconsider the validity of teachings that you wrongly perceived as instruments of hurt?

Talking to the wind?

Questions about prayer?

- Influencing your mind with insights that bypass ingrained but illogical religious practices and beliefs? For example, if you were a Tibetan Buddhist, might God for starters influence you to look rationally beyond societally ingrained traditions and karma fear to see the insult of mindless mantras — wind-blown prayer-flags, prayer-wheel spinning, mindless verbal repetitions, etc.?

Why so much unanswered prayer?

That leads to yet another question: why is so much prayer *seemingly* not answered — or at least not answered in the way *we* desire? Perhaps at one point(s) in your life you have prayed, but without apparent results — like Hien Pham prayed for a year in prison^a...or like the great many people who prayed for my chronically-ill daughter's healing. Some people become bitter because of seemingly unanswered prayer and conclude that nobody's there.

Cavalier answers to the “Why so much unanswered prayer?” question would be presumptuous — and hurtful to a reader in the midst of difficulty. Much about

^aPer [Encouragement from the latrine](#) on page 531.

Questions about prayer?

prayer is a mystery, and I'd be insulting you to pretend otherwise. However, consider these possibilities (some of which have biblical support, for those who care).

Motive issues?

Are you a parent? Do you honor purely selfish, unwise requests from your children? Is that the best for them? If you were God and you wanted only the best for the prayER, would you honor selfish motives?

Relational issues between the prayER and God?

Again, suppose you are God, and a prayER requests favors while otherwise rejecting you? If the prayER prays with an I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you attitude, would you honor the prayer? Here are a couple of extreme but nonetheless illustrative examples from the late Richard Wurmbrand's experiences:^a

^aWurmbrand didn't write from an armchair. He suffered greatly for his ministry in hostile countries, and his story is another example of great transformation. "...at age fourteen I was as convinced an atheist as the Communists are today. I had read atheistic books, and it was not just that I did not believe in God or Christ—I hated these notions, considering them harmful for the human mind."³⁶⁵

Questions about prayer?

THE OFFICER

After Wurmbrand briefly talked about Christ to a fellow train passenger — a Russian officer — the man spewed a torrent of atheistic arguments.

“Quotations from Marx, Stalin, Voltaire, Darwin, and others against the Bible just flew from his mouth. He gave me no opportunity to contradict him. He spoke for nearly an hour to convince me that there is no God. When he had finished, I asked him, ‘If there is no God, why do you pray when you are in trouble?’ Like a thief surprised while stealing, he replied, ‘How do you know that I pray?’ I did not allow him to escape. ‘I asked my question first. I asked why you pray. Please answer!’ He bowed his head and acknowledged, ‘On the front, when we were encircled by the Germans, we all prayed! We did not know how to do it. So we said, ‘God and spirit of mother...’”[366](#)

I don't know how God responded to that prayer. But suppose you were God and people talked to you only when they were in trouble and wanted

Talking to the wind?

Questions about prayer?

something from you, like putting coins in a cosmic vending machine — ignoring or despising you at other times. How would you respond?

PROFESSORS OF ATHEISM

Wurmbrand noted that,

“I have personally known professors of Marxism who, before delivering an atheistic lecture, prayed to God that He might help them in this!”^{[367](#)}

Faulty expectations/wisdom?

Does not the prayER implicitly pray from a *very* limited human perspective? If you were a wise **transcendent** God, wouldn't you have a vastly greater perspective of **spacetime**^a, cause-and-effect interrelationships, personal interrelationships, and general knowledge? If so, might you know that sometimes the best response to a prayER's request — best for him and/or for others — is NO, LATER, NOT THAT WAY, etc.?

^aRecall [Extra time dimensions and prayer?](#) on page 370.

Questions about prayer?

Unacceptable interference with human freedom?

Might the request impact someone's I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you freedom in ways God sees as unwise?

I suggested previously that God may preserve an I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you person's freedom by *not* acting unilaterally according to *his* (God's) will — but may not so constrain his will when expressing it according to *my* will — the will of a fellow human. BUT what if *my* will, as expressed in the prayer, *disagrees* with *God's* will?

That said, I think prayer for an I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you person's spiritual welfare always agrees with God's will and therefore always has effects, whether apparent to the prayER or not.

Inappropriate override of natural consequences?

I suggest that forgiveness doesn't necessarily remove the natural consequences of our negative actions, and neither does prayer for relief of those consequences. Biblical examples apply.

Talking to the wind?

Questions about prayer?

Beneficial pain/difficulty sometimes?

Don't humans generally seek well-being? Would we ever seek pain and difficulty? Yet it always comes, in various ways and degrees. Can it be beneficial?

I think the answer is YES, both for logical and biblical reasons, but this is a difficult subject. Had someone offered intellectual reasons for my daughter's 28 years of suffering, 260 she (and we) might have been offended. I can see certain benefits of her illness — some to her and much to others — but from my limited perspective, none were commensurate with the degree and duration of her suffering. I have no cheap answers.

That said, there are *some* answers. Consider the following:

HAVE WE A CLEAR EXAMPLE OF BENEFICIAL SUFFERING?

Would it help if *God* provided an example of **his own** gratuitous (undeserved) best-for-others pain? Have we a concrete example of *God himself* suffering — *and* the reasons for it — despite

Talking to the wind?

Questions about prayer?

his power to prevent and remove it? Is that even conceivable?

Yes. It's not my idea. It's recorded history,^a if you can accept that a **transcendent** personal God 1) exists, 2) has the power to bring humanity into existence, 3) therefore has the power to experience humanity himself, 4) is one **what** and three **whos**, and 5) in one of the **whos** experienced humanity in a horrendous way for us. (Recall [The solution](#) and [Christ's offer of grace makes sense.](#))

The scenario entailed prayer, ensuing gross suffering, and consequent benefit for others. The judge walked down from the bench and became the defendant in place of the criminal — for each human who accepts the terms. The prayer of the substitute defendant, recorded in Luke^b 22:41-42, was not answered according to his *preference*...

^aIn the New Testament, the validity of which I've defended in [Mythical foundations?](#), arguably supported by the *extra-biblical* citations in that chapter.

^bRecall [Historicity of the Gospel of Luke](#) on page 417.

Questions about prayer?

“He [Christ] withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”

...but according to his **willingness**.

BUT HOW CAN OUR SUFFERING EVER BE BENEFICIAL?

- Again, consider that pain can be ‘God’s megaphone’ **410** to get our attention.
- Might God not remove difficulty in response to prayer because he has allowed or caused it for the sake of beneficial discipline? Might God sometimes value character development over comfort? Even if we had good, loving parents (some of us did not), didn’t they at least *usually* discipline us for our ultimate benefit?

A family friend tended too often to get what she wanted. Relatives spoiled her. She grew up demonstrating lack of discipline in many facets of her life — and still does. Would more discipline have helped her? Undoubtedly.

And discipline, no matter how unpleasant, can help us too, yes?

Talking to the wind?

Questions about prayer?

Grace instead of relief?

Perhaps God often sees the *grace* to endure as more appropriate than *relief* — for our benefit and/or others'. Emphatically, neither my daughter Pamela nor I would have chosen her devastating genetic condition, but she had *grace* to endure and helped others in the process. Would she or I have chosen that price? NO! But my perspective of time, space, cause-and-effect interrelationships, personal interrelationships, and general knowledge is a tiny bit limited.

Frankly, I think that *grace to endure* — vs. *relief* — is more rule than exception regarding responses to prayer for difficult circumstances. Should those of us in a comfort-as-an-objective-driven culture (mine!) instead routinely expect *relief*? Phil Yancey, world traveler and author of multiple books about suffering, notes that...

"I have noticed a striking difference in the wording of prayers. When difficulties come, Christians in affluent countries tend to pray, "Lord, take this trial away from us!" I have heard persecuted Christians and some who

Talking to the wind?

Questions about prayer?

live in very poor countries pray instead, "Lord, give us the strength to bear this trial."³⁰⁷

Choice not to overrule nature's self-autonomy?

Maybe God overrules nature in some cases today. I've heard reports that suggest it. However, I think such cases are exceptional.

This issue is painful to write about and undoubtedly painful to read. Many unanswered questions. But here's one potentially helpful thought. If [God?](#) [Then why this mess?!](#) is even close to correct, then God's preventing or mopping up after every negative natural event effectively restricts overall freedom. Why? If the first humans chose **autonomy** for themselves, consider again the unreasonableness of continuing mitigation of *nature's* negatives while substantially abandoning mitigation of *human* negatives.

Many disorders and diseases are arguably the result of living in an entropy-driven — disorder-and-decay-driven — universe, despite the absolute necessity of entropy in this particular world for its existence and function, including biological

Talking to the wind?

Questions about prayer?

function. (Consider [God? Then why this mess?!](#) and [Appendix D: Some entropic perspectives on evil.](#)) However, what about the many illnesses resulting from negative human behaviors? Should God routinely fix cancers caused by smoking, cirrhoses of the liver caused by drunkenness, hepatitis C caused by illegal drug use and needle sharing, STDs caused by promiscuity, etc. etc.? Wouldn't nullifying the consequences of negative human behaviors — substantially undoing what we do — effectively nullify the choices of those behaviors?

Prayer may not routinely influence volcanic eruptions, twisters, hurricanes, tsunamis, disease, and other natural disasters — but it undoubtedly can and sometimes does influence special protection/[grace](#)/wisdom/comfort for individuals in the midst or aftermath of such disasters.

That's an inadequate answer. But might it provide a tiny bit of useful perspective?

Talking to the wind?

Closing thoughts

Do you still struggle with the idea of prayer, despite the evidence in the [EVIDENCE](#) and the accounts/discussion above? If a **transcendent** God exists, then should we be surprised if prayer's somewhat a *mystery*? The definition of **transcendence** implies that it **must** be.

Is mystery unacceptable? Recall that scientific revolutions have also elicited mystery. In the face of **space-time fabrics**, general **quantum weirdness**, experimentally-established 'spooky action at a distance' (**quantum entanglement**), new doubts about widespread '**abiogenesis**' in the universe^{[237](#), [238](#)}, unanswered questions about near-death experiences, and remaining conundrums about 'the **hard problem of consciousness**', I suggest that reality is far from fully understood. Accordingly, I suggest *avoiding* dismissal of prayer as irrational and unworthy of sophisticated moderns.

CONCERNING US

The following chapters especially, though by no means exclusively, support [God? Then why this mess?!](#), which addresses the condition and destiny of humanity.

- [Just animals?](#) proposes that the relatively sudden appearance of behaviorally modern humans during the **Upper Paleolithic** era, various aspects of human uniqueness arguably inexplicable by evolutionary mechanisms, and multiple evidences for involvement of a **transcendent** God in humanity at present^a are better explained by **transcendent** directive influence at the very beginning of true humanity than by undirected, mechanistic cause and effect.
- [Just stuff?](#) addresses the nature and destiny of humanity. Does temporal “star stuff” totally define us, or are we more? Is mind more than brain? Is the temporal a container for the eternal?

^a...a tiny sample of which is found in the [EVIDENCE](#).

Just animals?

Whether we're just advanced animals — at *best* maybe 'discovered' by God somewhere along the line — or whether God was actively involved at the beginning makes crucial differences in how we perceive and address ourselves and reality in general. So, frankly, this chapter touches on the *logic* of human origins. Was God involved or not?^a

In this book I've *mostly* side-stepped questions of **transcendent** directive influence in **abiogenesis** — origins of first life — except fleetingly in [Directed fine tuning?](#) I've *totally* side-stepped, and will continue to side-step, questions of **transcendent** directive influence in origins of the species. And I'd *prefer* to side-step the issue of specifically human origins in favor of the bottom line: is '*Undirective cause and effect*' or a

^aNOTE: My focus here is entirely on behaviorally modern humans, and I ask you only to consider what makes most sense in view of the evidence: undirected or directed beginnings of 'us'? If you're sensitized against the traditional 'evolution vs. creation' debate, please hear me out before drawing conclusions.

Three viewpoints

'Directive **who**' ultimately in charge? But I can't; it's critical.

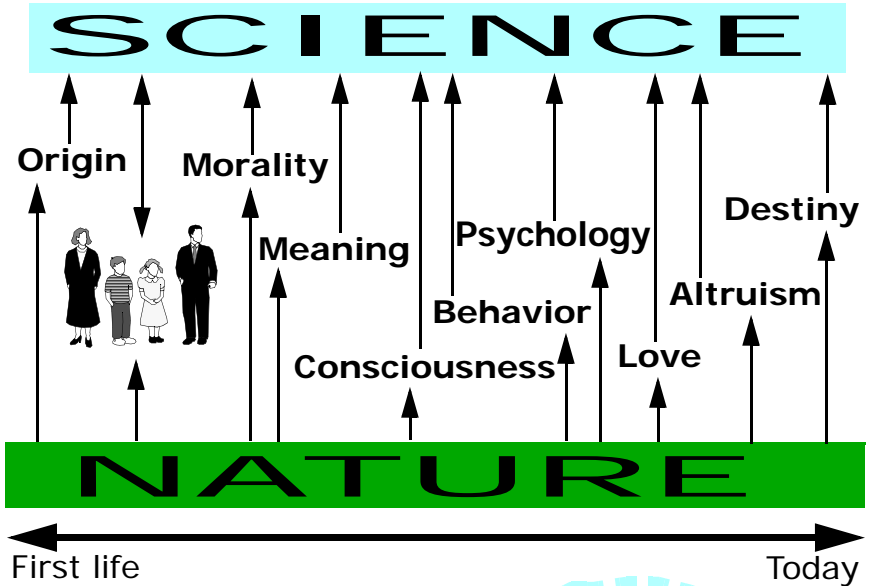
Perhaps those who've invested the effort to read this far through the book are open to God's existence and aren't convinced that we and everything we observe and experience are undirected and deterministic. Nonetheless, most readers get substantial exposure to an implicitly or explicitly *undirected* viewpoint of human origins in the classroom and in the media. Therefore, I posit some contrasting points for your consideration.

Three viewpoints

The following three viewpoints cover a spectrum of answers to general '*Undirective cause and effect*'? vs. '*Directive who*'? questions: **scientific**, [Figure 21](#), **compartmentalized**, [Figure 22](#), and **integrative**, [Figure 23](#). Each view interprets identical data differently, depending on presuppositions and general world-views.^a

^aOpinions on how the arrows should point in these diagrams may vary.

Figure 21 Scientific viewpoints



GOD is nonexistent or superfluous.
God *evidence*, if known, is
ignored or rejected. Science is
ultimate authority on everything.

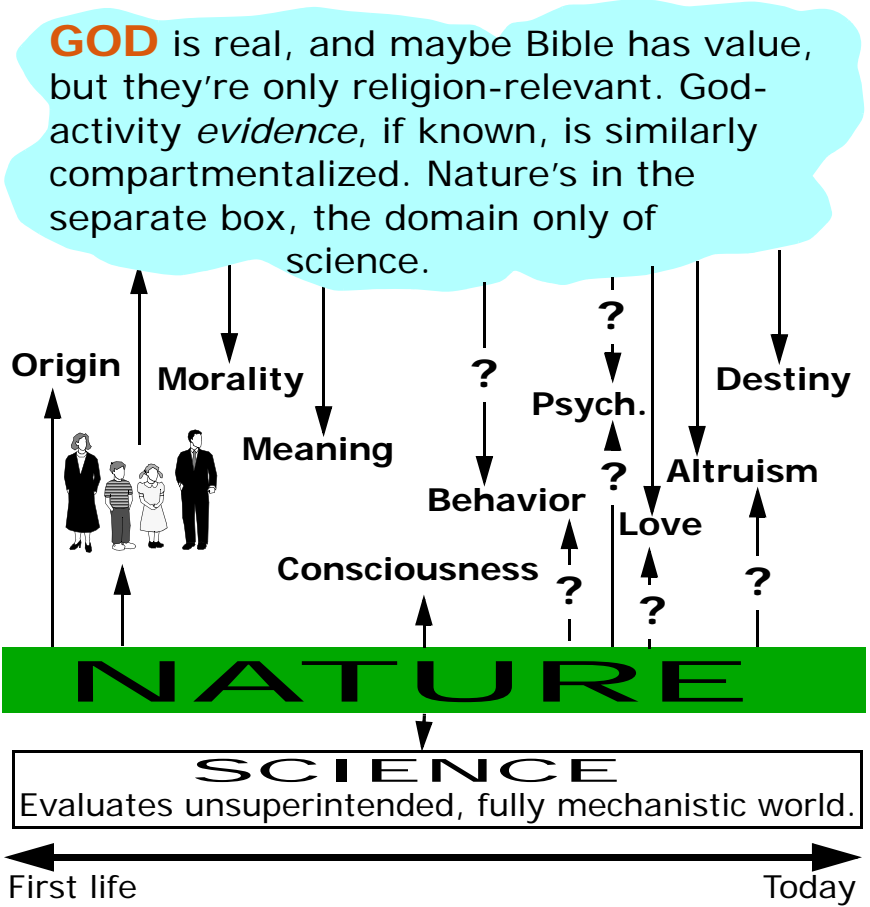
Just animals?

Three viewpoints

Again, ScienTISM claims that *science* is the final arbiter of *all* knowledge and truth. As discussed in [The problem with scienTISM](#), it is effectively a worldview, related to the waning philosophy of **positivism**; it's a *self-refuting* worldview, the truth of which science can't establish.

Just animals?

Figure 22 *Compartmentalized viewpoints*



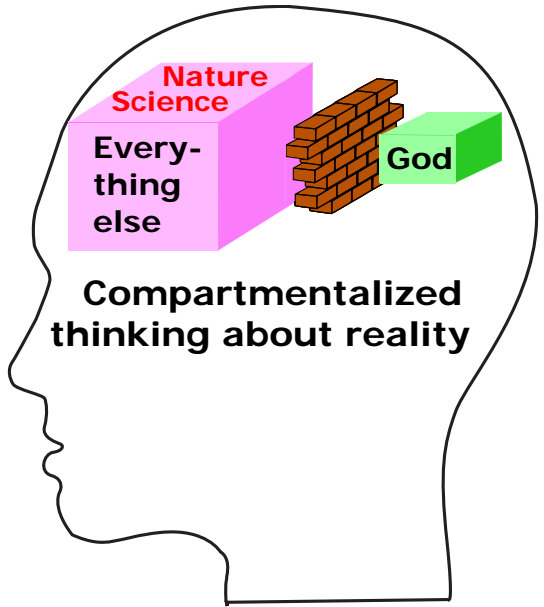
Just animals?

Three viewpoints

I previously commented on and illustrated compartmentalized thinking in an early endnote¹³, primarily focusing on its *moral* consequences. However, the modified illustration at right shows how compartmentalized thinking puts

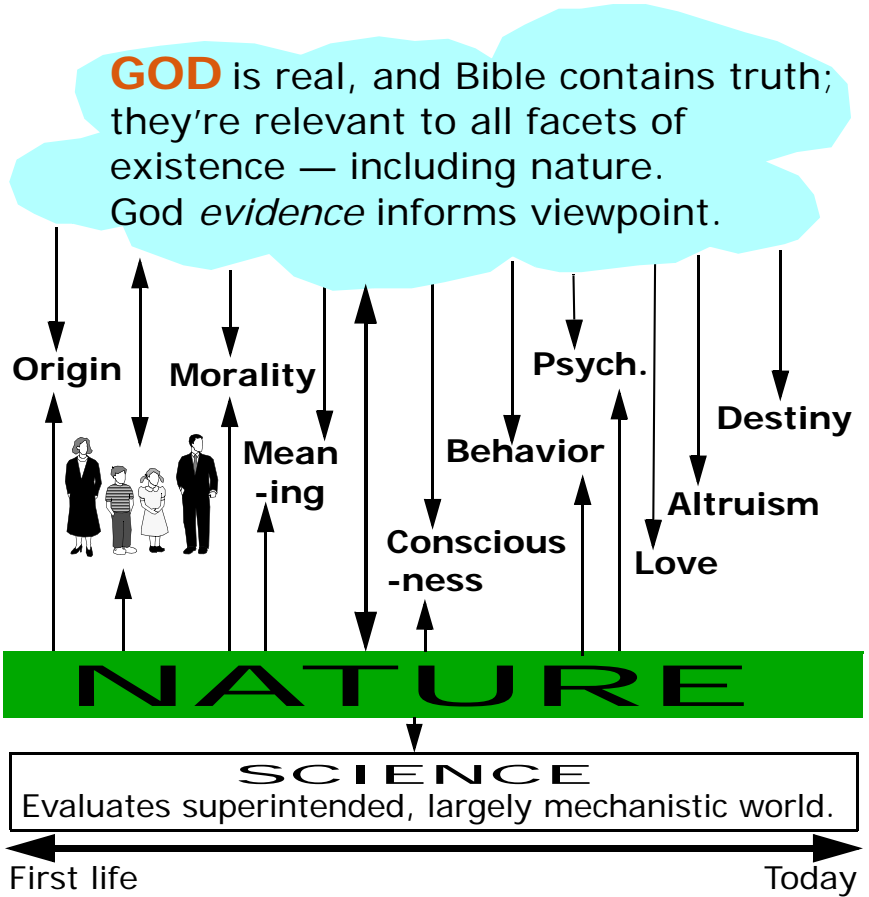
nature and science in the 'Everything else' box.

I strongly suggest that when theists approach science with **methodological naturalism**, they are practicing a form of **compartmentalized** cognitive dissonance — materialistic/atheistic interpretations of reality in the lab and mentally-walled-off theistic interpretations out of the lab.



Just animals?

Figure 23 Integrative viewpoint



Just animals?

Three viewpoints

After reading this far in the book, which view do you think best fits reality? I suggest that:

- If we *don't* have tangible evidence that God exists and is involved in the world, then arguably **compartmentalized** viewpoints are as reasonable as **integrative** viewpoints; **scientific** viewpoints are always unreasonable, because they self-refute (recall [The problem with scientISM](#)).
- If we *do* have tangible evidence that God exists and is involved in the world, then arguably **integrative** viewpoints are more reasonable than both **scientific** and **compartmentalized** viewpoints.

I'll argue in this chapter for an **integrative** viewpoint. (Remember that we're examining truth here, wherever it leads, unfettered by scientific bias). Of the following two prospective causes for the first appearance of behaviorally modern humans...

...purely mechanistic, materialistic processes

...**transcendent** directive influence

...I submit that, based on following combination of evidence, **abductive reasoning** best supports **transcendent** directive influence:^a

^a...neglecting biases that exclude God from consideration.

Just animals?

Three viewpoints

1. The relatively **sudden**^a appearance of behaviorally modern humans roughly 50,000 years ago (in the **Upper Paleolithic**) and concurrent sudden appearance of advanced cognitive and cultural capabilities
2. The cognitive uniqueness of human free will
3. Evidence of **transcendent** directive influence today.
4. Capabilities and behaviors that have no logical connection to survival (except in the minds of those who woodenly demand *some* kind of mechanistic, materialistic explanation, no matter how conjectural).
5. The capability and desire for **proximate meaning** — unique to behaviorally modern humans.
6. The common human desire and quest for **ultimate meaning**.
7. The uniqueness of behaviorally-modern unselfish and even sacrificial love to strangers.

^aJust how *sudden* is in dispute. Some researchers argue for more gradual appearance. "However, the traditional and probably currently dominant view is that behaviorally modern humans appeared in Africa approximately 50,000 years ago, and spread throughout in Europe..."²⁷³

Sudden appearance of behaviorally modern humans

Sudden appearance of behaviorally modern humans

The anthropological & linguistic evidence

Both language and an explosion of behaviorally-modern culture appear suddenly.

Culture

I'll focus here on the period in which behaviorally modern humans appeared: the so-called 'Upper Paleolithic' era.

Paleoanthropologist "Richard Leakey describes the Upper Paleolithic as 'unlike previous eras, when stasis dominated,...[with] change being measured in millennia rather than hundreds of millennia.' Similarly, Mithen refers to the Upper Paleolithic as the 'big bang' of human culture, exhibiting more innovation than in the previous six million years of human evolution."^a [273](#)

^aQuoted exactly as in *Evolutionary Perspectives on Creativity*. I try to avoid 'quote mining' in this book, commenting on context when an isolated quote might be misconstrued. This quote is unambiguous in context.

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Though quoted dates seem to vary a bit, the **Upper Paleolithic** began roughly 50,000 ago — about 500,000 years after the *last* anatomical increase in brain size per measurements of excavated skulls. [274](#)
Some behaviorally modern distinctives include: [272](#), [273](#), [275](#), [276](#), [277](#)

- Finely made tools (whereas “The hand axe persisted as the almost exclusive tool for over a million years...”).
- Multistep food plant processing.
- Elaborate burial sites indicative of ritual and religion (though there’s some sporadic evidence of basic burial before the Upper Paleolithic).
- Fishing
- Complex hearths
- Long-distance exchange or barter among groups
- Systematic use of pigment (such as ochre) and jewelry for decoration or self-ornamentation
- Naturalistic cave paintings of animals, decorated tools and pottery, bone and antler tools with engraved designs, ivory statues of animals and

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sea shells, and personal decoration such as beads, pendants, and perforated animal teeth

- Game playing
- Music
- Dance
- Religion

In their book *African Exodus: The Origins of Modern Humanity*, paleoanthropologist Christopher Stringer and co-author Robin McKie note that:

“For millennia upon millennia, we [hominids] had been churning out the same forms of stone utensils, for example. But about 40,000 years ago, a perceptible shift in our handiwork took place. Throughout the Old World, tool kits leapt in sophistication with the appearance of Upper Paleolithic style implements. Signs of use of ropes, bone spear points, fishhooks and harpoons emerge, along with sudden manifestations of sculptures, paintings, and musical instruments.... We also find evidence of the first long-distance exchange of stones and beads. Objects made of mammal bones and ivory, antlers, marine and

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freshwater shells, fossil coral, limestone, schist, steatite, jet, lignite, hematite and pyrite were manufactured. Materials were chosen with extraordinary care: some originated hundreds of miles from their point of manufacture.... *It is an extraordinary catalogue of achievements that seem to have come about **virtually from nowhere** — though obviously they did have a source. The question is: What was it?"²⁷⁷*
<Emphasis is mine.>

Unsurprisingly, these authors — like the authors cited in Gabora and Kaufman's review^a — suggest an evolutionary answer. However, if we don't *insist* on a mechanistic, materialistic answer and don't categorically exclude non-mechanistic, non-materialistic evidence, is such an answer the *best* answer?

Language

Moreover, some noted *linguists* and related scientists have argued recently (as of 2015) that our language developed *rapidly*, not gradually as often assumed, over

^a...discussed briefly in [Interpreting anthropological & linguistic evidence](#))

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the last 50,000 to 100,000 years. [278](#), [279](#) That time period roughly coincides with the **Upper Paleolithic** era.

Interpreting anthropological & linguistic evidence

Most scientific data is to some degree open to interpretation, and the complex, historical sciences are most open to interpretation. Sometimes biased and even diametrically-opposed opinions get posited for the same data.

Scientific/compartmentalized interpretations

Behavioral modernity in general

Gabora and Kaufman's 197-citation review of behavioral modernity seeks to address the question:

"Why does no other species remotely approach the degree of cultural complexity of humans? How did humans become so good at generating ideas and adapting them to new situations? Why are humans driven to create? Do creative ideas evolve in the same sense as biological life – through natural selection – or by some other means?" [273](#)

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These authors cite several cognitive-evolutionary and cultural-evolutionary hypotheses — all variably conjectural — to explain these sudden and remarkable advances. I counted over three dozen instances of the following words/phrases when attempting to address the above-quoted questions: 'suggestion/suggested/suggesting', 'propose/proposal/proposes', 'may', 'possible/possibility', 'believe/believed', 'ideas', 'thought to be', 'might', 'this view', 'assumes', 'hypothesis/hypotheses'. Such terms are legitimate and appropriate when attempting to address unknown reasons and mechanisms for phenomena. However, every such speculative hypothesis has been formulated from a **scientific** viewpoint that categorically excludes explanations outside the sciences, regardless of validity. More explicitly, I suggest that such hypotheses are formulated with a sort of tunnel vision, in which at-hand *evidence* for **transcendent** directive influence in humans is ignored in favor of *conjecture* about totally undirected mechanisms — the substance of which may be forever undiscoverable and **unfalsifiable**. Again, conjecture is fine when clarifying data doesn't exist — but, I suggest, it does.

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Language

Likewise, with regard to the rapid development of language, the linguists I've cited biasedly *pre-*sume that language developed by evolutionary mechanisms. Bolhuis *et al* ²⁷⁹ state that,

"It is ***uncontroversial*** that language has evolved, just like any other trait of living organisms. That is [i.e. 'here's the justification'], once — not so long ago in evolutionary terms — there was no language at all, and now there is, at least in *Homo sapiens*."

<Bracket comment and emphases are mine.>

Uncontroversial?

Shall we *uncritically* accept Bolhuis *et al*'s conjecture about the development of language — frequently using the words 'may', 'might', 'speculative,' 'could', and 'speculated' as *uncontroversial*?

Is Gabora and Kauffman's *conjecture* about causes of the exceedingly rapid Upper-Paleolithic 'big bang' — that "extraordinary catalogue of achievements that seem to have come about virtually from nowhere²⁷³" — *uncontroversial*? I counted over three dozen 'instances of 'suggestion/sug-

gested/suggesting', 'propose/proposal/proposes', 'may', 'possible/possibility', 'believe/believed', 'ideas', 'thought to be', 'might', 'this view', 'assumes', 'hypothesis/hypotheses' in their article.

I admire another evolutionist's intellectually honest perspective about such conjecture:

"The code of conduct that the naturalist wishing to understand the problem of evolution must adopt is to adhere to facts and sweep away all a priori ideas and dogmas. Facts must come first and theories must follow. The only verdict that matters is the one pronounced by the court as proved facts. Indeed, the best studies on evolution have been carried out by biologists who are not blinded by doctrines and who observe facts coldly without considering whether they agree or disagree with their theories. Today, our duty is to destroy the myth of evolution, considered as a simple, understood, and explained phenomenon which keeps rapidly unfolding before us. Biologists must be encouraged to think about the weaknesses of the interpretations and extrapolations that theoreticians put forward

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or lay down as established truths. The deceit is sometimes unconscious, but not always, since some people, owing to their sectarianism, purposely overlook reality and REFUSE to acknowledge the inadequacies and the falsity of their beliefs.²⁸¹ <Emphasis is mine.>

Conjecture in the scientific enterprise legitimately drives investigation but illegitimately establishes or maintains dogma.

An integrative interpretation

Is a theistic perspective about human origins equally conjectural? I suggest that the tiny sample of [EVIDENCE](#) in this book indicates otherwise. For readers who can accept that [EVIDENCE](#) for God's existence and involvement today I ask this: can we *reasonably* think that this same God was just passing by planet Earth one day many millennia in the past, stumbled on behaviorally modern humans — simply animals that advanced explosively without his influence — and took interest? Is it reasonable to assume that if he's involved with humans today he wasn't involved then?

Consider Figures [24](#) and [25](#) below. Which of the two perspectives better represents reality?

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Figure 24 Scientific and compartmentalized perspectives of natural reality

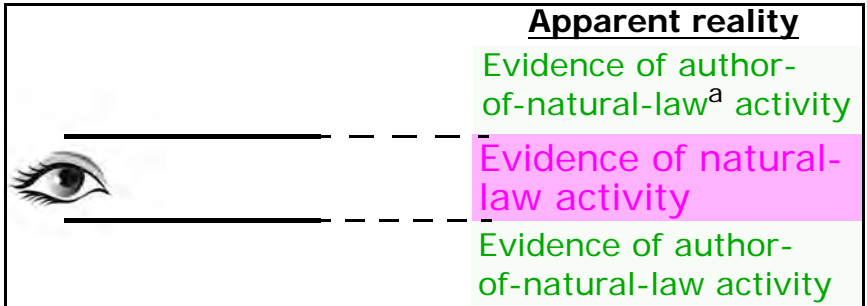
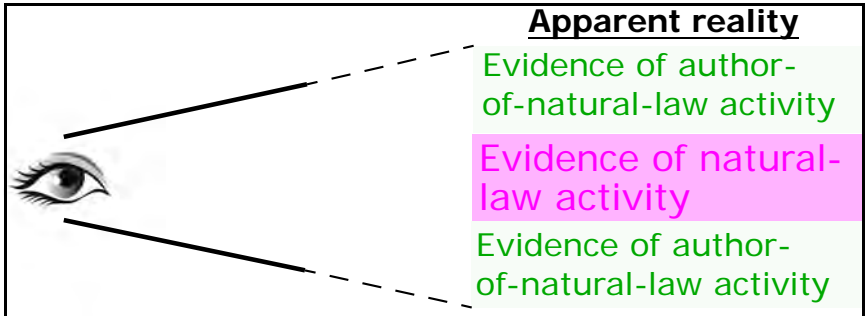


Figure 25 Integrative perspective of natural reality



^a Consider also [Big Bang initiator?](#) and [Directed fine tuning?](#). Our natural laws originated at the Big Bang.

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The cognitive uniqueness of human free will

The cognitive uniqueness of human free will

Are we truly just advanced animals at the pinnacle of evolutionary processes? However intelligent, are we ultimately little more than deterministic machines that are born, eat, live, work, reproduce, and die; born, eat, live, work, reproduce, and die; born, eat, live, work, reproduce, and die...with all behaviors ultimately directed by chains of material cause and effect? *Or is morally-cognitive free will REAL and clearly UNIQUE to humans?*

I can't hold the *deer* that destroyed over a thousand dollars worth of arborvitae in my yard morally culpable. But had *humans* maliciously destroyed my bushes, I'd hold *them* culpable — as would you. Most of us empirically and unambiguously **know**, without doubt, that claims of human *determinism* — near-infinite chains of causes and effects — can't realistically *excuse* human negatives as the inescapable result of nature and nurture. They can't realistically *devalue* human positives as inescapable either. Bad genes and environments notwithstanding, we still regularly make free *decisions*, good and bad.

Why then do we encounter academic doublethink and ultimate denial of the obvious? Stay tuned.

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Claims of determinism self-refute

Consider this argument for the claim titled above:

"In the opinion of many thinkers, human freedom is closely connected with human rationality. If we were deterministic beings, what would validate the claim that our utterance constituted rational discourse? Would not the sounds issuing from mouths, or the marks we made on paper, be simply the actions of automata? All proponents of deterministic theories, whether social and economic (Marx), or sexual (Freud), or genetic (Dawkins and E. O. Wilson), *need a covert disclaimer on their own behalf, **excepting** their own contribution from reductive dismissal.*" [300](#)

<Emphases are mine.>

Hmm. Such authors then can't legitimately take pride in or credit for their work. Long chains of deterministic causes and effects, over which these materialists ultimately have no control, *compel* each word they write or speak. That compulsion must *include* affirmations of deterministic 'programming' in the face of empirically obvious free will — frank admissions of which comprise the bulk of the next subsection.

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Materialism, determinism, and reality

Perhaps not all materialists deny free will, but seemingly the tendency is to do so, per my exposure to such positions and as suggested below:

"Because materialists only accept the existence or primacy of material things, they also only accept the existence or *primacy of material explanations* for events. Whatever happens in the world, it must be explained and explainable by reference to matter. *Materialism thus tends towards **determinism**: because there are material causes for every event, then every event follows necessarily from its causes.*"²⁸⁵ <Emphases are mine.>

Does **determinism** for humans square with empirical reality? Even some materialists have frankly admitted that *we cannot practically **live** with **determinism***; free will stares us in the face. Yet, despite the overwhelming evidence for free will that we routinely see and experience, many materialists continue to hold determinism and free will in **cognitive dissonance**. (Some materialists even claim that evolution has deterministically *programmed* us to falsely affirm free will — to believe a supposed lie.) Here are some admissions of such dissonance — the frankness of which I admire:

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- Humanities scholar Edward Slingerland, self-described as a 'complete atheist'²⁸⁸:

"...whatever we may assert qua naturalists, we cannot escape from the lived reality of moral space. As neuroscientists, we might believe that the brain is a deterministic, physical system, like everything else in the universe, and recognize that the weight of empirical evidence suggests that free will is a cognitive illusion^a. Nonetheless, no cognitively undamaged human being can help acting like and at some level really feeling that he or she is free. There may well be individuals who lack this sense, and who can quite easily and thoroughly conceive of themselves and other people in purely instrumental, mechanistic terms, but we label such people 'psychopaths', and

^a "...weight of empirical evidence...?! **What** 'empirical evidence'? The **obvious** empirical evidence for free will that stares him (and everyone else) in the face doesn't count? Per [Claims of determinism self-refute](#), why should anyone listen to Slingerland's claim that "...the weight of empirical evidence suggests that free will is a cognitive illusion." (Consider also the rest of this chapter and [Just stuff?](#).)

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quite rightly try to identify them and put them away somewhere to protect the rest of us."²⁸⁶

Moreover, a journalist noted in 2013 that,

"The couple have a six-year-old daughter whom, Slingerland says, 'I love intensely'...Slingerland admits his deep affection for his daughter is illogical, since he doesn't really believe in 'love'."²⁸⁸

Slingerland accordingly proposes...

"...*living with a dual consciousness*, cultivating the ability to view human beings simultaneously under two descriptions: as physical systems and as persons."²⁸⁷ <Emphasis is mine.>

A **dual consciousness**? The '*hard problem of consciousness*' isn't hard enough as it is? Might Slingerland and others quoted below *prefer* such **cognitive dissonance** over unwanted psycho-social implications of abandoning materialism?

- MIT artificial-intelligence pioneer Marvin Minsky, who once called the human brain a three-pound computer made of meat:

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"No matter that the physical world provided no room for freedom of will: that concept is essential to our models of the mental realm. Too much of our psychology is based on it for us to ever give it up. We're virtually forced to maintain that belief, even though we know it's false..." [289](#)

With lived reality staring us in the face, according to what unambiguous, unbiased evidence do "... we **know** it's false"?

- Philosopher Galen Strawson:

"As a philosopher I think the *impossibility of free will* and ultimate moral responsibility can be proved with *complete certainty*."

...except for a small problem...

"It's just that I can't really live with this fact from day to day. Can you, really? As for the scientists, they may accept it in their white coats, but I'm sure they're just like the rest."[290](#)

<Emphases are mine.>

Why then does Strawson (and, similarly, others quoted here) insist on "the impossibility of free will...*with complete certainty*," despite the plethora

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of obvious contrary evidence? Which of the following might best explain this:

- *Deterministic* chains of cause and effect that **compel** him to so insist?
- *Free-will* **unwillingness** to face unwanted consequences of abandoning his materialism?
- *Harvard cognitive scientist, psychologist, and linguist Steven Pinker:*

“We have every reason to believe that consciousness and decision making arise from the electrochemical activity of neural networks in the brain. But how moving molecules should throw off subjective feelings (as opposed to mere intelligent computations) and how they bring about choices that we freely make (as opposed to behavior that is caused) remain deep enigmas...

These puzzles have an infuriatingly holistic quality to them. *Consciousness and **free will** seem to suffuse the neurobiological phenomena at every level*, and cannot be pinpointed to any combination or interaction among parts. The best analyses from our combinato-

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rial intellects provide no hooks on which we can hang these strange entities, and thinkers seem condemned either to denying their existence or to wallowing in mysticism."²⁹²
<Emphases are mine.>

Do Pinker's "puzzles" and "enigmas" constitute "*every reason to believe*" that consciousness and decision-making arise purely from neurochemical processes?

- UC Berkely philosopher John Searle, who "...believes that the mental will *ultimately* be explained through neuroscience,"²⁹¹ nonetheless admits that we *don't* know that free will is false:

"...we cannot get on with our lives without presupposing free will. Whenever we are in a decision-making situation, or indeed, in any situation that calls for voluntary action, we have to presuppose our own freedom. *Suppose you are given a choice in a restaurant between steak and veal. The waiter asks you 'And sir, which would you prefer, the steak or the veal?' You cannot say to the waiter, 'Look, I am a determinist. I will just wait and see*

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what I order because I know that my order is determined.' The refusal, i.e. the conscious, intentional speech act of refusing to place an order, is only intelligible to you if you understand it as an exercise of your own free will.

The point that I am making now is not that free will is a fact. We don't know if it is a fact. The point is that given the structure of our consciousness, we cannot proceed *except* on the presupposition of free will."²⁹³ <Emphases are mine.>

Will Searle ultimately resolve his cognitive dissonance between deterministic materialism and obvious reality?

- MIT computer science and engineering professor Rodney Brooks:

"On the one hand, I believe myself and my children all to be mere machines. Automata at large in the universe. Every person I meet is also a machine—a big bag of skin full of biomolecules interacting according to describable and knowable rules. When I look at my children, I can, when I force myself, under-

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stand them in this way. I can see that they are machines interacting with the world.

But this is not how I treat them. I treat them in a very special way, and I interact with them on an entirely different level. They have my unconditional love, the furthest one might be able to get from rational analysis. *Like a religious scientist, I maintain two sets of inconsistent beliefs and act on each of them in different circumstances.*²⁹⁴ <Emphasis is mine.>

Dr. Brooks writes *accurately* about himself; the huge **cognitive dissonance** between his “two sets of inconsistent beliefs” is clear. By contrast, he writes *inaccurately* about the “religious scientist”, at least in my case. *This* ‘religious’^a scientist (me) experiences *no* cognitive dissonance between the existence of and evidence for a biblical God AND unambiguous, falsifiable science — vs. some broadly interpretable and interpreted observations,

^aI dislike that word because of its *huge* spectrum of meanings. I don’t consider myself ‘religious’ per many behavioral connotations of the word.

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worldview-biased interpretations (from materialist-axe-to-grind scientists as well as religionists), unfalsifiable hypotheses, and pure conjecture.

- *Evangelistic atheist Richard Dawkins* claims that we're ultimately nothing but machines. Referencing a British comedy scene, in which a car owner 'punishes' a car that won't start by beating it with a tree branch, Dawkins writes,

"Of course we laugh at his irrationality. Instead of beating the car, we would *investigate* the problem...Why do we not react in the same way to a defective man: a murderer, say, or a rapist? Why don't we laugh at a judge who punishes a criminal? Isn't the murderer or the rapist *just a machine* with a defective component? Or a defective upbringing? Defective education? Defective genes?"
[295](#) <Emphases are mine.>

What if someone encrypted Dawkins's computer system with ransomware, raped his wife or daughter, beat *his* car with a branch, or punched him in the nose? Would *he* dispassionately "inves-

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tigate" the defective component, upbringing, education, or genes of the responsible "machine"?

Probably not. In a Q&A session during a Washington DC promotion of one of Dawkins's books, he was confronted by Joe Manzari, a young Washington think-tank employee:

Manzari: "If humans are machines, and it is inappropriate to blame or praise them for their actions, then should we be giving you credit for the book you are promoting?"

Dawkins: "I can't bring myself to do that. I actually do respond in an emotional way and I blame people, I give people credit."

Manzari: "But don't you see that as an inconsistency in your views?"

Dawkins: "I sort of do, yes. *But it is an inconsistency that we sort of have to live with—****otherwise life would be intolerable.***"²⁹⁶
<Emphases are mine.>

So Dawkins *must* abandon a key tenet of his materialism in real life, which "*otherwise... would be intolerable.*" Why, then, does Dawkins regu-

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larly express so much contempt for non-materialist, non-determinist belief systems?

- Journalist Tom Wolfe has referred to scientists, including Richard Dawkins, whose...

"...theory is that the human brain is nothing but a machine, after all, a form of computer, and therefore it has no free will. In any situation we find ourselves we can only do what our evolutionary software—they love computer talk like 'software,' meaning genetic makeup—has programmed us to do."

Wolfe decided to test the livability of that position:

"So at a recent conference on the implications of genetic theory for the legal system—five distinguished genetic theorists are up on stage—I stood up in the audience and asked, *'If there is no free will, why should we believe anything you've said so far? You only say it because you're programmed to say it.'* You've never heard such stuttering and blathering in response to anything in your life." [297](#)

<Emphasis is mine.>

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Though I admire the frankness of the folks I've quoted above, I ask the same question as Wolfe.

Does '**unity** of truth' no longer apply? Can we legitimately simultaneously hold contradictory truth claims to suit our fancy? Doing so sounds much like Eastern '*Both/And*' thinking, arguments for which ultimately self-refute (recall [Contradictory belief systems are equally true?](#)).

Following a talk in which apologist Nancy Pearcey presented some of the examples above²⁹⁸ — which primarily highlight *academic* materialists' **cognitive dissonance** — a visibly upset Harvard professor approached her and complained that,

"*They^a know* their theories don't explain ordinary life outside the lab. But why throw it in their faces?" <Emphasis is in the source.>²⁹⁹

Why indeed? Was Pearcey being unkind? No. These scholars' frank admissions of cognitive dissonance are public, *in their own writings*. Pearcey, and I, merely seek — in the interest of *truth* — to emphasize to a broader audience that purely naturalistic assessments of human

^a...ostensibly university professors like his colleagues...

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cognition and behavior don't jive with empirical reality. I submit that doublethink like that revealed above ultimately stems less from the pursuit of truth than from a materialistic commitment to **scientism**.^a

The concerns of this chapter go well beyond unwarranted rejection of theistic involvement in human existence. Falsely reducing human existence to undirected, purely mechanistic processes — to 'just machines' and 'just stuff'^b — seriously demeans human value and significance. Ideas have consequences. For example, Friedrich Nietzsche's a) naturalism-based reduction of humans ultimately to little more than advanced, power-seeking animals, b) his despisal of human kindness and modern morality as *unnatural* and *dangerous*, and c) his promotion of the conquering, valueless *Übermensch* (superior man) substantially fueled Adolf Hitler's murderous policies.

^a...which insists that all knowledge *must* ultimately answer to science, no exceptions. (Moreover, many scientism adherents seemingly allow, as knowledge, only their *own* interpretations even of scientific data). Yet scientism is implicitly a self-refuting *worldview* (recall [The problem with scientISM](#)).

^bSee also the next chapter by that name: [Just stuff?](#)

Evidence of transcendent directive influence today

We'd be foolish to think that falsely considering humans as little more than deterministic machines, with no ultimate value or freedom, has no negative consequences for us.

Evidence of transcendent directive influence today

As noted above, I submit that the [EVIDENCE](#) section of this book presents substantial evidence for **transcendent** directive influence in the lives of behaviorally modern humans *now*. Unless we consider God to have been nonexistent, uncaring, or on a long vacation at the time behaviorally-modern humans came on the scene, *current transcendent* directive influence logically suggests *ancient transcendent* directive influence as well.

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Moreover, I suggest that **transcendent** directive influence at the onset of behaviorally-modern humans also correlates better with certain *other* observations

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of human characteristics than does *undirective*, mechanistic evolution.

Nonessential behaviors

I suggest that a huge gap exists between a) the apparent playfulness of some animals and b) the many *nonessential* distinctives of behaviorally modern humans described in [The anthropological & linguistic evidence](#), including art, music, dance, religion, etc. I suggest that attempts to non-empirically link these characteristics to evolutionary advantage consists mostly of worldview-biased conjecture.

Nonessential capabilities

How does the almost unfathomable genius we see today for clearly *nonessential* tasks — including in ancient times (consider brilliant feats of ancient engineering) — relate to adaptive survival? For example, how does the ability to do theoretical physics and its required exceedingly difficult math contribute to human survival/natural selection? How does engineering of and particle physics work with the Large Hadron Collider relate to the survival of our species? How does human curiosity so relate?

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How do we explain the *complex mechanisms* built into the human body to enable survival of 3 to 5 Gs of acceleration?³⁶⁸ The possibility of such whole-body accelerations did not exist until the availability of modern technology. *Undirective **chance** or directive foresight?*

NOTE One G is the acceleration exerted on a body by earth's gravity at sea level — resulting in the force that keeps us firmly against the earth and moves us downward when we jump or fall. The *force* on a body equals the *mass* of the body times its *acceleration* (in this case the *acceleration* effect of gravity). Therefore, whole-body *accelerations* of 3 to 5 G exert whole-body *forces* 3 to 5 times what we normally encounter. Those extra forces impede blood flow to critical areas of the body in ways that, without the body's built-in compensation mechanisms, would be harmful or fatal.

Sense of justice

How did the modern-human sense of *justice* arise? Contrary to psychologists' and philosophers' years-

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long 'born-as-moral-blank-slates' assumptions, Yale 'Baby lab' studies³¹⁹ show that infants as young as three months of age understand the concept of justice when:

- Favoring a 'good deed' puppet over a 'bad deed' puppet by reaching out to the 'good deed puppet' (age 6 months) or focusing eye attention on the good-deed puppet (age 3 months, eye focus having been found to correlate with preference in babies too young to reach out).
- Favoring punitive consequences, in terms of bad actions, against a 'bad deed' puppet.

Do these observations relate to a passed-on evolutionary trait of animal defense against and retaliation for harm caused to other animals in the animal's *group*?^a Or might something *higher and conscious* work here, based on innate *principles* rather than on instinctive reaction? Consider that the puppets were strangers, with absolutely no connection to the babies' 'groups'. (Note that this desire for justice for *others* may not carry over to the babies' *own* behav-

^aEven when dogs protect humans, the dogs consider human masters/families as part of their *packs* — groups.

iors — just as adults' desire for justice for *others* often doesn't necessarily carry over to their *own* behaviors. Compare [We like justice](#) with the behavioral entropy discussed in [Appendix D: Some entropic perspectives on evil.](#))

PROXIMATE meaning

NOTE *Proximate* meaning is meaning that *we* manufacture for ourselves, vs. *ultimate* meaning, as discussed in the next subsection.

Studies on *happiness* vs. *meaning* shows that *happiness* is largely self-oriented and largely relates to short-term fulfillment of OUR wants and needs.

Meaning, by contrast, substantially results from the fulfillment of ***others'*** wants and needs. For example,

“The focus of this investigation has been to identify the major differences in correlates of happiness (*corrected for meaning*) and meaningfulness (*corrected for happiness*)...

Our findings suggest that *happiness* is mainly about getting what one wants and needs, including from other people or even just by using

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money. In contrast, *meaningfulness* was linked to doing things that express and reflect the self, and *in particular to doing positive things for others...Happiness went with being a taker more than a giver, while meaningfulness was associated with being a giver more than a taker.*

Whereas happiness was focused on feeling good in the present, meaningfulness integrated past, present, and future, and it sometimes meant feeling bad.²⁸² <Emphases are mine.>

A higher animal may also experience a type of 'happiness' when drives for food, sex, and other needs and desires get met. However, an animal cannot *reflect* on the *meaning* of it's experiences.

'The ***happy person thus resembles an animal*** with perhaps some added complexity. In contrast, meaningfulness pointed to more distinctively human activities, such as expressing oneself and thinking integratively about past and future. *Put another way, humans may resemble many other creatures in their striving for happiness, but **the quest for meaning is a key part of what***

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makes us human, and uniquely so.²⁸²

<Emphases are mine.>

Though animals do sometimes 'give' in the sense of social practices such as grooming, sharing food, and teamwork, does that translate to meaning? Would you expect that Neanderthals — whose known cognitive abilities were minimal relative to behaviorally-modern humans — experienced and *reflected on meaning*? Where did meaning come from?

Moreover, the study²⁸² found that,

"Happiness was largely present-oriented, whereas meaningfulness involves integrating past, present, and future."

Does *any* evidence suggest that Neanderthals had the cognitive capacity to integrate past, present and future?

More critically, the study found that "Happiness went with being a *taker* more than a *giver*, while meaningfulness was associated with being a *giver* more than a taker." You might be inclined to say that "Well, meaning probably makes a person happier." That undoubtedly sometimes happens, but recall that the

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comparative results in the cited study were **corrected** for such effects. Moreover, the study frequently (or even mostly) found that a person's **meaningful** *unselfishness* and care for *others* was associated with **less happiness for them**. Does this sound bit like *sacrificial love*?

ULTIMATE meaning

Though some humans don't think deeply in general and certain others claim not to care about **ultimate** meaning, I submit that a substantial percentage of humans contemplate big questions such as: *Where did we come from? Why are we here? How should we live? Where are we going?*

If we're just animals, even smart animals, why should we care? Why not just pursue survival and happiness like animals?

I suggest that **ultimate** meaning and purpose for existence is impossible without God. Even some atheists have apparently agreed. Check out *The Absurdity of Life Without God* by W.L. Craig, available (free) as of 9/17/2015 at:

<http://www.reasonablefaith.org/the-absurdity-of-life-without-god>.

Just animals?

Unselfish, even sacrificial, love for strangers

Where did *unselfish love* — e.g. 'agape' — come from? Even **sacrificial** human love, sometimes extending even to complete *strangers*? I suggest that such love extends way beyond the survival of the species and way beyond *instinctive* sacrificial care of mother animals or the capacity of animals like elephants and crows to 'mourn' for their dead. You surely can add to the very short list of examples that follows:

- I've read many accounts (including one on the same day I've written this) of modern humans rescuing/attempting to rescue *complete strangers* from death, at enormous risk to themselves—sometimes perishing in the process. Where does that come from? In many of the accounts I'm thinking about, the people in need were adults, even older adults where protecting the genetic future of the species was not an issue. This is definitely *not* survival of the fittest.
- Why do people expend huge amounts of time and thought to write free books at their own expense, like this one, purely to help others out of love? What about high-quality, completely free soft-

Just animals?

Uniquely human behaviors

ware, sometimes even with free support and no trace of commercial interest from the developer? Why do an abundance of folks provide *very* helpful *no-ad* instructional videos on YouTube, with absolutely nothing to gain? Why the abundance of no-cost and sometimes even no-ad articles on the Internet, purely to help others? Why should my public library offer five downloads per week of free, legal ('Freegal') mp3 downloads purely for people's enjoyment, with nothing whatever to gain materially or politically? How do we rationalize public park systems — such as US national parks, more-local parks such as the fabulous "Emerald Necklace" network of parks in my north-east Ohio area, as well as other number of other public works purely for public enjoyment — including flowers planted along U.S. roadsides. Primarily for survival and advancement of the human species? Just political? Really?

- How do we account that, in the face of missing-persons tragedies, sometimes hundreds of people unselfishly volunteer to help search for total strangers? Not only for children — for whom adults often have special compassion — but often for ordinary adults, and even for 'over-the-hill' (?)

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post-reproduction-age geezers. Survival of the species? A totally mechanistic and deterministic universe?

- Consider this note:

“Only hours before Kim Haskins’ high school graduation, an auto accident took the life of her father and left Kim and her mother hospitalized. The next day, Joe Garrett, Kim’s high school principal, visited her at the hospital and said they wanted to do something special for her at the school. The Gazette (Colorado Springs) article by James Drew described the outpouring of love and support as the teachers, administrators, and classmates—deeply touched by Kim’s loss—filled the high school auditorium a few days later at a graduation ceremony just for her.”²⁸³

Elsewhere, including in [God? Then why this mess?!](#), I comment on the good and bad in us — particularly the bad (about which the media liberally informs us!). But above are a few of the *many* examples of the *good*. Is that kind of good purely the result of undirected cosmic and biological cause and effect? Or is

Uniquely human behaviors

this the *residual* good I've referred to in [God? Then why this mess?!](#); something well beyond 'nature red in tooth and claw'; something well beyond 'preservation of the species'; something directly implanted and **transcendent**?

How might such observations correlate with Bible passages claiming that God created the first humans in his *image*,^a however corrupted that image may be in us at present? Might these observations correlate in any way with biblical statements that 'God **is** love' and therefore the source of **our** love?

Or shall we reductionistically classify people (including loved ones) — and their nonessential capacities, nonessential behaviors, sense of justice, sacrificial love, and desire for meaning — reductionistically, in terms of deterministic collections of body cells, genes, **neurons**, **dendrites**, and **action potentials**? [Materialism, determinism, and reality](#) shows that even staunch proponents of philosophical naturalism and scientific

^a...obviously referring to *non-physical* characteristics — ostensibly so that we could properly relate to God, as well as relate to each other way beyond an animal level.

Uniquely human behaviors

materialism cannot, with intellectual integrity, dismiss the conflicts of such worldviews with empirical reality. Nor can we.

Just animals?

Just stuff?

Introduction

The late science-popularizer Carl Sagan — the atheist who publicly stated that we're 'star stuff' — was *fundamentally* correct. Except for hydrogen, the primary element of the universe, and some helium, the heavier elements in our bodies — including carbon, the foundational element of all life — were all manufactured in the nuclear furnaces of stars and scattered through the universe in almost unfathomably intense star explosions called supernovas, as well as through massive black hole eruptions and galaxy collisions. A supernova is caused "...by the sudden re-ignition of nuclear fusion in a degenerate star or by the collapse of the core of a massive star."³⁶⁹ In the process of exploding, a supernova scatters its material into interstellar space, only later to be incorporated into new stars, planets, etc.

Our bodies are indeed made of 'star stuff'. So the question is not "Are we *made of* 'star stuff'?" but, "Are we **only** 'star stuff'?" — Sagan's position.

Just stuff?

Standing in the shadow of dualism?

I hope previously covered ground in this book implicitly suggests or shows that reality is not JUST stuff — or at least that science isn't the final arbiter of all reality and can't address all aspects of *us*. Here I'll highlight that contention further, not to prove anything but rather to stimulate thinking — thinking that may incrementally penetrate roadblocks to belief.

Is a human just a body with a brain...or do each of us have an enduring part that couples with and only *uses* the brain as essential machinery during physical life? Do we have an independent, permanent core of being that exists even when our 'machinery' partially or totally breaks down?

That question has very important personal ramifications for each of us. I suggest that the answer ultimately lies beyond science. Here, nonetheless, is a bit more thinking fodder. (See also [Just animals?](#) on page 552.)

Standing in the shadow of dualism?

At the very end of twenty-four Great Courses lectures about the main theories of mind, philosopher Patrick

Just stuff?

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Brain's wiring makes us who we are?

Grim concedes that all modern theories fall substantially short of resolving the 'hard problem of consciousness.' (See the relevant scholarpedia.org Web page³⁷⁰ for a relatively brief and clear discussion of the 'hard problem'.) Grimm concludes that we still stand in the shadow of Cartesian dualism.^{371, 372}

A vigorous (1000+ post) *ResearchGate*^a debate on *What is consciousness? What is its nature and origin?*³⁷⁷ — starting in February of 2012 and continuing as I edit this paragraph (in October 2015) reveals the unresolved nature of the problem of consciousness.

Brain's wiring makes us who we are?

This book sometimes uses conjecture *to stimulate thought*. However, in Sebastian Seung's 2012 book, *Connectome: How the Brain's Wiring Makes Us Who We Are*,³⁷³ the MIT neuroscientist seems to rely heavily on conjecture to support his *book title*. Though his discussion of basic neuroscience refreshed and enhanced my understanding, I stopped fully reading after Chapter 4 when he seemingly, in

^aA scientists' forum.

Brain's wiring makes us who we are?

the rest of his book, extrapolated support for his title from the results of very limited experiments in which a particular single neuron, wired to a detector, fired repeatably whenever a particular male subject was shown a Jennifer Aniston photo. (Other male subjects had neurons that responded similarly to photos of other beautiful women.) Such experiments in no way rule out the possibility that the guy's 'turned on' mental response originated in a mind separate from his observable 3D brain and interacted with or through the brain (for example, very speculatively consider an extra-dimensional mind, perhaps quantum mechanically entangled with the brain; a few scientists have considered related ideas). Or at best, could this be a primitive, instinctual, *nonconscious* male-seeing-female response?

Per my skims of the rest of the book, it seems that everywhere in and after chapter 4, Seung seems to justify the seemingly categorical *How the Brain's Wiring **Makes** Us Who We Are* (not *How the Brain's Wiring **MIGHT** Make Us Who We Are*) with speculative words and phrases:^a "extrapolate", "Let's suppose",

^aIf you find I've failed to appropriately qualify speculation in this book please tell me at bridges4hs@hotmail.com.

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Brain's wiring makes us who we are?

"might", "could", "So I imagine", "What if", "I propose", "assumed", "hypothesized", "likely", "perhaps", "We could imagine", "Let's consider", etc. Though such words and phrases are legitimate in science — even essential when establishing frameworks for investigation — they illustrate the ignorance and speculation that still exists concerning the operation and function of the human brain, despite many decades of research.

The human brain's ≈ 100 billion neurons, ≈ 100 trillion interconnections, and dizzying capabilities are truly astounding. And, yes, functional disorders, disease, and injury to those neurons can affect thinking, memory, outward personality, and bodily function. But do such abnormalities ultimately define **us**?

Will neuroscientists ultimately show^a that the brain accounts for everything that's **us**? Consider the 44-

^a...or claim to show. Data sets are often open to multiple interpretations. [Science is objective?](#) and other discussions in this book show that all-too-human scientists often interpret data according to their prejudices. This concern applies especially in reports to the public. **108** We must read scientific claims in popular media with caution.

God ↔ mind interface: how?

year-old man who lives a relatively normal life — civil servant, married, two kids — with “...little more than a thin sheet of actual brain tissue.”³⁷⁴ Does his brain, however adapted, account for everything that’s *him*?

Will neuroscientists ultimately show that we’re indeed just ‘stuff’? Admissions of some naturalists that their ‘just stuff’ or ‘just machines’ positions don’t jive empirically with lived reality suggest otherwise.

Recall [Materialism, determinism, and reality](#) in the previous chapter.

God ↔ mind interface: how?

Does a **transcendent** personal God exist? I’ve implicitly and explicitly addressed that question in the [EVIDENCE](#), in [God?](#), and elsewhere in the [THINKING FURTHER](#) part. If you’ve read this far in the book, you’re presumably willing by now to at least consider a personal God’s existence. If so, then...

- Does God communicate with people, and how? If people interface with God through silent prayer — through the mind, then how does God typically interface with people? (Recall instances in [EVI-](#)

Just stuff?

God ↔ mind interface: how?

DENCE. Regarding the general validity of prayer, recall [Talking to the wind?](#)) Does God interface through audible sounds and physical appearances? Or through mental impressions and, in special cases, dreams and visions? If the latter, how is such an interface possible if the mind is nothing more than interconnected **neurons, action potentials, neurotransmitters**, synapses, etc. isolated within the brains of the prayER?

- How has God interfaced with the brains of thousands of Muslims who've experienced dreams and visions of Christ — dreams and visions so powerful that many ultimately become **Christ-followers** despite knowing the almost certain cultural backlash and substantial risk of death for those choices? (Recall [Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?.](#))
- Through what interfaces did the team in Istanbul ask for and receive a dramatic 180° turnabout in Turkish receptivity for Bibles, per [Prayer for Istanbul?](#) Through what interfaces were the Turks' minds so influenced?
- Ditto for the Romans in [Prayer for Rome?](#)

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Other remote, non-sensory, extra-neural inputs?

- Moreover, if you can accept that *negative supernatural* entities exist and influence human thinking in harmful ways, then through what mental processes do *they* operate?

Other remote, non-sensory, extra-neural inputs?

Over the years I've read of *many* situations in which:

- A normally-sound sleeper suddenly awakes, sensing an urgent need to pray for someone, whom they later find out was in danger at that specific time.
- Similar experiences in which people have dreams or visions correlating with and coincident with the timing of tragedies.
- Totally inexplicable, seemingly irrational foreboding to avoid ostensibly harmless plans, only to find out later that fulfillment of those plans would have resulted in death or disaster.
- Other events inexplicably associated with dreams/premonitions.

Purely internal 'just-stuff' firing of neurons? Read five such accounts in an endnote^{[375](#)} and decide for yourself.

Just stuff?

Life beyond the brain?

If the following are true...

- Materialist neuroscientists can't show, beyond substantial doubt, that 'the brain's wiring makes us who we are'...
- Substance dualism has legitimate arguments for validity ([page 600](#)) — and therefore the concept of 'soul' has legitimate arguments for validity.
- The life-changing dreams and visions of Christ discussed in [Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?](#) — and premonitions, dreams and visions relating to other physical outcomes³⁷⁵ — reflect communication mechanisms that transcend physical brain function...^a
- This book's [EVIDENCE](#) for **supernatural** influence — most notably from a **transcendent** God who is active in human affairs...and in human *minds*...

...then I suggest that we can't arbitrarily assume that we're *just* stuff — that **we** die when our material

^aOther evidence and arguments suggest *negative* extra-brain **supernatural** influence on human thinking — a topic I'll tentatively discuss in a forthcoming book.

bodies die. Does any *data* beyond [EVIDENCE](#) support such a statement? I suggest that *some* so-called near-death experiences (NDEs) [378](#) might represent qualified 'maybes'.

After having read substantially in respectable (serious investigation) publications about such experiences, the jury's still out for me concerning the nature and significance of these relatively frequent^a but controversial phenomena. I suspect that NDEs refer to a *class* of experiences with sometimes similar presentations but perhaps multiple etiologies (causes/origins).

Physical?

I'll first acknowledge a couple evidences that *partially* support physicalist explanations for *some* NDEs or NDE-like experiences. At least 40 pilots in test centrifuges experienced "dreamlets" and out-of-body experiences — seeing themselves from a distance. Some saw tunnels. These effects potentially relate to relocation of blood out of the brain during high-G forces.[379](#) In certain other cases of NDE-like experiences, some think that stress on the brain causes it

^a"According to a Gallup poll, approximately eight million Americans claim to have had a near-death experience."[378](#)

Life beyond the brain?

to protect itself by focusing on more 'primitive' areas, causing certain atypical neuronal processes to dominate. One author thinks that NDE-like effects of a particular psychoactive substance in the cerebellum support that contention. [380](#)

More than physical?

However, one size doesn't fit all. Some individuals having 'veridical' NDEs or NDE-like experiences have seen and/or heard things that they *couldn't possibly* have seen or heard by normal processes — and this status was subsequently verified independently. See the sources cited in the endnotes for a few examples. [381](#) [382](#) [383](#) [384](#) Though the evidence is strongly suggestive, not bullet-proof,^a perhaps the Pamela

^aTrue NDEs or something else equally mysterious? In Pamela Reynolds's case, the **veridical** part occurred while Pamela was blindfolded, anesthetized, and with clicking-sound emitters plugging her ears (for neurological monitoring) — *before* chilled blood was drained from her head — effectively creating clinical death. [The blood was drained during a daring operation to repair an otherwise inoperable aneurism, during which Pam experienced a dramatic but more conventional and independently unverifiable NDE.]

Reynolds case^{383, 384} is stronger than others.

A couple of at-death experiences

I'll throw in these two contrasting *at*-death experiences as thinking fodder. Both, quite coincidentally, come from Ravi Zacharias (several years apart).

Positive experience

Ravi told us about the cancer death of his father-in-law, who'd been an exceptionally fine Christ-follower. Ravi's wife was at her father's bedside and witnessed the following:

"...he was silent for some protracted period of time. But [in] his last two statements, where <*sic*> he looked to the heavens, and he said, 'Amazing! That's just amazing!' And then he looked at his wife and said, 'Jean, I love you.' And he was gone." ⁹⁵

What had he seen?^a

^aFor what it's worth, my father-in-law, a Christ-follower as well, had related positive experiences on his deathbed.

Negative experience

Ravi related an account he heard personally from the late British journalist/author/media personality/satirist Malcolm Muggeridge. Muggeridge, in turn, heard it directly from Joseph Stalin's daughter Svetlana when they'd worked together on a BBC production about Stalin — a man who'd *ordered* the deaths of half a million and was ultimately *responsible* for the deaths of millions. [144](#)

"According to Svetlana, as Stalin lay dying, plagued with terrifying hallucinations, he suddenly sat halfway up in bed, clenched his fist toward the heavens once more, fell back upon his pillow, and was dead." [385](#)

What had Stalin seen? Another hallucination? Or something far more upsetting to the God-hating man?^a

Bottom line

Do some NDEs and at-death experiences support a 'not-just-stuff' position? You decide.

^aFor what it's worth, my wife's great uncle — 'unbelieving', though hardly a moral monster like Stalin! — told those present that he saw a vision of something 'creepy' and frightening just before he died.

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AFTERWORD

These three pages conclude the primary material of this book: [EVIDENCE](#), [THINKING FURTHER](#), and [CONCERNING US](#). If you've read the appendices and followed the red hyperlinked cross-references to the endnotes, you've effectively read beyond this point as well. I hope the book has at least minimally fulfilled my objectives: to help you to see/better see the rationality of God in general and the **biblical Christ** specifically and to bridge one or more obstacles to faith. If not, or if you've found issues that need cor-

Life beyond the brain?

rection, feel free to *constructively* report your issues by e-mailing me at:

bridges4hs@hotmail.com

I'll end this book with the Pascal paraphrase with which I started:

*"God has given us evidence sufficiently clear to convince those with an open heart and mind, yet evidence sufficiently vague so as not to compel those whose hearts and minds are closed."*²

If you've read *this* far, presumably you aren't among "...those whose hearts and minds are closed." However, each person's worldview is the product of thousands or even millions of inputs: helpful and hurtful, true and false, clear and confusing, good and bad. Worldviews become ingrained and painful to change: intellectually, emotionally, socially, and volitionally (concerning the will). Enough coercion can force *external* changes of attitude on anyone, but — aside from influences like drugs, brainwashing, and brain injury — nothing can **force** *internal* changes.

It's been said, however tritely, that, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink." But an

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old rancher once noted that, "I can get a horse to drink. I just feed him some salt." Hopefully I've fed you a bit of salt. Perhaps this book has at least made you think and hopefully has led you to reconsider the validity of some prior inputs to your worldview.

More hopefully, the book has started or moved you along on a quest to seek the true God — *whom you'll never find purely on the basis of evidence and reason alone*, neither from this book nor through any other human agency. If God is *transcendent*, then he is *by definition* beyond us and *he* must complete the process to *him*. If you sincerely want *him* in your life, you might start by saying something like,

"God, I've seen evidence and reasoning for your existence and work. However, right now that's all I have. If you really exist, then please give me the confidence in you that *only you* can provide. Please forgive all my offensive actions and attitudes — through Christ's fulfillment of the justice that I deserve — and please start transforming me to become the person you've intended."

In the final analysis, however, *you* are the author of the missing 'CONCLUSIONS' section.

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APPENDICES

These appendices provide supplementary evidence and analyses that some readers may consider too detailed to read. Therefore, this material is not placed in the main body of the book. However, the skeptical reader will potentially find here helpful reinforcement and support for questions that the main text doesn't fully address.

Appendix A: Greg Spencer evidence analysis

In some miracles, the changes are unambiguous. For example, I've written earlier in [Adult small intestines CAN'T regenerate, but...](#) about the *verified naturally impossible* regeneration of a man's almost-destroyed small intestine — a medically obvious transformation. However, 'before' and 'after' eye conditions are less obvious, requiring more effort to establish high evidential certainty of a miracle. Therefore, in this appendix I look in detail at the evidence for the ['Once I was blind, but now I can see...'](#) account of Greg Spencer's restoration of sight.

I have mostly ignored Greg's, Travis Hunt's, and Randy Webb's testimony in this analysis, except in one argument near the end — not because those statements are unimportant (I think they're *very* important), but because I want to focus primarily on medical evidence and government documentation to satisfy those who may not accept *any* testimony.

Did Greg truly have irreversible vision loss?

Did Greg truly have irreversible vision loss?

It's far easier for a person to fake *lack* of adequate sight (the 'before' condition in Greg's account) than to demonstrate the *possession* of good sight (Greg's 'after' condition) — just as generally in life it's usually easy to fake *lack* of an ability but hard to demonstrate *possession* of that ability. Therefore, in this account we most importantly need to firmly establish Greg's 'before' condition: a serious loss of central vision.

To do that, I'll mostly analyze the 'before' data shown in ['Once I was blind, but now I can see...'](#), [Figure 3](#) through [Figure 11](#). My efforts to understand the data in detail will hopefully translate to *your* better understanding of the data.

Though this analysis substantially reflects my extensive online research to understand the nature and impact of the 'before' data, I needed help with questions that I couldn't address. Therefore, parts of the analysis include the results of a detailed ('level 3') paid consultation with online retina specialist 'Dr.

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Rick' [at <http://www.justanswer.com/eye-health/>]. Dr. Rick (last name obviously withheld from users to avoid abuse of the service) has been a board-certified ophthalmologist since 1994, with a retina sub-specialty. He's a retinal surgeon. I'll attribute his inputs to my analysis as appropriate — continuing to refer to him simply as 'Dr. Rick' (however unsophisticated that sounds, a bit like how a child might refer to his/her pediatrician). Note that, over multiple communications with Dr. Rick, I was impressed that he moved from initially “uncomfortable” calling Greg's account a miracle to seemingly greater confidence as I supplied more data (the quantity of which was nonetheless time- and cost-restricted to *far* less evidence than I've provided you in this account).

Dr. Weleber's evaluations and diagnosis

The primary evidence of Greg's eye condition comes from Dr. Weleber's letter and attachments, [Figure 3](#) through [Figure 7](#). Dr. Richard G. Weleber is a board-certified ophthalmologist at Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU) with subspecialties in retinal dystrophies, congenital/genetic disease, diabetic retinopathy, and macular degeneration. He's both a cli-

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nician and a researcher. [Information obtained on 10/23/2014 at <http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/health/services/providers/index.cfm?personid=816>.]

Dr. Weleber letter — page 1, paragraph 1, sentence 1

Quote

“On May 21, 1999, I saw Greg Spencer, the 40-year-old gentleman who you referred for evaluation because of his failing central visual acuity.”

Comment

Nothing special here, except establishment of Greg's age and calendar date at the time of the examination — relevant to other statements in the doctor's letter.

Dr. Weleber letter — page 1, paragraph 1, sentences 2 to 3

Quote

“At about age 12-13, he began to experience reduction of vision, and his parents were told that he had swelling of the retina. Apparently the

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vision improved in about 10 months and eventually came back to the 20/30 to 20/40 level, which he maintained for many decades."

Comments

RETINAL SWELLING

Though the nature of Greg's adolescent "retinal swelling" was not identified, leaving uncertainty about the meaning of this term, my online searches of the term "retinal swelling" have typically pointed to a condition called 'Cystoid Macular Edema' (CME).

"The American Academy of Ophthalmology Preferred Practice Patterns defines Cystoid Macular Edema (CME) as retinal thickening of the macula due to a disruption of the normal blood-retinal barrier; this causes leakage from the peritoneal retinal capillaries and accumulation of fluid within the intracellular spaces of the retina, primarily in the outer plexiform layer. Visual loss occurs from retinal thickening and fluid collection that distorts the architecture of the photoreceptors. CME is a leading cause of central vision loss in the

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developed world." [[http://eyewiki.aao.org/Cystoid Macular Edema](http://eyewiki.aao.org/Cystoid_Macular_Edema) under "Disease"]

Though chronic CME (e.g. greater than 6-9 months) can require medical intervention and cause damage,

"CME is usually self-limiting and spontaneously resolves within 3-4 months." [[http://eyewiki.aao.org/Cystoid Macular Edema](http://eyewiki.aao.org/Cystoid_Macular_Edema) under "Prognosis".]

Note that the documentation of Greg's middle-age vision loss does **not** suggest retinal swelling or CME.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS EPISODE

Does this youthful episode of self-correcting vision loss confound the validity of Greg's middle-age vision restoration as a miracle? I address that question subsequently in this appendix in [Encore performance of youthful sight regeneration?](#) and conclude 'No' — for multiple reasons.

Appendix A: Greg Spencer evidence analysis

Did Greg truly have irreversible vision loss?

Dr. Weleber letter — page 1, paragraph 1, sentences 6 to 7

Quote

“However, because of difficulty with his central acuity, this began to become very difficulty [sic] for him over the past several months. His visual acuity was still 20/40 in August of 1998, but in April of this year the visual acuity had dropped to the 20/60 level and he stopped driving entirely”.

Comments

Even Greg's initial vision loss, which subsequently worsened, was serious enough to stop Greg from driving. Given that later notes in Dr. Weleber's letter imply that Greg's later advanced vision loss could not be mitigated with corrective lenses, perhaps the 20/60 vision could not be corrected either — at least not enough to let him drive.

Did Greg truly have irreversible vision loss?

Dr. Weleber letter — page 1, paragraph 2, sentences 1 to 2

Quote

“Without correction his visual acuity today was CF at two feet, 20/400 letters at near in the right eye, and 20/200 no improvement with pinhole at distance, 20/200 letters at near, left eye. The near acuities were with a +2.00 sphere reader in each eye.”

Interpretive comments

- *“...CF at two feet”* refers to... **‘Counting Fingers’**:
“A method of recording vision in patients who are unable to identify any optotype on an acuity chart. If a patient correctly counts the numbers of the examiner's fingers shown, this is recorded with the distance at which it is performed.” [Millodot, *Dictionary of Optometry and Visual Science, 7th edition*, Butterworth-Heinemann, 2009 — quoted as of 10/9/2014 from <http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/counting+fingers>]

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- "...right eye...20/200...at distance..." most generally refers to some variant of the Snellen-chart eye test to which most of us have been subjected (sometimes a *variable digital screen*, vs. a printed chart). The patient covers one eye and tries to read the smallest line possible on an eye chart actually or effectively 20 feet away. Technically,

"Snellen acuity is given in terms of a Snellen fraction S , which is defined as:

$$S = \frac{\text{Greatest distance a subject can just read a given line on chart}}{\text{Greatest distance a 'normal' observer can just read the same line"}}$$

[As of 10/20/2014, see <http://spie.org/x32356.xml>]

Greg's 20/200 vision effectively meant that Greg needed to be 20 feet from a line on the Snellen chart that a normal-vision person (20/20) could read at 200 feet away.

- The phrase "*20/200 no improvement with pin-hole at distance*" meant that Greg's distance vision loss was *not* related to eye-lens issues

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Did Greg truly have irreversible vision loss?

as in myopia (nearsightedness). Looking through a pinhole eliminates effects of lens refraction in a patient's eye.

"An effective tool to determine if distance visual acuity can be corrected with a change of glasses or contact lenses is the pinhole disk. The pinhole disk admits only central rays of light, that do not need to be refracted by the cornea or lens to fall to a point on the retina as opposed to a circle of blur. A single pinhole of not more than 2.4mm or a multiple circular arrangement of 1.0mm pinholes can be used. Upon reevaluation with the pinhole, if a patient's visual acuity improves two or more lines, there is probably a refractive error present [in his eye], and refraction (evaluation for corrective lenses) should be performed before any further testing. *If the acuity is not improved with pinhole evaluation, it is likely that the cause of the decreased visual acuity is not refractive, and further ophthalmologic evaluation is indicated...*"

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<Emphasis is mine.> [Krisa Drentlaw, *Visual Acuity: The Critical Measure*, Association of Technical Personnel in Ophthalmology, p. 7. As of 10/9/2014, available at <http://www.atpo.org/Documents/New/Articles/Visual%20Acuity%20The%20Critical%20Measure!.pdf>]

- The “at near” in “...20/400 letters at near in the right eye,... 20/200 letters at near, left eye...” refers to having the patient holding a card 14 inches from their right and left eyes — one at a time — and reading the smallest line on the card that they can. (The evaluation tool can be a *variable digital screen*, vs. a printed card.) The line they can read shows the person's ability to see the details of near objects. Though the card has tinier letters than the Snellen chart, the terms of visual acuity are similar (20/20...20/50....20/200 etc.) Note that Greg's right eye had worse *near* acuity (20/400) than *far* acuity (20/200).
- “The near acuities were with a +2.00 sphere reader in each eye” apparently states that

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Greg had +2-diopter corrective 'reader' lenses in front of his eyes during the near-acuity tests, apparently to correct for age-related farsightedness (presbyopia). The term "sphere" indicates that the correction was for *non-astigmatic* farsightedness.

Could a patient fake acuity-test results?

In general? — Yes. Patients are in control of reporting what they say they can read. Therefore, they can report that falsely — though *good* acuity would be difficult to fake (unless a patient memorized a conventional — printed, vs. variable digital — Snellen chart).

Concerning bad-vision eye chart acuity tests, Dr. Rick noted that, "They could be faked and they are faked all the time but faking good vision is almost *impossible* to do nowadays with computer generated, variable vision charts." <Emphasis is mine.> The presently available data don't indicate whether or not the vision charts used in Greg's vision tests were digital.

In Greg's case? — Unless Greg had educated himself in advance about the pinhole test, he

wouldn't have known how to fake those results. Moreover, regarding Greg's character, he's a low-key guy who only very reluctantly shared his testimony for the *Jesus of Testimony* video; he doesn't trumpet his story for gain. And if he had faked the acuity tests — and gotten disability benefits because of his bad vision — what would have motivated him to inform the Social Security Administration of his vision improvement (an action implicitly confirmed by [Figure 11](#) of '[Once I was blind, but now I can see...](#)')?

- ...given that his notification would result in *loss* of further disability payments — when Greg could have easily faked continuing bad vision and received free money indefinitely, given the natural *irreversibility* of macular degeneration.
- ...given that his notification would predictably result in the hassle of a fraud investigation.

Greg's request for the benefits to stop following restoration of his vision (an action implicitly confirmed by [Figure 11](#) in '[Once I was blind, but now I can see...](#)') testifies to his character — and sug-

gests a likelihood of honesty about the miracle event as well.

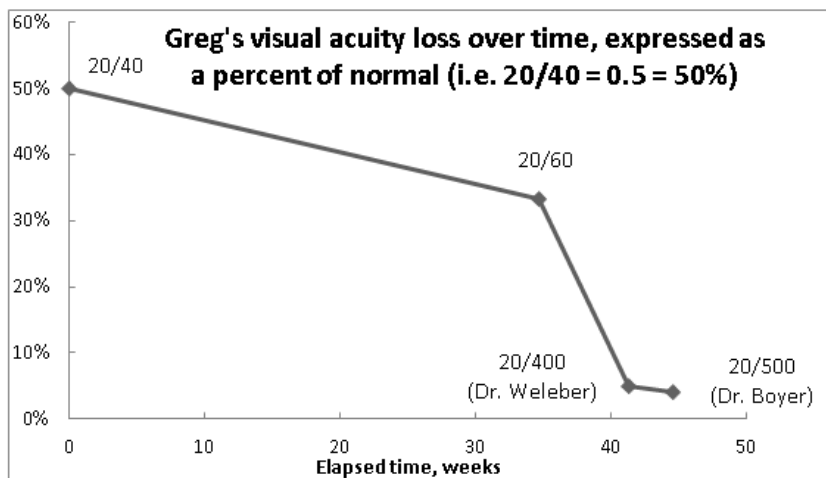
More importantly, however, hard-to-fake Goldmann perimetry visual field tests and examination of his interior eye surfaces (the fundus of each eye) — discussed in subsequent sections of this appendix — definitively showed serious loss of central vision prior to the miracle.

Multiple acuity data points: failing vision over time

[Figure 26](#) below, which I plotted for Greg's right eye from data in Dr. Weleber's and Dr. Boyer's letters, shows a gradual and then more rapid visual acuity loss over four eye exams, culminating in leveling-off of the deterioration process. The final data point comes from an independent acuity test done by optometrist Dr. Boyer (see [Figure 8](#)).

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Figure 26 Greg's vision loss over time



Note that the visual acuity loss is *not* represented by a single data point that could be — without any neighboring points to compare to — an 'outlier'. Two independent measurements of the most severe condition are close and logically changing in the negative direction (worsening vision). Two data points are statistically more reliable than one.

Dr. Weleber's diagnoses of Greg's macular degeneration include no comments about or distinctions

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between so-called 'dry' and 'wet' macular degeneration and mentions no blood-vessel abnormalities in Greg's eyes. Therefore, ***we can't draw conclusions about those distinctions.*** However, the above-plotted trend of initially slow loss of acuity, followed by a very rapid loss of acuity, then followed by a slower loss of acuity is at least logically *consistent* with...

- ...Greg initially having the more-slowly-deteriorating 'dry' form of macular degeneration...
- ...followed by rather precipitous deterioration to the more serious 'wet' form...
- ...followed by slower deterioration of what little central vision was left.

It seems at least *consistent* with the following:

"Dry AMD [age-related macular degeneration] affects about 85% of those with the disease and causes *gradual* loss of central vision, sometimes starting in one eye. *Wet AMD*, which accounts for 90% of all severe vision loss from the disease, often involves a *sudden* loss of central vision. *Most people with the wet form of AMD previously had the dry form.*"

<Emphasis is mine.> [As of 11/3/2014, see <http://umm.edu/health/medical/altmed/condition/macular-degeneration.>]

Conclusions

Serious visual acuity loss seems real on the basis of acuity tests alone, given the number and trending of independent acuity data points and Greg's character — voluntarily ending disability payments when otherwise no one but him would have to know of his remarkable restoration of sight. Moreover, even a person of poor character who might casually fake a given test of poor visual acuity would need substantial knowledge and creativity to fake the vision-loss trend we see in the above four-point plot.

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Dr. Weleber letter — page 1, paragraph 2, sentence 3

Quote

“Tonopen intraocular pressures were 15 mm Hg OU”.

Comments

This is normal. “Normal intraocular pressures average between 12-22 mm Hg.” [See *What is considered normal eye pressure?*, Glaucoma Research Foundation. Available as of 10/9/2014 at <http://www.glaucoma.org/q-a/what-is-considered-normal-pressure.php>] This measurement for Greg indicates the lack of glaucoma.

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Dr. Weleber letter — page 1, paragraph 2, sentence 4

Quote

"We were unable to improve the vision with manifest techniques."

Comments

Manifest means "Clearly revealed to the mind or the senses or judgment" [WordWeb]. Dr. Weleber's statement above implies that he was unable to improve Greg's vision with any obvious techniques, presumably including corrective lenses. The pinhole tests, described previously, also suggest that eye-lens refraction was not responsible for his vision loss, seemingly confirming the futility of corrective refraction (glasses or contact lenses) as a solution.

Conclusion

Greg's *central* vision loss was not correctable.

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Dr. Weleber letter — page 1, paragraph 2, sentence 5

Quote

“Goldmann perimetry visual fields performed the previous day disclosed dense central scotomas in each eye, with the larger more dense scotoma being present in the right eye.”

Comments

1. “A scotoma...is an area of partial alteration in the field of vision consisting of a partially diminished or entirely degenerated visual acuity that is surrounded by a field of normal – or relatively well-preserved – vision.” [Wikipedia, *Scotoma*.] Each of our eyes has a normal scotoma called the ‘Blind spot’ where the optic nerve exits the retina. However, in macular degeneration an *abnormal* scotoma obscures normal central vision — which is critical for many human activities and is the primary focus of vision in well-illuminated environments. The shaded areas of Greg’s Goldmann plots, [Figure 4](#) and [Figure 5](#) in [‘Once I was blind, but now I can see...’](#) definitively indicate

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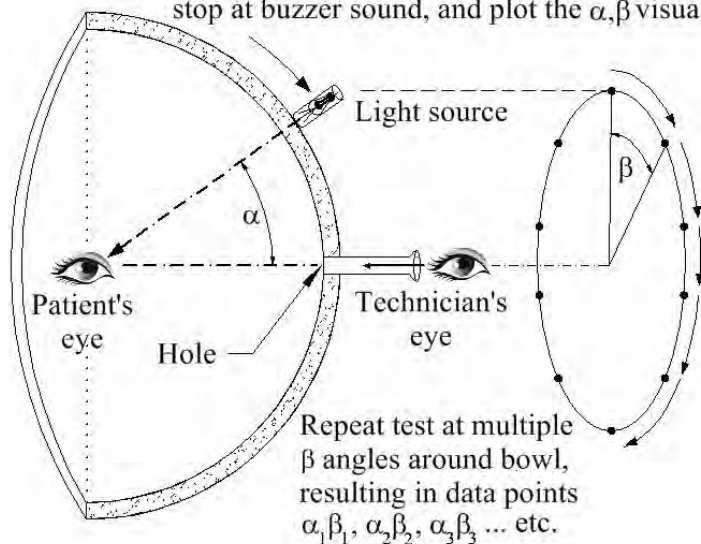
that Greg had serious loss of central vision — macular disease.

2. Here's what I've learned about Goldmann perimetry tests that might help you better understand that aspect of Greg's evidence.
 - a. The semi-blindfolded, head-positioned patient fixates the focus of his/her exposed eye on a hole at the center of a large hemispherical bowl in a darkened room.
 - b. In the initial tests, a technician behind the bowl moves the *angle* of a *light* spot *inward* towards the hole — starting at a high light-source-to-hole angle outside the range of peripheral vision, moving into the patient's field of peripheral vision and, ultimately, toward the patient's field of central vision. I'll call the light-source-to-hole angle *alpha* (α). I illustrate this understanding of the process below in [Figure 27](#).

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Figure 27 Schematic understanding of Goldmann perimetry^a

At a chosen circumferential angle β and light setting, decrease the light-source-to-hole angle α at $\sim 3\text{-}5^\circ/\text{sec}$, stop at buzzer sound, and plot the α, β visual-field point.



^aThe left half of the figure shows a cross section of the hemispherical bowl (think of placing a knife on the central hole and cutting the bowl in half to help illustrate the α -angle). In the right half of the figure, the 'circle-on-edge' illustrates the β angles (rotation angles about the center-hole axis) at which technician takes multiple measurements.

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- c. When the patient first sees the light — when the light is first detectable in their field of vision — he/she presses a buzzer. The technician then immediately stops the movement, notes the light spot angle *alpha* (α) relative to the patient's line of sight to the bowl's central hole. The technician also notes the circumferential angle of the light source about the central hole *beta* (β) and plots the α, β coordinates on a graph like that shown in [Figure 4](#) and [Figure 5](#) of ['Once I was blind, but now I can see...'](#).
- d. The technician repeats this procedure at different β angles. Each point on the graph, $\alpha_1, \beta_1, \alpha_2, \beta_2, \alpha_3, \beta_3, \dots$ etc. represents the intersection of the particular light-source-to-hole angle α at which the patient first sees light and the corresponding circumferential angle β .

Each such point on the graph corresponds to a location on the inside surface of the eye opposite the lens (i.e. on the 'fundus').

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NOTE *Clarification of angle β* — Consider the Goldmann-test bowl like a half grapefruit, which you've cut perpendicular to the axis of the stem — the location corresponding to the Goldmann bowl's central hole. Each grapefruit segment you see is roughly triangular, with the apex of each triangle at the stem axis. The tasty segments of the half grapefruit look roughly like a pie cut into ~triangular slices, with the apex of each slice at the center of the pie.

When we eat the first grapefruit segment we leave a roughly-triangular hole; let's call the apex angle of that first hole β_1 . When we eat the next segment, the roughly triangular hole is now about two times larger, with an apex angle β_2 . Each time we eat another segment, we increase the apex angle of the hole to $\beta_3, \beta_4, \beta_5, \dots$ etc. until we've emptied the grapefruit (at which point angle β is 360 degrees).

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Analogously, the Goldmann technician moves the light source around the bowl 'one additional grapefruit segment' at a time, each time: 1) noting the current β angle, 2) performing the test, 3) noting the corresponding α angle at which the patient rings the buzzer, and 4) plotting the α, β point.

- e. The technician repeats the above procedure — steps a through d — at variable light-spot intensities and sizes. For example, the designations I-3e, I-4e, III-4e etc. on Greg's Goldmann plots designate such light-spot intensities and sizes. Each 'ring' on a Goldmann plot (called an 'isopter') represents all of the points corresponding to one specific light-spot intensity and size combination.
- f. If a central scotoma is found, the technician may then modify the procedure. He/she moves the α angle of the light-spot *outward*, starting at *low* angles (small α values), corresponding to the insensitive scotoma region, and then moving toward larger angles (higher α values) — again

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stopping and plotting angles as soon as the patient presses the 'I see the light' buzzer. The technician may also check for *static* detection of light at various points in or around the scotoma region — each time fixing the light spot at a particular combination of α, β angles, turning the light on, and asking whether the patient sees it.

For more information about Goldmann tests:

- First see Inci Dursu *et al*, *Understanding Visual Fields, Part I; Goldmann Perimetry*, Journal of Ophthalmic Medical Technology, June 2006 (accessible as of 10/11/2014 at <http://www.jomtonline.com/jomt/articles/volumes/2/2/visualfields.pdf>)
 - Then optionally see Carol Pollack-Rundle, *Goldmann Visual Fields: a Technician's Guide*, Association of Technical Personnel in Ophthalmology (accessible as of 10/11/2014 at <https://www.atpo.org/Documents/New/Articles/GOLDMANN.pdf>)
3. Someone might ask, "If Greg pushed a buzzer at each point on the Goldmann field plots, could he have faked the exam to make the

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plots look the way he wanted...to make his vision seem worse than it was?" I.e., could he have pressed the buzzer deliberately at inappropriate points?

Faking would be very difficult for the following reasons:

- Firstly, a Goldmann-test technician monitors a patient's focus through an eyepiece in the center of the bowl, ensuring that focus remains fixated at that point — critical for mapping light detection points in the eye. Greg's technician made the following notation on his right-eye Goldmann plot: "coop/fix - good" (and apparently similar notation, cut off at the beginning of the 'g' on the left-eye plot), presumably indicating that Greg was cooperative and maintained eye fixation on the central point of the bowl.
- Fakers need to guesstimate the angle from which the light is shining — but they cannot see the light until their eye is capable of detecting it, at which point the technician records numbers they can't influence.

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- Even if a faker were very cognizant of how the test works (which most people are not without research), experience has established that he/she would have trouble faking a coherent pattern. *Understanding Visual Fields, Part I; Goldmann Perimetry*, page 8, notes that the Goldmann test...

“...is extremely useful in patients with *functional* visual loss. These patients have no organic basis for their decreased vision. They run the gamut from malingerers (to feign for gain) to the psychologically depressed (subconscious loss of vision). Certain visual field defects are indicative of functional patients. These include spiraling isopters, crossing of isopters, and severely constricted fields.”

If you look at the diagrams in *Understanding Visual Fields, Part I; Goldmann Perimetry* that illustrate such characteristics (see PDF-page 9 of that document) you'll quickly note that Greg Spencer's Goldmann plots do *not* exhibit any such characteristics.

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4. Retina specialist Dr. Rick, *before* seeing Greg's Goldmann field plots, expressed reservations about using that technology for severe central vision loss — though he later noted that it's more generally a very good tool in competent hands, which he believes the staff at OHSU likely possesses. However, after seeing the unusually detailed, low scatter Goldmann field plots at the end of our dialog, he noted that, "You can suggest that they did a very good job with the best reliability possible and very high attention to detail." His concern seems not to be the *fact* of significant central vision loss defined by the Goldmann plots but the *quantification* of that loss by these tests. Commenting on the Goldmann technician's notes of "coop/fix - good" (see [Figure 4](#) in ['Once I was blind, but now I can see...'](#)), he indicated that "with that size and density of a central scotoma, while the patient may have cooperated to the best of his ability, maintaining fixation during the test would have been very, very difficult." Excellent Goldmann results implicitly require excellent patient fixation (steady focus of the eye on the central hole in

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the Goldmann-perimeter bowl) — tough to do with severe central vision loss.

Conclusions

The Goldmann tests genuinely indicate that Greg had serious central vision loss, especially in the right eye, regardless of how precisely that loss was quantified. Greg's condition was neither faked nor psychosomatic.

Dr. Weleber letter — Last sentence of page 1; page 2, paragraph 1, sentences 1 and 2

Quote

“Ocular motility, external examination, and biomicroscopy were normal. On fundus examination, the optic nerve heads were pink with 0.3 cup-to-disc ratio, and the retina vessels, peripheral choroid, and peripheral retina all unremarkable and normal in appearance...”

Comments

These are apparently all ‘normal’ findings, some of which relate to the peripheral (vs. central) areas of Greg's vision.

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Dr. Weleber letter — Page 2, paragraph 1, sentence 3

Quote

“The foveal region had rather striking retinal pigment epithelial mottling bilaterally in an oval distribution of about one disc diameter in size, greater for the right eye than for the left eye.”

Comments

- The foveal region is in the center of the macula. To appreciate the critical importance of the fovea for central vision, note the following:
 - “Humans are diurnal creatures. We tend to be most active during the day, or we recreate these high light levels with manufactured sources when we are active at night. *Thus most of human visual experience is mediated by cones.* This cone dominance occurs despite a prominent anatomical bias: the human retina is 95% rods and only 5% cones, and *this minority of cones is concentrated in a tiny central portion of*

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the retina, the fovea." <Emphases are mine.> [Nouchine Hadjikhani and Roger B.H. Tootell, *Projection of Rods and Cones Within Human Visual Cortex*, Human Brain Mapping, Vol. 9, 2000, pp. 55–63. As of 10/30/2014, available at: http://www.ibrarian.net/navon/paper/Projection_of_Rods_and_Cones_Within_Human_Visual_.pdf?paperid=8824245]

- "...*greater for the right eye than for the left eye*" correlates with worse vision in the right eye than in the left eye.
- "...[optic] *disk diameter in size*" refers to the size of the blind spot over the exit point of the optic nerve.

The average size of the optic disk is 1.76 mm wide × 1.92 mm high. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Optic_disc] and the size of the fovea is about 1.5mm [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fovea_centralis]. Therefore, Dr. Weleber's statement implies that the entire fovea was mottled.

- Per retina specialist Dr. Rick:

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- One-disk-diameter foveal mottling, at least if centered over the fovea (as implied in Dr. Weleber's 1999 letter) *would implicitly decrease central vision* — though not necessarily result in visual acuities as bad as 20/200 or 20/400, given a multitude of possible causes for such mottling.
- “If the RPE [retinal pigment epithelium] is damaged, the photoreceptors die and **they do not come back** in clinical situations.” <Emphasis is mine.>
- “Retinal pigment epithelial mottling, once present, **never goes away.**” <Emphasis is mine.>
- In answer to another question, he concurred that Greg indeed had some *significant and irreversible* central vision loss, regardless of how precisely that loss was quantified.

Note also that *early* in my dialog with Dr. Rick — at a more skeptical point *before* he knew of and was impressed by Dr. Weleber's qualifications as an OHSU retina specialist and was provided further data — he stated the following about the

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natural irreversibility of such extensive vision loss:

"I believe that this man may have decreased vision but I very much doubt that it was 20/400 and 20/200 and then got better. ***Retinal damage that you are talking about does not improve.***" <Emphasis is mine.>

Conclusion

Dr. Weleber's fundus examinations indicate, if not precisely quantify, significant irreversible central vision loss.

Dr. Weleber letter — Page 2, paragraph 1, sentences 4 and 5

Quote

"Also on May 20, 1999, Greg had an electroretinogram which disclosed normal amplitudes and implicit times for both rod and cone mediated responses. The final 45-minute rod psychophysi-

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cal threshold was mildly elevated above normal in each eye."

Comments

Retina specialist Dr. Rick noted the following about the above quote: "**Exactly what I would expect** the ERG [electoretinogram] to show **given what you have told me** [via other Weleber quotes]. **A very good data point.**" <Emphases are mine.>

Conclusions

Per Dr. Rick, these results apparently confirm Greg's **naturally irreversible** central-vision loss.

Dr. Weleber letter — Page 2, paragraph 2, sentence 1

Quote

"All things considered, Greg appears to have a macular degenerative process in each eye that

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has finally resulted in legal blindness status for his better seeing left eye."

Comments

- Dr. Weleber effectively diagnoses **macular degeneration** here. (See more details of his diagnosis in "Dr. Weleber letter — Remainder of letter".) That's important.
- "In 1972, the Aid to the Blind program and two others combined under Title XVI of the Social Security Act to form the Supplemental Security Income program which currently states:

'An individual shall be considered to be blind for purposes of this title if he has central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with the use of a correcting lens.'" <Emphasis is mine.>

[\[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blindness#United_States\]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blindness#United_States)
- Greg had 20/200 vision in his better (left) eye that was uncorrectable. (Recall prior Dr. Weleber quote, "We were unable to improve the vision with manifest techniques.")

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- The Social Security Administration letter ([Figure 11](#)), stating the result of the possible-fraud investigation, acknowledges the legitimacy of Greg's former legally-blind status — and the “remarkable return of your vision.”

Dr. Weleber letter — Page 2, paragraph 2, sentence 2

Quote

“Because of the rather sudden fall in acuity the most likely situation was that he had a tight ring scotopic around fixation with a central island of vision for the left eye that finally got ‘snuffed out’ leaving him with the large central scotoma.”

Comments

My research on this came up mostly empty — especially given that “scotopic” refers to rod-cell peripheral vision. Initially Dr. Rick was baffled too, noting that “...a tight ring scotopic around fixation is not common terminology.” However, he subsequently speculated that Dr. Weleber might have inadvertently typed the word “scotopic” instead of “scotoma”, which would make sense.

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My interpretation: ***If*** the word “scotoma” was indeed intended instead of “scotopic”, then Dr. Weleber apparently perceived that at one point — presumably before the precipitous final loss of central vision — a ring-shaped, sight-impairing scotoma surrounded an “island” of still-functioning central vision in the left-eye macula. But that “island” of central vision ultimately also became functionally “snuffed out” and became a scotoma as well. It therefore merged with the ring scotoma, resulting in a combined large central scotoma that left Greg with severely impaired central vision.

Dr. Weleber letter — Page 2, paragraph 2, sentence 3

Quote

“The central scotomas on Goldmann perimetry appear larger than one would expect from just the fundus appearance alone. Nevertheless, I believe that the scotoma sizes are correct and his macul-

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opathy is cause for his marked reduction of acuity.”

Comments

Dr. Weleber is convinced that the Goldmann-measured scotoma size is fundamentally correct, despite a lesser severity of central vision loss suggested by fundus observations. My retina consultant Dr. Rick is not as confident of this quantification, for reasons discussed previously. (See comment 5 at the end of [Dr. Weleber letter — page 1, paragraph 2, sentence 5.](#)) However, as previous discussions in this analysis indicate, the **fact** (vs. the **degree**) of significant, irreversible central vision loss is not in doubt.

Dr. Weleber letter — Remainder of letter

The rest of Dr. Weleber's letter primarily discusses measures to help Greg deal with the diagnosis and hypothesizes genetic reasons for the vision loss. However, please note the following:

- Dr. Weleber's comments on page 3, paragraph 2, sentence 1, noting...

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"the high likelihood that this is a genetic form of macular degeneration." <Emphasis is mine.>

...a yet firmer statement of his judgment on page 2, paragraph 2, sentence 1 that...

"All things considered, Greg appears to have [present tense] a macular degenerative process in each eye that has finally resulted in legal blindness status for his better seeing left eye."

- The fact that macular degeneration is considered irreversible — adding to Dr. Rick comments about the irreversibility of Greg's condition on page 2, paragraph 1, sentence 3. Consider the following statements:
 - *"With all the attention given to macular disease, doctors have not discovered the 'silver bullet.' Macular degeneration is irreversible and incurable. Patients diagnosed with the disease are told that their vision will slowly decrease. At best, therapy is palliative. The attempt is to maintain the size of their central*

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blind zone so that it does not expand."

<Emphasis is mine.>

Ophthalmologist T. Ramsey Thorp, M.D., *The Laying On of Hands*, Hamilton Books, 2005, pp. 33 to 34. These pages are available, as of 9/30/2014, at: <https://books.google.com/books?id=7LGzx29J0YgC&printsec=front-cover&dq=isbn:0761832491&hl=en&sa=X&ei=9JS1VJK9HoyoNvnzgPgJ&ved=0CB8Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false>

- "Are there any cures for macular degeneration? Once the damage has occurred, it's considered *permanent and irreversible*."
<Emphasis are mine.>

Mitchell Hatch M.D, *Macular degeneration is irreversible*, 'Ask Dr. H', The Spokesman Review, September 14, 1999, page 02. Available as of 9/30/2014 at <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1314&dat=19990914&id=PY9XAAAAlBAJ&sjid=IfIDAAAAlBAJ&pg=2882,4188359>

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- “The utmost important consequence of macular degeneration is *irreversible vision loss*.”
<Emphasis is mine.>

Causes and consequences of macular degeneration, eMedWiki. Available as of 9/30/2014 at: http://php.med.unsw.edu.au/medwiki/index.php?title=Causes_and_consequences_of_macular_degeneration

Note also Doctor Weleber's comment that,

“The news of his visual acuity reaching the legal blindness status was quite a shock for Greg and he will need considerable support...”

Of course a good actor *could* feign shock. However, such an effort might not fool an astute medical professional who's seen hundreds or thousands of patients and would seemingly require one more element of coordinated planning by a faker. Therefore, the “quite a shock” statement further suggests that Greg didn't try to get disability payments by faking irreversible central vision loss — *the existence of which is independently attested to by the medical evidence discussed above.*

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Dr. Boyer letter

I won't go through Dr. Boyer's letter in detail, as I did for Dr. Weleber's letter, except to highlight these points:

- Dr. Boyer subsequently and independently confirmed seriously compromised visual acuity, which had in fact deteriorated further by that point in time: 20/300 and 20/500, vs. 20/200 and 20/400 before. (Note that two sets of independently measured data points are generally statistically more reliable than one.) Unless Greg faked both tests, which I strongly doubt for multiple reasons discussed previously, his legal status of blindness seems even more certain. (Recall my earlier plot in [Dr. Weleber letter — page 1, paragraph 2, sentences 1 to 2](#), which includes Dr. Boyer's 20/500 right-eye data point.)
- Moreover, Dr. Boyer's recommendations for polarized filters, a magnifier of a specific power, specific prescriptions for near-vision lenses (positive-diopter numbers presumably for presbyopia), and specialized software appear to further confirm that Greg's vision was evaluated comprehensively, not haphazardly.

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Was Greg truly healed of his blindness?

- That this letter and these recommendations are addressed to the Oregon Commission for the Blind, a state agency [http://www.oregon.gov/blind/Pages/about_us.aspx], seems to further confirm Greg's statutory blindness.

Was Greg truly healed of his blindness?

The following examines the 'after' evidence of [Figure 10](#) and [Figure 11](#) in '[Once I was blind, but now I can see...](#)' without the detail to which I subjected the 'before' evidence.

Could Greg's GOOD vision be ambiguous or faked?

Less detailed medical data is available to us for Greg's 'after' condition — that is, 'after' the remarkable restoration of his sight — than for his 'before' condition. *However, less information is needed.* All we need is confirmation that his sight is now good, which is hard to fake.

- Again, the absence of good vision, just as the absence of any ability, is typically much harder to

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establish than the presence of good vision. Regarding acuity tests, if I say I can't see letters on a chart in the ophthalmologist's office, or deliberately read them incorrectly, who's to know — unless the doctor later observes me doing something that I shouldn't be able to do with poor vision? That's why I dedicated so many pages of this appendix to examining 'before' data to establish beyond reasonable doubt that Greg had severe vision loss.

- By contrast, the presence of good vision, just like the presence of any ability, is hard to fake. If I falsely claim to be a good baseball pitcher, a minute or two on the mound will reveal my lie. If I falsely claim to be a skilled computer programmer, a few lines of code will reveal my lie. And if I falsely claim to have good vision, a few failures to read letters on an eye chart will reveal my lie. One could ostensibly buy and memorize a printed eye chart and fake good vision. However, as retina specialist Dr. Rick noted, it's virtually impossible to fake with digital eye charts, the letter patterns of which can be randomly constructed and so impossible to memorize. (Without the availability of further information, unfortunately,

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we don't know whether the charts used to evaluate Greg's 'after' vision were digital.)

- It's impossible for a person with macular degeneration to fake a now-favorable-looking post-miracle eye fundus and macula, yet physical examination apparently revealed favorable changes. (See [Did Greg's eyes change physically?](#) below.)
- It's impossible to walk leisurely around town, with friends, and into the eye-doctor's office without revealing vision deficiencies. If a man can't read the 'Men's Room' sign, walks hesitantly because of inferior peripheral vision, cannot read instructions, cannot read a menu, etc., that will be obvious. It would have been impossible to read aloud, to Randy and Travis, license plates at a distance.
- It's impossible to successfully hold a normal job with vision as bad as Greg's was. Yet Greg willingly gave up disability payments, and the Social Security Administration declared him able to work.
- It's unlikely that the Social Security Administration ([Figure 11](#)) would close a year-long fraud investigation with a statement that effectively

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says, "He really had horrible vision and needed our help and now has good vision and doesn't" if it weren't true.

Did Greg's eyes change physically?

Considering that, per retina specialist Dr. Rick, "Retinal pigment epithelial mottling, once present, never goes away," it seems that the 'before' and 'after' observations of the insides of Greg's eyes revealed substantial physical differences. Though Dr. Rick would like to see 'before' and 'after' fundus pictures and angiogram films — unfortunately unavailable to me — he noted that the following 'after' vision-restoration assessment...

*"Examination shows mild macular pigment scatter but no macular edema or deposits at this time."
(Dr. Burpee)*

"...is a **totally** different description of the state of his retina" <Emphasis mine> from the following 'before' vision-restoration assessment...

"...rather striking retinal pigment epithelial mottling bilaterally in an oval distribution of about one disc diameter in size." (Dr. Weleber)

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Encore performance of youthful sight regeneration?

Encore performance of youthful sight regeneration?

Some individuals who consider this account in detail — myself included — may understandably wonder, or *have* wondered at some point, whether Greg's restoration of good vision in middle age could in some way have been an 'encore performance' of the vision restoration of his youth. I submit that we can virtually dismiss that possibility because of key dissimilarities between his youthful and middle-age visual situations. I discuss these dissimilarities in the next two subsections

Analysis

See [Table 7](#) below and the bullet list that follows.

Encore performance of youthful sight regeneration?

Table 7 Youth vs. middle-age vision-loss scenarios

Youth	Middle age
Reported diagnosis of retinal swelling.	No mention whatever of retinal swelling in documentation.
By implication, compromised vision was <i>correctable</i> enough for functionality.	Greg's vision was declared <i>not correctable</i> (see Dr. Weleber letter — page 1, paragraph 2, sentence 4)
Greg apparently not seriously incapacitated or legally blind.	Declared legally blind in detail. Given official government help. (See Dr. Boyer letter.)
Loss was apparently <i>not</i> diagnosed as <i>irreversible</i> (logical if indeed his condition was CME, as discussed above in Retinal swelling).	<i>Naturally irreversible.</i> See Dr. Weleber letter — Page 2, paragraph 1, sentence 3 , Dr. Weleber letter — Page 2, paragraph 1, sentences 4 and 5 , and Dr. Weleber letter — Remainder of letter
Acuity restored over about 10 months.	Acuity restored <i>very</i> quickly. Confirmed by observations of Greg's post-restoration behaviors and by date-closeness of retreat (Figure 9) and Dr. Burpee letter (Figure 10).

Encore performance of youthful sight regeneration?

- *Different pathology* — The retinal swelling in Greg's youth apparently differs from the foveal epithelial mottling, large central scotomas, and diagnosis of macular degeneration in Greg's middle age.
- *Uncorrectability* — Apparently glasses or other corrective refraction could not help Greg in his middle age. That's further indicated by the results of the pinhole test ([Dr. Weleber letter — page 1, paragraph 2, sentences 1 to 2](#)).
- *Irreversibility* — Multiple factors indicated that Greg could **not** have **naturally** regained his sight after his **irreversible** middle-age vision loss.
- *Legal blindness* — The government had every right to wonder whether Greg may somehow have previously faked blindness to get disability payments, *because his prior condition would have been considered irreversible*. The Social Security Administration understandably does not typically encounter or readily accept miracles. However, it obviously *looked at the data* — presumably with the assistance of their own eye-disease experts — and *ended up convinced* that Greg's prior blindness claims were genuine, and his remarkable restoration of sight was genuine as well.

Encore performance of youthful sight regeneration?

- *Rapidity of middle-age vision restoration vs. slowness of youthful restoration* — Greg's report of the *suddenness* of his good-vision restoration is confirmed:
 - Retreat participants — two of whose comments I've reported — observed Greg's irrepressible excitement about his renewed vision and his 'environmental testing' thereof, on multiple occasions over several hours.
 - The May 3, 2002 date of the Dr. Burpee letter about Greg, reporting the "remarkable return of his visual acuity" ([Figure 10](#)). It was written a mere 14 days after the April 19, 2002 *starting* date of the *Cleansing the Mind* retreat ([Figure 9](#)), at which Greg's vision was restored.
 - Greg's honesty — evidenced by 1) his voluntary notice to end a free ride from the government — apparently *promptly* after his vision restoration and 2) his willingness to endure a predictable investigation of possible disability-payments fraud. (Greg was exonerated. See [Figure 11](#), noting that the 5/3/02 Dr. Burpee letter was key evidence in that investigation.)

Conclusions

Greg's honesty buttresses the reliability of his report of *sudden* healing at the *Cleansing the Mind* retreat.

Bottom line

Though Greg may indeed have an inborn weakness that manifested itself in two widely spaced episodes of vision loss, *we need to consider Greg's middle-age vision loss and dramatic restoration completely on its own merits*. His middle-age vision loss and sudden restoration was clearly no 'encore performance' of the youthful scenario.

Conclusions

Does this evidence and analysis *prove* that **supernatural** intervention occurred? No, not *prove*. However, I submit, the realistic criterion for evaluating such evidence is *sufficiency*, not perfection. Even the most rigorous application of the scientific method — clearly inapplicable to one-time events or to the overwhelming majority of life's decision-making scenarios — rarely or never generates absolute proof, just varying degrees of confidence (albeit sometimes very close to

Conclusions

unassailable proof^a). *Legal* standards of evidence — not scientific research standards and often not even *forensic* standards^b — apply to such one-time events. I submit that if miracles were considered criminal events, the attestations supplied in this account — and in the two other medically attested accounts in this section — would easily convict the recipients in any legitimate court of law.

Of course not even *perfect* evidence, if such were even possible, would convince individuals whose worldviews — may I suggest *faith* commitments? — deny even the possibility of miracles. Prejudices aside, I suggest that the *best* explanation of Greg Spencer's data *unequivocally* favors ***a miracle***.

^aFor example, the second law of thermodynamics is generally considered virtually 'bulletproof', as are Newton's laws of mechanics when applied in non-quantum-mechanical, non-relativistic situations.

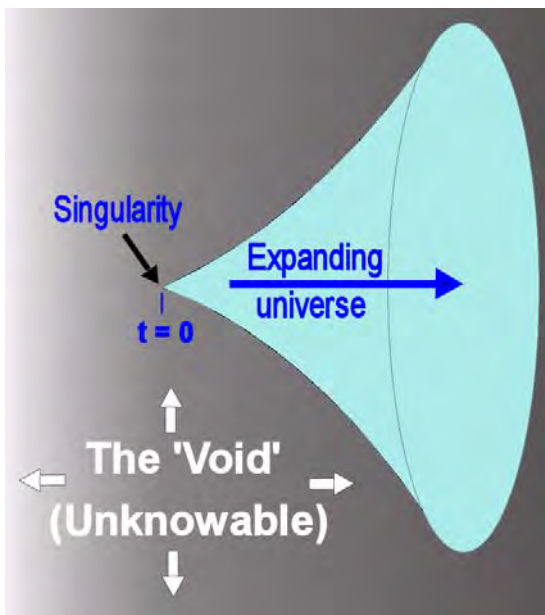
^bForensic evidence — often based on sophisticated scientific methodologies — isn't involved in the majority of criminal convictions, in contrast to common misperceptions. See [How many critical LEGAL decisions are scientific?](#)

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In the *standard* Big Bang model, our universe starts from a **singularity** — an infinite-density, infinite temperature point at which all the laws of physics break down and at which OUR *time* dimension starts. See Figure at right.

Some scientists resist the *standard* Big Bang theory

because of unacceptability of a **singularity**, including unwanted theological implications. Reiteration of a



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Conclusions

comment by astronomer Robert Jastrow seems appropriate:

"...scientists cannot bear the thought of a natural phenomenon which cannot be explained, even with unlimited time and money. *There is a kind of religion in science*; it is the religion of a person who believes there is order and harmony in the universe. Everything can be explained in a rational way as the product of some previous event; every event must have its cause; there is no **First Cause**." ¹³⁸ <Emphases are mine.>

Unsurprisingly, some scientists have proposed ways to eliminate the **singularity**, typically assuming that the universe began according to the principles of **quantum physics**. That's reasonable from one viewpoint: exceedingly small entities behave in quantum-physical ways. However, that's problematic from another: if the enormity of the universe is initially condensed into such an unfathomably tiny entity, then it must also behave according to the principles of general relativity, notably gravity, which is presently mathematically at odds with **quantum physics**. Some scientists hope to harmonize the two with

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some future theory of **quantum gravity** (a big 'if', which in any case may (will?) not be falsifiable).

Scientists such as Stephen Hawking, Alexander Vilenkin, and Lawrence Krauss have proposed *quantum-physical* starts of the universe from what they sometimes **call** 'nothing'. In reality, what scientists designate as '**nothing**' **is** always '**something**' — any proposed 'scientific' origins and properties of which *are* and intrinsically **must be** conjecture. I refer to 'nothing' in this book as the '**Void**' — which is forever unobservable and unknowable. It is **outside** of our spacetime or any precursor. Even experiments that attempt to emulate the beginning of our universe must operate **within OUR** spacetime according to the **physical laws of OUR** spacetime.

As an 'Exhibit A' example of this kind of thinking, I'll focus on the 'no-boundary' proposal of Stephen Hawking (and others), with whom readers are probably the most familiar. His discussions of the proposal relate to statements in *A Brief History of Time*²¹⁵ (1988; over 10 million copies), *Universe in a Nutshell*³⁸⁶ (2001; over 0.8 million copies since 2008), and *The Grand Design*³⁸⁹ (2010; over 1.4 mil-

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Philosophical presuppositions

lion copies). Hawking claims that his 'no boundary' proposal eliminates the objectionable **singularity** and posits the beginning of the universe from that **meta-physical** unknown: '**nothing**'.

However, most critically for honest skeptics, *Hawking claims that his proposal eliminates the need for God*. I have written this appendix (and the one that follows) to rebut the basis for that claim as worldview-based, *forever-unfalsifiable conjecture*.

Philosophical presuppositions

You know my **metaphysical** position by now. Therefore, before discussing the 'no-boundary' proposal^a, it's only fair for you to know something about Hawking's **metaphysical** position as well.

'Grand DESIGN' but no designer?

His 1988 book *suggests* that the no-boundary proposal eliminates universe design and a designer. But his 2010 book seemingly *contends* that his proposal

^aHawking's version is called the Hartle-Hawking proposal, acknowledging a co-theorist in its development.

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eliminates the need for *design* and a *designer* — seemingly the top priority of the book, in ironic contradiction to its title: *Grand DESIGN*.

"It is reasonable to ask who or what created the universe, but if the answer is God, then the question has merely been deflected to that of who created God. In this view it is accepted that some entity exists that needs no creator, and that entity is called God. This is known as the first-cause argument for the existence of God. *We **claim**, however, that it is possible to answer these questions purely within the realm of science, and without invoking any divine beings.*"³⁹² <Emphases are mine.>

I'll argue that a) the first sentence above is effectively a statement of *faith* that references a straw-man God (see "[...who created God?](#)") and b) the italicized last sentence summarizes **metaphysical** conjecture *masquerading* as science.

For simplicity, I'll refer simply to 'Hawking' in this appendix. Though *Grand Design* co-author Leonard Mlodinow obviously contributed to that book, perhaps substantially, Hawking is doubtless the primary driver.

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Philosophy is dead?

Hawking is brilliant and has accomplished much, despite enormous health obstacles that would defeat most people. His popular-level writings are interesting, substantially instructive, and sometimes witty. I genuinely enjoy reading much of what he writes. However, as you'll see, substantial biases distort some of his thinking. I submit that just as misapplication of exceptional *physical* capabilities can cause exceptional *physical* harm, so misapplication of exceptional *thinking* capabilities can cause exceptional *thinking* distortion. I.e. the most brilliant bias breeds the biggest blindness. Notably, Hawking says at the beginning of *The Grand Design*...

*"...philosophy is dead. Philosophy has not kept up with modern developments in science, particularly physics. Scientists have become the bearers of the torch of discovery in our quest for knowledge."*³⁹⁰ <Emphases are mine.>

Yet in that last sentence, Hawking boldly affirms **scientism** — a self-refuting worldview, a **philosophy** (see critique in [The problem with scientISM](#)). ScienT-ISM is substantially what he identifies as "**positivist philosophy**" — to which he says he *subscribes*.³⁸⁷

Philosophical presuppositions

Further contradicting his claim that “philosophy is dead,” he goes on to make several purely philosophical proclamations in *The Grand Design*. For example, he talks substantially (twelve places) about “*model-dependent realism*,” stating at one place that,

“Another problem that model-dependent realism solves, or at least *avoids*, is the meaning of existence.”³⁹¹ <Emphasis is mine.>

Philosopher W.L. Craig notes that ‘model-dependent realism’ is just a form of ‘*ontological pluralism*’ — an anti-realist philosophy “...defended [only] by a handful of philosophers.” It “...holds that there really is no right answer to many *ontological* questions.”⁴⁰⁰

Despite Hawking’s brilliance in *physics*, I submit that his *metaphysics* reflects more philosophical bias than intellectual genius. I suggest accordingly that readers who decry attitudes like “God said it, I believe it, that settles it!” as uncritical thinking should equally avoid attitudes like “Hawking said it, I believe it, that settles it!” Issues highlighted in [Science is objective?](#) suggest the wisdom of similar caution when reading the works of certain other science popularists as well.

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Basics

The Planck-size universe

Hawking starts his no-boundary-proposal description with the understanding that, though quantum theory isn't relevant to large-scale structures of the universe, it's quite relevant at the birth of the universe when it was unfathomably tiny:

"But if you go far enough back in time, the universe was as small as the **Planck size**, a billion-trillion-trillionth of a centimeter^a, which is the scale at which quantum theory does have to be taken into account. So though we don't yet have a complete quantum theory of gravity^b, we do know that the origin of the universe was a quantum event. [393](#)

<Emphases are mine.>

That statement is based on the physics of our *present*,

^a More precisely, 1.6×10^{-35} m [402](#). See **Planck length**.

^b Quantum behavior and gravity are incompatible — except, for example, in string and M theories, which some physicists call untestable *non*-theories. Physicist Lawrence Krauss — who also claims a *Universe from Nothing* (book) — says that presently NO theory of **quantum gravity** exists, let alone an "incomplete" theory. Will a **testable AND appropriately tested quantum gravity** model arise?

Basics

all-we-know universe — which Hawking admits is very **unlike** the *very early (incipient) universe*:

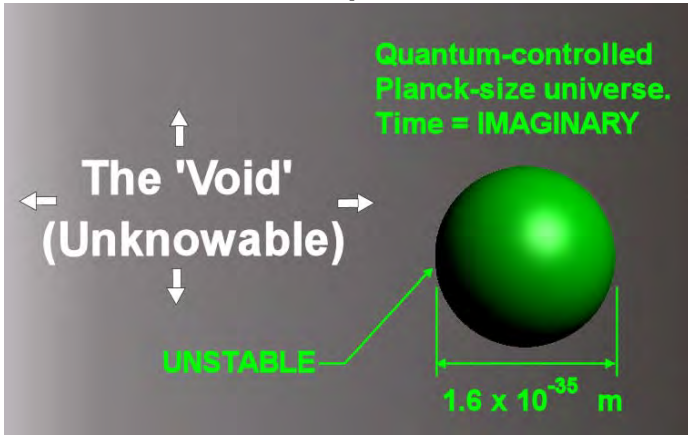
*"We must accept that our usual ideas of space and time do not apply to the very early universe."*³⁹⁴ <Emphasis is mine.>

Yet he extrapolates from the knowable to the unknowable without hesitation.

He posits this incipient universe with effectively four spacial dimensions (the three we know and *imaginary* time behaving like a fourth spacial dimension **orthogonal** to

the other three.). We can't *picture* the proposed incipient universe better than as a 3D sphere. See [Figure 28](#).

Figure 28 Planck-size incipient universe



Before continuing, let's elaborate a bit on [Figure 28](#):

1. This proposed Planck-size incipient universe, though exceedingly tiny, is finite: NOT a *singularity*. The *singularity* is of course what Hawking and others wish to eliminate.
2. Again, the proposed Planck-size incipient universe is *exceedingly* tiny. So, *neglecting gravitational considerations* (per the general theory of relativity), it unquestionably qualifies as a quantum-

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controlled entity. (Entities like the proton so qualify and are billions-of-quadrillions times bigger.)

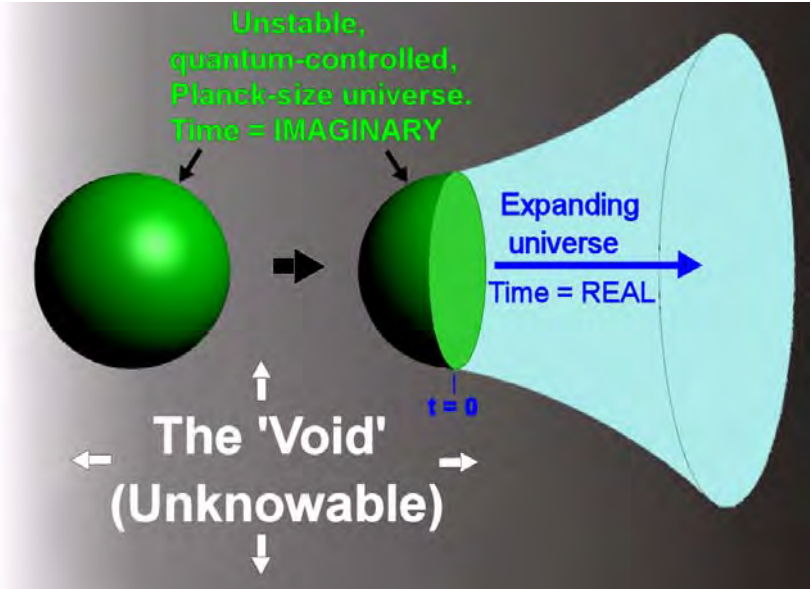
3. The proposed Planck-size universe is **quantum-physically unstable**, such that it will unpredictably and suddenly begin expanding into our universe based on a **quantum fluctuation** (and, per Hawking, other universes as well; see [Appendix C: UNspecial universe, one of zillions?](#)).
4. To satisfy Hawking's theoretical math, involving what are called 'path integrals', *time* must be *imaginary* in the Planck-size universe — and must *stay imaginary* until this *ultramicro* incipient universe suddenly begins to expand into our universe. More on that later.

The expansion

Quantum events are unpredictable in the Planck-size incipient universe. It exists for what ***we'd*** call a finite ***time*** — before a quantum fluctuation causes it suddenly to start expanding into our universe (*and*, Hawking proposes, into other universes as well; see [Appendix C: UNspecial universe, one of zillions?](#).) [Fig-](#)

Figure 29 depicts this event.

Figure 29 Our universe from Planck-size universe



1. The Planck-size incipient universe has the surface of a finite four-spacial-dimensional object, not a point. Our universe(s) can expand from any location(s) on the periphery of this ultramicro object, not at some particular point. There's no **singularity**; all locations on the 4D 'sphere' are equivalent. In other words, though the Planck-size universe is

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finite, there is *'no boundary'* from which the universe predictably starts expanding.

2. The proposed Planck-size is like a four-spacial-dimensional object because, Hawking says, *our real* dimension of time doesn't start until a **quantum** event initiates the expansion of our universe^a
Based on Hawking's theoretical *math*:

- *Time is IMAGINARY* before the start of our universe's expansion. It behaves (*mathematically*) like a fourth dimension of space.
- *Time is REAL* at and after the start of our universe's expansion. The beginning of real time, $t=0$, marks the beginning of *our* universe and its real, unidirectional 'arrow' of time.

^aThe Planck-size universe involves a huge jumble of **wave-functions**. The Big Bang expansion starts via a **quantum fluctuation** and proceeds per a sum of the huge jumble of wavefunctions — the sum of quantum 'histories'.

Hawking **assumes** that Richard Feynman's sum-of-histories approach to **quantum physics**, initially proposed to explain particle behavior in the deceptively simple **double-slit experiment**, applies to the unknown and perhaps exceedingly complex beginning of the universe(s).

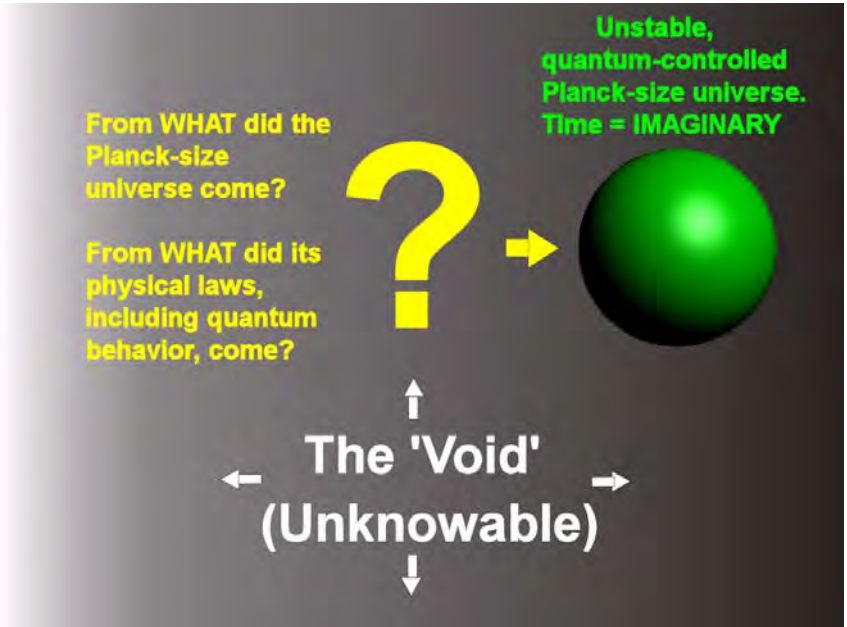
Issues

Here, in decreasing order of importance, I challenge the *metaphysical* assumptions that Hawking popularly asserts based on his proposal.

From where did Planck-size universe come? When?

Suppose our universe *did* originate from a 'no-boundary' Planck-size incipient universe. Where did THAT come from? Where did the *laws of physics* governing THAT come from? See [Figure 30](#). Hawking doesn't eliminate the need for a **First Cause**. He simply moves it one step back. His questions "[...who created God?](#)" and [God plays dice?](#) don't rescue his position.

Figure 30 From where did Planck-size universe come?



Moreover, WHEN did the Planck-size incipient universe and its laws of physics come into being in the forever unknowable "Void"? Given that the Planck-size incipient universe ultimately expands into ours, clearly Hawking doesn't consider the *unstable* Planck-size universe to have been around for 'eternity' — 'forever' — which also implies some **second prior**

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time or time-like dimension, some point in which the Planck-size incipient universe came into being.

He provides no scientific basis whatever on which to address these issues.

Some scientists speculate about **quantum fluctuations** and conjecturally conceive *properties* for the forever-unknowable 'Void'. Oh? Fluctuations IN what? Fluctuations OF what? Fluctuations ACCORDING TO what: according to what laws of physics — especially given some physicists' insistence on the existence of *multiple* universes in the 'Void', each with *different* laws of physics and physical constants?^a Fluctuations (a time-based concept) RELATIVE TO what — to what *second* TIME dimension?

"...who created God?"

Hawking likely would appeal to the following reasoning to counter a prospective First-Cause resolution to the conundrums posed in the previous paragraph.

^a...which I discuss in [Is there evidence for a multiverse?](#) and [Appendix C: UNspecial universe, one of zillions?](#)

"It is reasonable to ask who or what created the universe, but if the answer is God, then the question has merely been deflected to that of who created God.

This is a prime example of Robert Jastrow's previously quoted remark (e.g. on [page 670](#)) citing...

"...a kind of **religion** in science...of a person who **believes**...**there is no First Cause.**" <Emphases are mine.> [138](#)

I especially emphasize the word 'believes', because that position is ultimately based on *faith*, not science.

Far from appropriate humility about unknown and *unknowable* ultimate origins (given the unknown and *unknowable* "Void"), thinking as in the last two quotes reveals conceptions of a wimpy straw-man God: NOT a **transcendent** entity but a human-like entity who must fit and capitulate to intrinsically limited and fallible human knowledge, reasoning, and perspectives — and must ultimately capitulate to some *other* cause.

Admittedly, 'Who created God?' is a legitimate *initial sincere* question that probably most thoughtful people have asked at some point, sometimes even chil-

dren. However, I suggest that it becomes a *persistent hostile* question in otherwise brilliant people *not* because the existence of a **transcendent** First Cause is *logically unreasonable* but because a **transcendent** First Cause is *intellectually intolerable*.

More critically, a hostile “Who created God?” question completely ignores any independent evidence (such as the **EVIDENCE** in this book) for the *present* existence and involvement of a **transcendent** God.

God plays dice?

Hawking asserts, regarding his proposal, that even if God were responsible for initiating the universe, quantum uncertainty in the Planck-size universe renders such involvement arbitrary:

“We are the product of quantum fluctuations^a in the very early universe. If one were religious, one could say that God really does play dice.” [397](#)

^a“Fluctuations” = changes over **time**, despite Hawking’s attempts to eliminate it. The Big Bang may have created OUR dimension of time. But that doesn’t nullify the existence of a **prior** SECOND dimension of time in which Hawking’s Planck-size incipient universe — or alternatively a **singularity** — was initiated.

Issues

...borrowing from Albert Einstein's famous remark that "God *doesn't* play dice." <Emphasis is mine.>

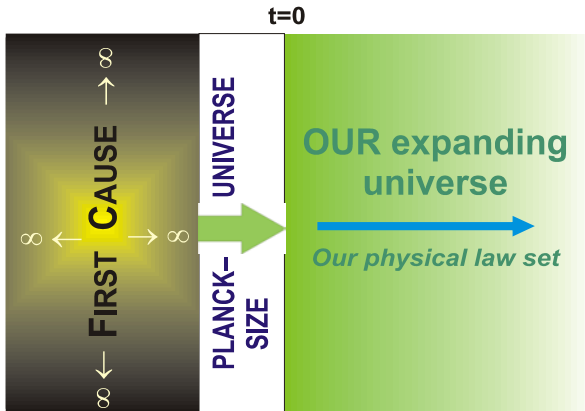
Let's examine Hawking's statement a bit.

1. God 'playing dice' to decide on the universe — allowing quantum uncertainty to rule — is *again* based on a wimpy straw-man concept of God who, instead of **transcendentally *creating or providing*** laws of physics, is rather **controlled *BY*** them. Such a god doesn't qualify as God.
2. Moreover, if a **transcendent** God supplied the following from the '**Void**'...
 - ...the laws of physics...
 - ...the initiation of a Planck-size incipient universe or **singularity**...

...then **transcendence** reasonably implies that he would have done so from a **transcendent SUPER**-set of physical principles/laws, as strongly suggested by evidence and arguments in the [Miracles impossible?](#) section. A **transcendent** God would not be limited by OUR **quantum physics**. I suggest that the scenario in [Figure 31](#) below is reasonable if we don't *arbitrarily* rule out a **transcendent** God.

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Figure 31 *Transcendent God with access to SUPERset of physical laws isn't limited by quantum behaviors defined by our universe's SUBset of physical laws*



3. Hawking proposes his Planck-size quantum beginning of the universe based on Richard Feynman's all-possible-histories model of quantum-physical behavior. Feynman's model at least initially focused on the results of the famous '**double-slit experiment**'. In his model, all possible *paths* for the experiment's tiny launched particle — all possible *histories*, including a single particle going through *both* slits and having all possible **wave-functions** — sum to determine where the particle lands on the nearby target.

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Whether a model based this relatively 'simple' experiment applies to the unknown, inevitably more complex, and inevitably different start of the universe is highly speculative. (Moreover, Feynman's hypothesis is just one of *many* attempts to explain quantum behavior.) Far more critically, however:

- a. When, during a **double-slit experiment**, a **human observes** the path of the particle on its way to the target — if only in an attempt to distinguish *which slit* the particle passes through, the particle behaves in a *classical, non-quantum-physical* way. (Like a fired bullet.) **Human observation removes the quantum uncertainty.** This '**quantum weirdness**' is an experimental fact.
- b. By logical extension, if **God observes** the same particle, it behaves in a classical, non-quantum-physical way for him as well. **God's observation removes the quantum uncertainty.**
- c. Therefore, if Hawking's extension of the Feynman all-possible-histories model to the beginning of the universe were valid, then **God's**

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observation of the formation of our universe removed the quantum uncertainty.

d. **Therefore, God did NOT 'play dice'.**

Imaginary time is real?

At first glance, Hawking's use of **imaginary time** in his proposal might seemingly be a *physical/mathematical* issue that doesn't impact the *MET*aphysical issues discussed above. However, his *justification* for proposing **imaginary time** is not merely as a temporary mathematical tool but as a *real*, permanent feature of the incipient (Planck-size) universe during its existence, for which Hawking takes a *philosophical* position. So that's partly *MET*aphysical, as discussed below. Therefore, I need to address it along with Hawking's other **scientific** *MET*aphysical assertions.

Hawking fails to mention in *The Grand Design* (though does note in the other two books I cite) that he introduces **imaginary time** to make his 'no-time-at-the start' universe *work mathematically*. He introduces **imaginary time** as a tool to get rid of mathematical problems caused by *real* time in his equations. Let's look generally at imaginary numbers

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— **imaginary time** being just one of a class of **imaginary numbers**.

- *NORMAL: **imaginary numbers** are always TEMPORARY numbers in a derivation or calculation.*

Scientists and engineers frequently use **imaginary numbers** as helpful mathematical tools. But in the end, all **imaginary numbers** ultimately revert to *real* numbers in the derived/calculated result.

- *HAWKING: Treats **imaginary time** as though it's intrinsically real in the Planck-size universe; in his math, the results never revert to real numbers in descriptions of the Planck-size universe. Yet, interestingly, in *A Brief History of Time*, Hawking philosophically admits that,*

*“When one goes back to the real time in which we live, however, there will still be appear to be singularities [see ‘**singularity**’ in glossary]...In real time, the universe has a beginning and end at singularities that form a boundary to space time and at which the laws of science break down. But in imaginary time, there are no singularities or boundaries. So maybe what we call imaginary time is really*

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more basic, and what we call real is just an idea that we invent to help us describe what we think the universe is like. [217](#) <Emphasis is mine.>

Per the italicized text in the above quote, could imaginary actually be real and real actually imaginary? In other words, could the following be true?

- **Imaginary** time in the incipient Plank-size universe is actually **real**.
- What we consider **real** time in our present, verifiably-*real* universe is actually **imaginary**?

The following statements, in Hawking's *The Universe in a Nutshell*, seemingly confirm his philosophical bias in that direction:

"...**I am a *positivist*...*imaginary*** numbers can be thought of as a new kind of number at right angles to ordinary real numbers. Because they are a **mathematical construct**, *they don't need a physical realization*; one can't have an imaginary number of oranges or an imaginary credit card bill."

"One might think this means that imaginary numbers are just a mathematical game having nothing to do with the real world. From the viewpoint of **positivist philosophy**, however, *one cannot determine what is real.*"³⁸⁷ <Emphases mine.>

Yet Hawking *draws conclusions* from his imaginary time as though it *has* "...physical realization."

Recall prior comments on 'model dependent realism' in [Philosophy is dead?](#). I suggest that *we can't have it BOTH ways* ('imaginary time = real' AND vice versa, both in the *incipient* universe AND in *today's* universe).

1. If *IMAGINARY* time in the Planck-space incipient universe were actually *REAL*.
2. And *OUR* universe's *REAL* time is actually *IMAGINARY*
3. THEN...
 - *OUR time, in OUR present universe is **falsely** perceived as REAL. It's truly imaginary.*
 - *Normally, we do math in OUR present universe with IMAGINARY numbers but end up with REAL numbers in the results. These*

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results must in reality be *IMAGINARY*, perhaps "...just an *idea* that we *invent* to help us describe what we *think* the universe is like."
<Emphases mine.>

4. SO the results of *Hawking's* other theoretical work that **end up** with *REAL*-number results must be *IMAGINARY*.

Moreover, consider Hawking's word '*fluctuation*', as in '*quantum fluctuation*.' In every definition I've found on the Web — and I've looked at several — fluctuations implicitly or explicitly always refer to some type of change relative to the passage of **time**. However, though Hawking justifies invoking timeless fluctuations *mathematically* — to make his math work and in accordance with his philosophy of 'model-dependent realism, he cannot *conceptually* avoid the implicit invocation of some dimension of **time**. (Perhaps a *second* pre-Big Bang dimension of time, per my discussion in [Extra time dimensions and God?](#))

Conjecture in physics resolves issues in METAphysics?

Conjecture in physics resolves issues in METAphysics?

I submit that the METAphysical assertions in Hawking's proposal are not science but scientISM-based philosophical conjecture.

But recall that Stephen Hawking is only "Exhibit A" in that regard. Some other scientists do the same thing. For example, theoretical physicist Lawrence Krauss writes related and arguably even bolder metaphysical assertions in his *Universe from Nothing* book, albeit based on a somewhat different quantum-fluctuation-origins proposal. I won't discuss Dr. Krauss's proposal here; I've taken enough of your time (and mine) addressing Dr. Hawking's *metaphysics*. However, I suggest that the following remark from mathematical physicist Ikjyot Singh Kohli, in a review of Krauss's *Universe from Nothing* book, appropriately cautions us to discern conjecture and METAphysics from physics in popular science books, including Hawking's:

"The whole reason why books like this have become popular is because the authors claim to be teaching science to the public, but what you are learning is NOT science, it is their philosophical viewpoints dressed up as science to gain more

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Conjecture in physics resolves issues in METAphysics?

momentum for their personal viewpoints.^a The proof is in all the faulty claims made in this book, and the fact that Krauss does not offer a single shred of how any of these ideas can be tested, which is a cornerstone of science. If you don't have these things, your ideas are just philosophical, and are therefore no more or less valid than anyone else's philosophical beliefs." [401](#)

Scientists like Hawking and Krauss are people of worth and significance with the right to their opinions and expression thereof. However, misleading readers to equate conjecture with fact^b is deceptive abuse of their prestige.

^aI don't think Kohli implies that we can't learn *any* legitimate science from such books. I have learned/reviewed legitimate physics both from Hawking and Krauss. Rather, this comment addresses *metaphysics masquerading as physics, conjecture masquerading as science*, and the need for discernment.

^b...though — regarding 'nothing' (what I call the 'Void') in *The Universe from Nothing* — Lawrence Krauss sometimes seemingly almost flirts with admitting both conjecture and theistic plausibility — then repeatedly rationalizes the latter away with statements of 'no evidence' for God. Really? Recall [No evidence?](#)

Appendix B: No singularity, no initiator?

Bottom line

So which of the following two options *best* represents truth concerning initiation of the universe: naturalistic *conjecture* or *transcendental evidence*?

1. Naturalistic *conjecture*

- The very different *nature* of the *incipient* universe is quite *speculative*, at least presently. Regardless of mathematical sophistication, quantum proposals *presume* that laws operating in *PRE-spacetime* operate the same as in *spacetime*. Even huge particle accelerators — e.g. the Large Hadron Collider and the two yet more powerful facilities being planned — must operate in our *present spacetime*. Can they ultimately replicate conditions in *pre-spacetime*?
- The *source* of *physical laws/operating principles* in the incipient universe *is empirically unknowable, forever*. We cannot empirically observe anything about conditions or contents in the forever-unknowable pre-universe 'Void'. Moreover, physical laws are *descriptive* principles *discovered* in OUR spacetime, not *pre-descriptive* free-floating entities.

Appendix B: No singularity, no initiator?

Bottom line

- The **source** of the starting entity of the incipient universe — whether a Planck-size entity or a **singularity** — is *empirically unknowable, forever*. Speculations about quantum fluctuations in a forever unknowable ‘**Void**’ may be intellectually interesting but, I suggest, they’re ultimately unfalsifiable.

2. Transcendental **evidence**

- There’s ample past, present, and likely future empirical evidence for a presently-involved **transcendent** agency — a tiny sample of which I provided empirically in [Miracles impossible?](#) and more associatively in the rest of [EVIDENCE](#).

I again submit that if miracles were illegal, then the reported three recipients of medically documented healings in [EVIDENCE](#) would easily be convicted in any court of law. (Recall [Why the double standard? Why the ‘special pleading’ fallacy?](#).) Evidence of **supernatural** action implies **transcendent** agency.

Based on that evidence, consider again the following logic (copied from [Arguments for a Big Bang initiator](#)):

Appendix B: No singularity, no initiator?

Bottom line

- a. We have empirical evidence of **transcendence** OVER nature — e.g. medically impossible healings, documented by disinterested parties, unexplainable by any conceivable natural mechanism now and *too fast* for any conceivable biological mechanism **ever**.
- b. AND our dimension of time is PART of nature. Why? Not only all of nature but also our dimension of time is scientifically considered to have come into existence at the Big Bang, per multiple theoretical derivations (e.g. the space-time theory of general relativity).
- c. THEREFORE transcendence OVER nature entails transcendence OVER our dimension of time.
- d. Transcendence OVER our dimension of time implies transcendence INDEPENDENT of, OUTSIDE of, and BEFORE our dimension of time — i.e. in the forever-unknowable, undefinable pre-Big Bang 'Void'.
- e. So the following also logically applies:

Appendix B: No singularity, no initiator?

Bottom line

- IF transcendence existed BEFORE our dimension of time began.
 - AND transcendence is involved AFTER our dimension of time began (now).
 - THEN transcendence reasonably existed WHEN our dimension of time began — e.g., at the Big Bang beginning of our universe.
- f. Moreover:
- IF [EVIDENCE](#) shows that transcendence cares about our universe now
 - AND transcendence was present at the beginning of the universe
 - THEN, reasonably, transcendence cared about our universe from the beginning AND was involved in the ***formation*** of our universe.
- Though some of this evidence is not technically scientific (the medical-record evidence for miracles arguably excepted), science is not the ultimate arbiter of all truth, self-refuting **scientific** assertions notwithstanding (rebutted in [The problem with scientISM](#)). As argued in

Appendix B: No singularity, no initiator?

Bottom line

[Why the double standard? Why the 'special pleading' fallacy?](#), we routinely accept non-scientific evidence — and sometimes virtually no evidence — for critical life decisions and therefore cannot summarily discard important evidence just because it's not scientific.

Using **abductive reasoning**, which of the above two choices — scientific **conjecture** or **transcendental evidence** — best explains the inception of our universe? Which choice is most consistent with an unbiased search for **truth**?

I suggest that empirical **evidence** of **transcendence** OVER *nature* trumps **conjecture** ABOUT *nature*.

Appendix C: UNSpecial universe, one of zillions?

Many physicists dismiss our universe's **acknowledged**^a extreme fine tuning for life as evidence for design, *assuming* that 'zillions' of universes (the **multiverse**) formed at the Big Bang as a result of one of the following:

1. Per 'no-boundary' proposals, an unstable, unfathomably-small (Planck-sized), timeless quantum universe unpredictably expanding into myriad universes, each with different physical laws and constants. The dimension(s) of real time for these universes begins at this instant ($t=0$). Stephen Hawking and others propose such a beginning. (See [Appendix B: No singularity, no initiator?](#)).
2. In the standard inflationary Big Bang model, 'inflaton' collapses during the hyperinflation, $\sim 10^{-33}$ to 10^{-32} sec *after* the start of the Big Bang, leading to myriad universes, each with different physical laws and constants.

^a...including by Stephen Hawking, in *The Grand Design*.

Bottom line

Based on unfalsifiable mathematical constructs, some scientists say that, among a near-infinite number of universes (10^{500} per M-theory), one or more — maybe many — of these universes would have laws and constants ‘just right’ for life. Our ‘just right’ universe resulted purely from a happy *accident*, from ‘serendipity’ — not from *tuning* at all; they say “there’s nothing special about our universe.”

I’ll argue against the ‘nothing special’ interpretations of both proposals. I’ll focus mainly on proposal #1 above, because my arguments in this appendix naturally extend from the no-boundary proposal discussion in [Appendix B: No singularity, no initiator?](#) above. However, the main argument below applies to proposal #2 as well as to proposal #1 — it holds whether the proposed multiple universes began directly from the Planck-size universe or began slightly later during hyperinflation. In fact it holds for ANY physically-diverse-multiverse proposal that starts from our laws of physics.

Appendix C: UNSpecial universe, one of zillions?

OUR physics spawned DIVERSE physics?

OUR physics spawned DIVERSE physics?

Before continuing, I suggest first reading the previous [Appendix B: No singularity, no initiator?](#) if you've not yet done so. Again, this discussion partially extends that one.

In his ironically-named *Grand Design*, Stephen Hawking^a states that:

"In this view [per the no-boundary proposal], the universe appeared spontaneously, starting off in every possible way. Most of these [ways] correspond to other universes. While some of those universes are similar to ours, most are very different. They aren't just different in details...but rather they differ even in their apparent laws of nature. In fact, many universes exist with many different sets of physical laws...these are just different expressions of the Feynman sum over histories." [396](#)

^a...and coauthor Leonard Mlodinow, whom I'll not mention hereafter, referring only to 'Hawking' for brevity...

Appendix C: UNSpecial universe, one of zillions?

OUR physics spawned DIVERSE physics?

As an analog of the spontaneous quantum beginning of the universe, Hawking refers to the bubbles of steam in boiling water. Many tiny bubbles form and then collapse before rising in the liquid. He likens these to a host of mini alternative universes that do not last long enough to develop stars, galaxies, and life. They expand but collapse again while still of microscopic size. But, continuing the analogy, *some* bubbles grow too large to collapse...

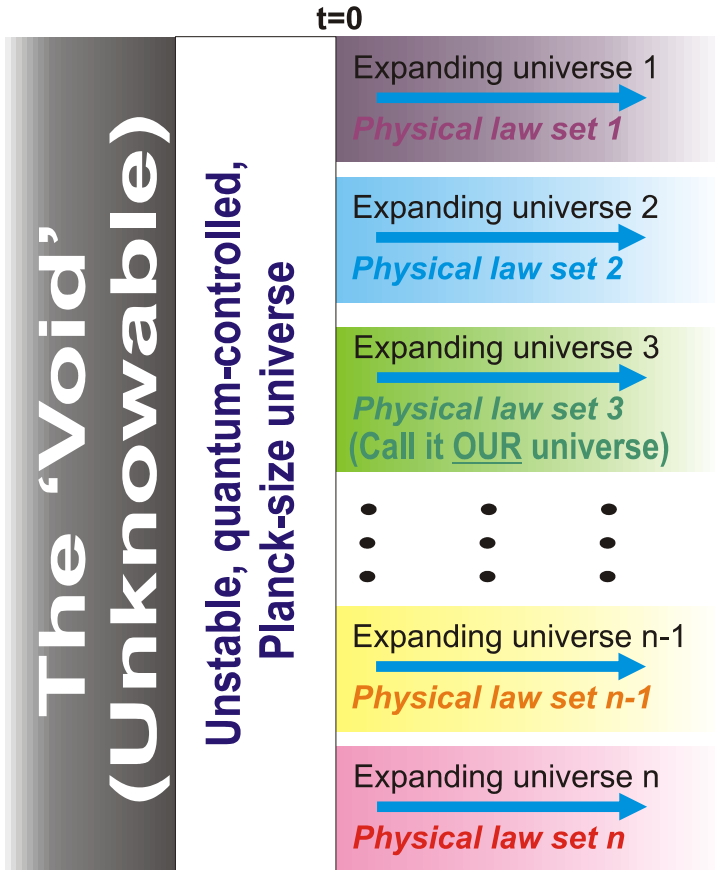
“These correspond to universes that start off expanding at an ever-increasing rate — in other words, universes in a state of inflation” [see [cosmic inflation](#).]

I summarize this proposal schematically in [Figure 32](#). A similar figure would apply to proposed spawning of ‘zillions’ of universes during a brief hyperinflation scenario *after* initiation of universe expansion.

Appendix C: UNSpecial universe, one of zillions?

OUR physics spawned DIVERSE physics?

Figure 32 Synopsis of Hawking multiverse proposal



Appendix C: UNSpecial universe, one of zillions?

If so, OUR universe must be exceedingly special

If so, OUR universe must be exceedingly special

Yet all these unique universes *must have stemmed* from the Planck-size universe per OUR physical laws. (The whole proposal is *formulated* from OUR physical laws.) In other words, out of the 'zillions' (trillions upon trillions upon trillions) of universes produced during the Big Bang *cosmic inflation* event, OUR laws of physics — *including OUR quantum physics* — would have been uniquely responsible for it all. Therefore, ***OUR universe would be exceedingly special*** among all 'zillions' of universes in a multiverse. Why? ***Because OUR physical laws^a in the Planck-size universe would have governed the seeding of ALL other universes in this multiverse.***

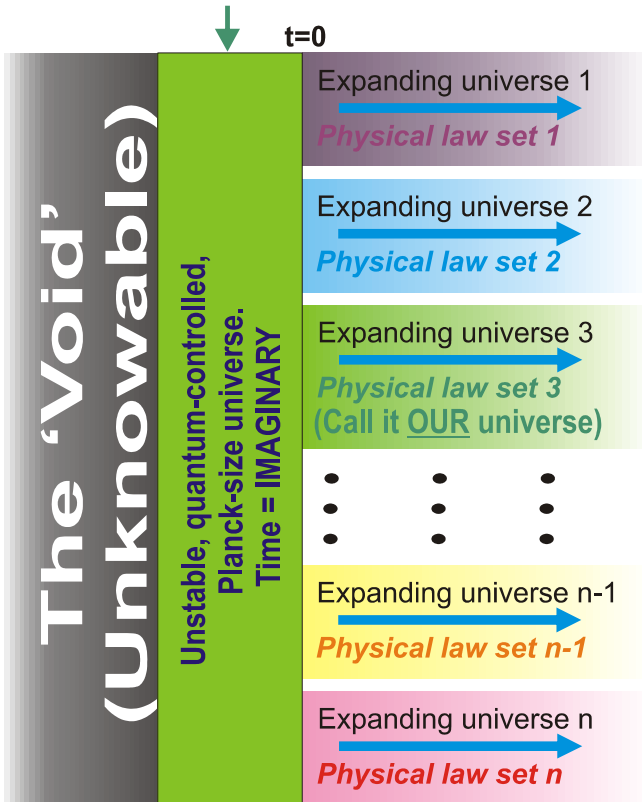
See [Figure 33](#) below. (A similar figure would apply to proposed spawning of innumerable universes during a brief hyperinflation scenario *following* initiation of expansion.)

^aOr, worst case, perhaps the physical laws applicable to a collection of universes like ours.

If so, OUR universe must be exceedingly special

Figure 33 *Disparate physical laws of the multiverse arose from OUR physical laws, OUR quantum physics?*

Quantum behavior per OUR laws (physical law set 3)



Appendix C: UNSpecial universe, one of zillions?

If so, OUR universe must be exceedingly special

Again, per any such proposal we must live in an ***exceedingly special*** universe — one from which **OUR** laws produced ***both*** of the following:

- OUR universe with OUR laws and constants.
- OTHER universes with OTHER laws ('zillions' of such other universes and other law sets and constants).

Conclusion: ***OUR universe is exceedingly special, and 'zillions'-of-universes-based arguments against designed fine tuning are invalid. OUR physical laws and constants are indeed special, and extreme fine tuning is special, requiring an extreme fine TUNER. Serendipity is NOT involved in our fine tuning.***

One may counter that OUR physics is all we know, and that scientists *must* come up with something 'scientific' — or scientISTic. Per **scientificism**, and even **methodological naturalism**, *any* explanation, however incoherent, is better than *a God* explanation. But the following is *indeed* logically incoherent:

- Proposing the spawning of 'zillions' of DIFFERENT physical laws and constants based on OUR physi-

Appendix C: UNSpecial universe, one of zillions?

If so, OUR universe must be exceedingly special

cal laws and constants — including *OUR quantum physics*, AND...

- Simultaneously saying that our universe is nothing special, just one of 'zillions' of universes in which fine tuning isn't tuning at all: just a happy accident.

Might it be fair to say that such proposals have their 'feet firmly planted in mid-air.'^a

NOTE Again, this rebuttal of 'fine-tuning serendipity' applies to ANY and ALL proposed mechanisms for multiverse formation, now and in the future, because ALL proposed mechanisms for multiverse formation MUST be based on OUR known physics. Any suggestions of some alternate type(s) of physics must be pure conjecture.

^a...borrowing from the subtitle of a Francis Beckwith and Greg Koukl book rebutting relativism.

Appendix C: UNSpecial universe, one of zillions?

Appendix D: Some entropic perspectives on evil

NOTE This appendix represents a bit of my current thinking as I wrestle with the problem of evil. It's subject to future refinement. Therefore, whether you agree or disagree with these perspectives, feel free to send me constructive comments at bridges4hs@hotmail.com. I can't promise a reply but will value the feedback.

I suggest that even the most brilliant of humans will never fully comprehend the origins of, reasons for, and nature of *evil* and resulting suffering. Some people, including perhaps some psychiatrists, may prefer to avoid the word, but others are less hesitant to declare *moral* evil when they see its extremes:

“Predatory killers often do far more than commit murder. Some have lured their victims into home-made chambers for prolonged torture. Others have exotic tastes — for vivisection, sexual humiliation, burning. Many perform their grisly rituals

If so, OUR universe must be exceedingly special

as much for pleasure as for any other reason. Among themselves, a few forensic scientists have taken to thinking of these people as not merely disturbed but *evil*. Evil in that *their deliberate, habitual savagery defies any psychological explanation or attempt at treatment.*

...many career forensic examiners say their work forces them to reflect on the concept of evil, and *some acknowledge they **can find no other term** for certain individuals they have evaluated."*

<Emphases are mine.> [308](#)

Yet with ISIS in the news as I write this and a history of other world-class monsters and monstrosities, few of us need degrees in forensic science to recognize and use the term *evil*.

What drives the evil in human monsters — and in a more limited sense, *in each of us*? A **transcendent** perspective, like that of God, is necessary to fully explain evil — and, by definition, *we don't have it*. My objective in this appendix (and possibly in a separate future ebook addressing **supernatural** evil), is therefore prospective *insight* — *thinking fodder*, not complete or final answers.

Appendix D: Some entropic perspectives on evil

If so, OUR universe must be exceedingly special

Philosophers and theologians have thought about the origins and meaning of evil for millennia. And even a substantial focus of this appendix — the prospective **influence** of **entropy** on evil — is hardly a new topic, however sparsely considered. However, when I ‘connect the dots’ as a combined scientist and theist, **entropy** seems inescapably to play a **contributing** role in the big picture of evil. Therefore I consider it in more detail here, as a supplement to the model proposed in [God? Then why this mess?!](#), particularly the [Some thoughts on foundations of evil](#) section of that chapter.

NOTE As an extension of [God? Then why this mess?!](#), please tolerate a bit of redundancy at places in this appendix; I think it’s important for *local* context.

Biblically-sensitive readers should note that, though the Bible speaks extensively about *sources*, *manifestations* and *avoidance* of evil, it says nothing (to my knowledge) about the *ultimate origins* of evil in the universe — that is, origins of the *principle* of evil. Do we *need* to know? NO. Is this appendix important to

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What is evil?

every reader? NO. Does thinking about origins of evil nonetheless have value? YES, for those who are...

- ...probing, analytical personalities (like me) who seek answers to big questions.
- ...baffled at the evil we see in the news, in those around us, and in ourselves and want to make some sense of it.
- ...inclined to think that the existence of evil, especially outrageous evil, denies the existence of God.

What is evil?

Is that a stupid question? Don't we know evil when we see it? After all, doesn't evil represent anything contrary to the way things ***should*** be?

What's the reference point for 'should be'?

Well then, how ***should*** things be? Relative to what ***standard*** of '*should be*' — of *good* — do we identify *evil*?

1. Simply by the way we *personally* (and perhaps *selfishly*) *like* things to be?

What is evil?

2. Against arbitrary *broader* standards of good that *only* OUR culture has formulated? I.e., maybe in some other cultures the following are *goods* and *shoulds*: torturing babies, stealing others' stuff, punching people in the nose, raping others' wives or daughters, swindling each other in business, rude belligerent behavior, etc., etc.?
3. Relative to assumptions that the powers of nature should only help and never harm? Like wanting fire only to cook food, heat homes, and process steel and never to burn food, homes, and us? Assumptions that *only good* and necessary effects of entropy 'should be? *Never negative* effects?
4. Relative to some higher, *independent* moral standards — perhaps standards with ***transcendent*** origins — standards that have been implanted in human minds but are frequently ignored? Standards perhaps formulated out of a ***transcendent*** perspective of *what's best* for humanity?

If an independent standard of good exists — the way things truly *should* be — where did that standard come from and how do we know it? Might the ultimate source of and standards for 'should-be' *indeed* be ***transcendent*** — outside of, predating, and forever superior to fallible human whims and thinking? I sug-

What is evil?

gest that evidence and arguments in [EVIDENCE, Just animals?](#), [Just stuff?](#), [Mythical foundations?](#), support that position.

How much of 'should be' is *expectation*?

Moreover, human *expectations* of 'should be' — and *tolerance* for deviations from 'should be' — vary. For example, members of *less* convenience-driven and comfort-driven societies sometimes tolerate suffering far better than most people in maximum-comfort-as-an-objective societies like mine (USA). See [Expectation perspectives](#).

Whatever your 'should be' perspective of evil, two general types seem to emerge.

Moral evil

Moral evil refers to harmfulness stemming from wrong *human* attitudes, ensuing actions, and/or neglect — starting in *human minds*: the only minds capable of discerning good and evil.^a It includes the

^a...a) in contradiction to assertions of human determinism (see [The cognitive uniqueness of human free will](#)) and b) neglecting **supernatural** evil — which I don't dwell on here but may discuss in a future e-book.

What is evil?

most heinous attitudes and behaviors of world-class monsters like Hitler, everyday intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts, and everything in between.

As noted previously, moral *evil* must be measured against an objective standard of moral *good*. Some have argued that moral evil is simply the *absence* of God's moral good. But I suggest that at least one contribution to moral evil is palpable; evil is at least *partially driven by a thing*. I suggest it's partly *driven* by a tendency for every human and natural good to deteriorate and decay via the path of least resistance — which in life is typically self-interest, sometimes *harmful* self-interest — in the absence of proactive, effortful restorative input. That tendency is a *thermodynamic* property called *entropy*.

Natural evil

Sometimes called 'gratuitous^a evil', *natural* evil refers to the harmfulness and harm caused by natural phenomena in our environment over which we *seemingly* have no control. Examples include earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, tornadoes, volcanic eruptions,

^aUnnecessary and unwarranted [WordWeb].

drought, genetic disorders, diseases unrelated to morally-coupled practices, unprovoked animal attacks on humans, etc. Arguably *entropy* substantially influences all such natural phenomena.

Is natural evil always 'natural'?

I say “*seemingly* have no control” in the preceding paragraph, because we need discernment when labeling evil “*natural*.” Isn't *natural* harm sometimes avoidable or mitigatable by wise *human choices*? Don't some diseases result from abuse of the human body, such as lung cancer directly attributable to smoking? Is lung cancer caused by smoking *natural* evil or *moral* evil? Is HIV contracted by promiscuity and adultery *natural* evil or *moral* evil? Is hepatitis C resulting from the sharing of street-drug needles *natural* evil or *moral* evil? Is cirrhosis of the liver caused by drunkenness *natural* or *moral* evil?

Moreover, is not the harm from *natural* phenomena sometimes greatly exacerbated by bad *human choices* and *human corruption* — i.e. *moral* evil? Consider the resistance to, diversion of, and profiteering from desperately needed international aid after

cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar in 2008.^{[301](#)}, ^{[302](#)} The *combined* cyclone and corruption resulted in at least 84,500 people dead and 53,800 missing.^{[303](#)} What part did *moral* evil play after this *natural* storm?

Yet more broadly, if you can accept the scenario I propose in [God? Then why this mess?!](#), might even the ***natural*** evil we experience stem *in one sense* from an I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you ***moral*** decision that began many hundreds of generations ago and has been perpetuated in the human psyche throughout history?

In any case, recalling the **thermodynamic** tendency for every human and *natural* good to deteriorate and decay via the path of least resistance, **entropy** seems clearly involved in *natural* evil, as well as *moral* evil.

Expectation perspectives

Though suffering arguably results predominantly from *moral* evil, a *qualifying* perspective is necessary even for the considerable suffering caused by *natural* evil — especially considering that most of my readers probably come from *relatively* comfortable circumstances. Otherwise, they wouldn't possess the desk-

What is evil?

top computers, laptops, digital tablets, and smartphones necessary to read this ebook.

These perspectives concern ***expectations***. I intimately know young children who's whims have been a bit too coddled, in my opinion. They often see absolutely trivial unfulfilled expectations as catastrophes. ("I wanted the pink plate. Whaaaa!") Without intending in any way to minimize the significance of intense suffering (which my own daughter Pamela sometimes experienced), might exaggerated *expectations*, however more reasonable than those of young children, sometimes cause exaggerated perceptions of suffering?

The late physician Dr. Paul Brand was an expert on leprosy and the criticality of normal pain^a — which lepers (and sometimes diabetics) substantially lack, sometimes resulting in horrid inadvertently-self-inflicted injuries. He wrote that,

"My esteem for pain runs so counter to the common attitude that I sometimes feel like a subversive, especially in modern Western countries. On

^a...vs. pain that chronically persists long after fulfilling its necessary function.

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my travels I have observed an ironic law of reversal at work: as a society gains the ability to limit suffering, it loses the ability to cope with what suffering *remains*. (*It is the philosophers, theologians, and writers of the affluent West, not the Third World, who worry obsessively about 'the problem of pain', and point an accusing finger at God.*)³⁰⁶ <Emphasis is mine.>

Phil Yancey, world traveler, author of multiple books about suffering, and a coauthor with Dr. Brand on occasion, doesn't exempt Western Christ-followers:

"I have noticed a striking difference in the wording of prayers. When difficulties come, Christians in affluent countries tend to pray, "Lord, take this trial away from us!" I have heard persecuted Christians and some who live in very poor countries pray instead, "Lord, give us the strength to bear this trial."³⁰⁷

Which is worse: moral or natural evil?

I suggest that the worst of human ills stem from *moral* evil, *not* natural evil. Even the notoriously anti-Christianity Voltaire would have agreed. Though he wrote his satire *Candide* following the 1755 Lisbon

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The influence of entropy

earthquake (which killed around 60,000 in Lisbon alone³⁰⁴) — at least partly to mock Gottfried Leibniz's 'best of all possible worlds' **theodicy** — Voltaire recognized that human evil eclipses natural evil. In correspondence with a pastor, he noted that...

"I pity the Portuguese, like you, but men do still more harm to each other on their little molehill than nature does to them. Our wars massacre more men than are swallowed up by earthquakes. If we had to fear only the Lisbon adventure in this world, we should still be tolerably well off."³⁰⁵

The influence of entropy

As noted, this appendix substantially suggests and discusses a *palpable* contribution to evil: **entropy**. Entropy is absolutely essential in our universe, though, as we'll see, it's a 'two-edged' sword'. It drives good things as well as bad.

What is entropy?

Begging patience from readers who've already read the following expanded definitions in [Some thoughts](#)

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[on foundations of evil](#), I repeat them for local context:

“Entropy is a measure of the disorder of a system. That disorder can be represented in terms of energy that is not available to be used. *Natural processes will always proceed in the direction that increases the disorder of a system...All natural processes tend toward increasing disorder.* And although energy is conserved, its availability is decreased. *Nature proceeds from the simple to the complex, from the orderly to the disorderly, from low entropy to high entropy...*The more highly ordered the configuration of a system, the less likely it is to occur naturally — hence the lower its entropy.”³⁰⁹ <Emphases are mine.>

“Entropy is also a process of '**degeneration**', marked variously by *increasing degrees of uncertainty, disorder, fragmentation and chaos*, up to the terminal stage in the life of physical, social or cultural systems or structures.” <Emphases are mine.> ³¹⁰

The impetus of entropy toward natural good

The expansion of our universe since the Big Bang has involved an *unfathomable* increase in **net entropy**,

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resulting in the inexorable **net** increase in disorder and decay in the universe. A **net** tendency to disorder and decay exists in every process and activity *in* the universe — including our *lives*.

But entropy is by no means intrinsically bad! In fact it's **necessary** in our **spacetime**, in our universe. Had our universe not expanded and cooled — involving **entropy** — we and everything we observe wouldn't be here. That's all part of the formation of matter, stars and planets, and galaxies. It's part of the formation of all chemical elements of life (manufactured in stars and violent supernova explosions, however utterly disastrous they'd be if we were nearby!). It's part of the processes involved in the ultimate source of our planet's most abundant source of energy: our sun.

And, more critically, if entropy didn't exist in this universe, life as we know it couldn't exist biochemically. The **thermodynamic** impetus and equilibrium of every chemical process in our bodies is regulated by changes in **entropy** in balance with changes in *internal energy* — that balance expressed mathematically in what chemistry majors know as **Gibbs free energy**.

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The impetus of entropy toward moral good

Again I argue for the positives of entropy, *including* human entropy. Even though inevitable increases in *net*, universe-wide entropy produce *net* increasing disorder and decay, *net* **increases** entropy 'A' are frequently accompanied by important **decreases** in *local* entropy 'B'. For example, capitulation to hunger drives ensures that we're fed, ending in some more positive, less decayed *local* states. *Right* capitulation to sex drives not only ensures reproduction (many positives, including lower *local* entropy states in new humans, which possess high degrees of order amidst complexity) and also bind a man and woman together emotionally (arguably a lower *local* entropy state than two isolated humans). Drives for significance can call us to do great good for humanity, including building structures from random materials and helping to rebuild and restore disjointed, high-entropy lives. The drive for sleep ensures bodily growth and repair and mental renewal — arguably a *more* ordered, *less* decayed state that is more ready to input proactive, social-entropy-reducing energy into activities and relationships. The *right* enjoyment of pleasure in general *can* be refreshing, restorative, and recreational, leading to a more positive and less

The influence of entropy

decayed local states, improved social entropy states, and implicit development of relationships.

The impetus of entropy toward moral evil

But physical and chemical systems, left to their own devices, tend to move toward disorder and decay — *maximum net* entropy — in the *easiest* way possible: ***the path of least resistance***. That *tendency* has benefits, as noted above, *but also negatives*.

Moral evil as failure to balance negative ENTROPY with positive ENERGY

The *tendency* toward increasing disorder and decay and the path of least resistance seemingly applies not only to the physics and chemistry of the universe generally but also to the selfish *tendencies* of life specifically: doing 'what comes naturally' (unrestrained by morals), 'going with the flow', fulfilling all drives and urges, doing what's *temporarily* most pleasurable — neglecting others and/or ultimate consequences, and of course 'nature red in tooth and claw' (which arguably has some positives though, however distasteful to us). It applies to societies and individuals as well as to less advanced forms of life. ***Resisting***

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*negative entropic tendencies requires net inputs of **energy** — net inputs of **effort**.*

We of course cannot expect other organisms to expend the effort, the internal energy, to resist the path of least resistance — the *selfish* path. It's the path that considers one's own welfare or the welfare of one's group supreme (the effects of built-in maternal and more broadly social *instincts* notwithstanding). Such organisms are not moral agents.

However, humans arguably are uniquely moral agents, charged with the responsibility to *resist* entropic selfishness, again requiring net input of useful **energy** — net input of sometimes uncomfortable **effort**. As we all know, this is *not* easy, and the best of us often fail. Deterministic pronouncements notwithstanding, we obvious have choices. (See [The cognitive uniqueness of human free will](#).)

This entropy connection is not just my idea. Others, including secular individuals, have written about what they label 'social entropy'. Though the authors I'm about to quote don't attach the word 'moral' to 'social entropy', their comments clearly address moral evil.

For example, New York Times science writer K.C. Cole, in an excellent popular-level commentary on entropy, remarks about some of its negative *social* implications, noting the need for input of usable energy — *proactive* effort — to combat negative **entropic** tendencies:

“Disorder is the ***path of least resistance***...

Like so many others, I am distressed by the ***entropy*** I see around me today. I am afraid of the randomness of international events, of the lack of common purpose in the world; I am terrified that it will lead into the ultimate entropy of nuclear war. I am upset...that tensions between sexes and races seem to be increasing again, that relationships everywhere seem to be falling apart. Social institutions...decay if ***energy*** is not added to keep them ordered. Friendships and families and economies all fall apart *unless we constantly **make an effort** to keep them working and well oiled*. And far too few people, it seems to me, are willing to contribute consistently to those efforts.”³¹¹ <Emphases are mine.>

In an *Encyclopedia of Leadership* article, the author notes that...

...both the social structure of organizations and the psychological structure of individuals tend toward increasing **entropy**. *Unless work* [a form of energy] *is done to the contrary*, natural processes will move the organizational culture or the individual ego towards stagnation and decay...*we need to feel that we are in control; thus our natural reaction to demands for change is to practice denial*. Such denial is a defense mechanism. It defends against the pain of anticipated personal or collective change...***Following the natural laws governing physical systems, individuals and organizations travel along the path of least resistance.***³¹² <Emphases are mine.>

The above authors aren't philosophers and theologians looking for the ultimate causes of evil. However, I suggest that they have also 'connected the dots' between **thermodynamics** and their observations of human behavior.

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The influence of entropy

But, ignoring my opinion and theirs for the moment, consider, in your own life, “the pain of anticipated personal or collective change”. Does a sometimes unpleasant need to resist the path-of-least-resistance effects of entropy make sense? Does it take energy and positive input keep your house clean and prevent it from deteriorating (the entropic direction)? If you’re married, does truly loving your spouse — doing things for him/her that you’d just as soon neglect — take energy? Does doing the unselfish (and perhaps ethical/legal) thing on your job take more energy, and perhaps more immediate risk, than going with the selfish flow to maximize company profits and/or personal income? Does altruism come naturally? Does your child’s room clean itself? Does this book — this labor of love — represent my entropic path of least resistance? Does _____ come naturally? (You fill in the blank.)

Moral evil as failure to place appropriate boundaries on legitimate entropic drives

I again quote apologist C.S. Lewis’s fictional demonic character, ‘who’ *correctly* depicts some moral *evil* as perversion of *good*:

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*"Never forget that when we are dealing with any pleasure in its healthy and normal and satisfying form, we are, in a sense, on the Enemy's ground. I know we have won many a soul through pleasure. All the same, it is His invention, not ours. He made the pleasures: all our research so far has not enabled us to produce one. All we can do is to encourage the humans to take the pleasures which our Enemy has produced, at times, or in ways, or in degrees, which He has forbidden. Hence we always try to work away from the natural condition of any pleasure to that in which it is least natural, least **redolent** of its Maker, and least pleasurable. An ever increasing craving for an ever diminishing pleasure is the formula."*

<Emphases are mine.> [406](#)

Again, fulfillments of entropic drives for sex, food, love, significance, etc. are good, ***within established boundaries***. *In-boundary* capitulation to such entropic drives, to fulfill *intended* purposes, is appropriate.

Consider even the physical example of driving a car. The ability to transport ourselves and our stuff this

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way is a wonderful gift, available only to a minority of the world's population. It's a *good* thing within the **boundaries** for which it is designed, licensed, and regulated. But stopping at a traffic light, fence, barricade, or other physical boundary requires *restraint* — demanding some degree of proactive **energy** and effort (minimally pushing the brake); the natural, entropic tendency is to keep on going.

Legal and *physical boundaries* — negative consequences — help to restrain us, even restrain 'can' people, who tend to do what they 'can' get away with. However, *moral* boundaries are more problematic, because the consequences aren't always immediate or obvious.

- 'Can' people, who do what they 'can' get away with, *more* often follow the path of least resistance *beyond* appropriate boundaries.
- 'Ought' people, whose consciences coax them toward the right thing — especially, I suggest, 'ought people' who lean on, trust in, and rely on God — *less* often follow the path of least resistance *beyond* appropriate boundaries.

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The impetus of entropy toward natural evil

By contrast, natural processes and lower organisms are *not* moral agents. They have neither intrinsic nor revealed 'oughts'; no 'should be' standards.

Balanced entropy in nature

The lack of moral standards in nature is by no means uniformly negative. As noted previously, entropy in our universe isn't intrinsically evil and it's even necessary. And there are trade-offs; we must not forget the positives. The *natural* operation of entropy, without reference to morality, must be considered in balance.

- The crustal movements of **plate tectonics**, responsible for much of the world's geology, bring life-giving mineral rich deposits to the surface and provide other benefits; but they also cause earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanos, the latter of which in turn also affect climate and air pollution.
- Water generally and rain specifically is essential for the continuation of life, and yet excessive rain (or melting snow) causes flooding and damage.
- Wind often brings needed rain and helps to balance the earth's temperature differences, but tor-

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nados, hurricanes, and typhoons can cause death and destruction.

- The majority of microorganisms are beneficial to our lives — some, as in our digestive tracts, even essential — but a minority are pathogenic and cause devastating illnesses.
- Animals can be sources of esthetic pleasure, companions, essential food for each other and for non-vegetarian humans, and actors in the ecological balance.^a But 'nature-red-in-tooth-and-claw' seems cruel, and some animals spread disease, act senselessly toward other animals, and occasionally kill humans directly.
- Many plants are absolutely essential to our survival, both as oxygen generators and food, and some are esthetically delightful; but others aggressively crowd out, choke, and kill beneficial species and some poison us.

^a Reintroduction of wolves into Yellowstone National Park is a key example. Lack of these top predators resulted in overpopulation of animals like elk, decimation of grasslands by overfeeding, and even detriments to the course of waterways. Reintroduction of wolves restored balance.

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- The increases in entropy implicit in fire can be beneficial, such as fuel turned into gases and heat: fire for warmth, cooking, manufacturing, etc. Even forest fires, once considered harmful to forests (and *still are* harmful to animals, humans, and their structures — a natural evil) are now considered to provide *net benefits* to the forest, even *necessary* net benefits. Yet fire can and does cause extreme damage and death.

Natural *evil* arguably stems *partly* from the **negative side-effects** of entropy, many of which we can avoid and/or mitigate. *Some* natural evil is inevitable for us, *except* when...

- ...we **can** and *do* take care to avoid or mitigate it
- ...**transcendent** directive influence partially mitigates it, as per this book's the [Miracles impossible?](#) examples.
- ...**past transcendent** directive influence universally squelched it, as suggested for incipient humanity in [God? Then why this mess?!](#)

Unbalanced entropy in nature

However, lacking moral scruples, animals can and do injure or kill people and act as vectors for pathogenic

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microorganisms. Animals sometimes mirror among their *own species* behaviors that most humans would consider morally reprehensible...including behaviors that arguably don't advance those species and even negatively affect such advancement. You can refer to instinctive family/group bonds in animals. You can refer to ecological balance. But plenty of *meritless* crass selfishness exists, such as follows:^a

- Many male animals battle for sexual dominance in a harem — I submit *entropically* for the privilege of fulfilling mindless sexual urges, *not knowingly* to transfer their genes to the next generation (how could they *possibly* understand that?). Victory by *temporarily* superior strength and endurance can be factors of age, size, and experience — *logically* not necessarily of superior genes, as **macroevolutionists** frequently suggest. For example:
 1. At time t_1 , a stronger, more physically mature male A in prime condition may defeat a younger, less mature competitor B in combat

^aI've gleaned most of the example information from extensive viewing of high-quality animal documentaries, which I'll not waste your time citing individually.

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for sexual dominance. Logically, male A may sexually dominate simply *because* he is stronger and in prime condition — **temporarily** — not because he's passing on superior genes.

2. At time t_2 , male A is old and worn and can no longer defeat male B, who is now stronger and in prime condition. Male B now sexually dominates the harem.

Was A's **genotype** superior to B's at time t_1 when he defeated B. Is B's **genotype** now superior to A's at time t_2 when he defeats A? Did B's **genotype** somehow markedly change with age?^a

- Moreover, males sometimes kill helpless young of their own species. Hungry male grizzlies will often eat cubs — the next generation — unless the mother protects them. Some animals kill young sired by other males purely as a power play. Seal bulls have been known to kill the pups of other bulls in a bid to maintain their power. Male zebras sometimes also do the same with offspring sired

^aAt least "in humans, mutations that would change an amino acid within the protein coding region of the genome occur at an average of only 0.35 per generation (less than one mutated protein per generation)."

Is moral evil inevitable?

by other males. Rogue male tigers will kill cubs to gain sexual access to their mother. Sexually frustrated male walrus sometimes crush young females to death by attempting to satisfy urges. Male alligators eat baby alligators. Seagulls eat the eggs of other seagulls. Doubtless males of many other species are 'guilty' of similar crass acts of selfishness.

- Troops of 'cute' chimpanzees sometimes viciously attack neighboring troops of the same species to expand territory.

Do such behaviors advance the species? Or the opposite?

Again, physics, geology, and biology — plants and animals specifically, *don't have* cognitive moral reference points (not ignoring animal internal *instincts* to protect and care for their own families and groups — strong exceptions noted above notwithstanding).

Is moral evil inevitable?

But what about us? Humans, who *do have* cognitive moral reference points, sometimes capitulate to

Is moral evil inevitable?

entropic paths of least resistance in ways as bad as or worse than the animals described above. *Much* worse in cases of moral monsters. Is that inevitable? Are the worst of us deterministically *driven* to act *worse* than animals?^a Are the rest of us just *less* enslaved to negative entropic drives. Despite all our advancements and intelligence, are we ultimately [Just animals?](#)

Or have moral principles — however often ignored — been directly implanted at the dawn of behaviorally-modern humans, along with dramatic abilities and creativity? How do we account for unselfish goodness in the midst of moral evil? More emphatically, what influence dramatically transformed the lives discussed in [EVIDENCE](#)? from negative to positive? What [transcendent](#) influence dramatically changed violent hater Tass Saada, Waodani murderer Mincaye, violent drug runner Mitch Zajack, white hater Marshall Brandon, violent Saul of Tarsus, 'Mr. Insecticide', an ISIS murderer, and many others?

^a*Beyond* that, might the minds of moral monsters have capitulated to *supernatural* suggestions of evil? I'll so argue in another book or future appendix.

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Forever?

What if **we** were to humbly submit our lives to that same **transcendent** influence? Might God work in **us** and help us to input the *positive* energy needed to counter **personal negative** path-of-least-resistance entropy?

Might that help us to mitigate the moral evil in our world today, *one person at a time*?

Forever?

Will evil never end?

Beyond today, the model in [God? Then why this mess?!](#) proposes that those who submit to and trust in God's *partial* solution for moral evil now will experience his *total* solution for moral, natural, and **super-natural** evil in the future — a solution in which, I suggest, entropy will no longer be present or needed.

DEFINITIONS, COMMENTARY, AND CITATIONS

This part contains a hyperlinked glossary of key terms, followed by the comments and citations that have been referenced by hyperlinks such as [8](#) and [7](#).

Glossary

abductive reasoning

Reasoning that argues to the *best* explanation. Most appropriate when we can't experimentally reproduce or prove an event or phenomenon.

abiogenesis

A hypothetical **organic** phenomenon by which living organisms are created from nonliving matter. [Word-Web]

NOTE In this book I restrict unqualified mention of the word 'abiogenesis' to that **general** meaning — i.e. to the formation of living organisms from nonliving matter by *any* mechanism, directed or undirected.

action potential

A short term change in the electrical potential that travels along a cell such as a nerve or muscle fiber. [Wiktionary] For more details, see <http://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/ap.html>.

aether

A medium that was once supposed to fill all space and to support the propagation of electromagnetic waves. [WordWeb] (See also **electromagnetic radiation**.) As noted elsewhere in this book, the general notion of a 'medium that...fill[s] all space' has been revived.

agape

Selfless love of one person for another without sexual implications (especially love that is spiritual in nature) [WordWeb] However, in view of intrinsic human selfishness — a residual of which exists even in the best of people — it's *purely* possible only in God.

alchemy

A pseudoscientific forerunner of chemistry in medieval times. [WordNet 2.1]

analytical thinking

(...or analytic thinking). The capacity to examine and break down evidences and opinions into their strengths and weaknesses. Developing the capacity to think in a thoughtful, discerning way, to solve

problems, analyze data, and recall and use information. [Ask.com].

The abstract separation of a whole into its constituent parts in order to study the parts and their relations [thefreedictionary.com]. Also see **reductionism** and contrasting **holism**.

Anthropic Principle

Definitions vary, but I refer here to the evidence of combined extreme fine tuning of a huge number of physical constants of our universe, galaxy, solar system, and earth that makes earth just right for life.

autonomy

Self-directing freedom and especially moral independence. [merriam-webster.com]

axon

A nerve fibre which is a long slender projection of a nerve cell, and which conducts nerve impulses away from the body of the cell to a **synapse**. [Wiktionary]

biblical

Of or pertaining to or contained in or in accordance with the Bible. [WordWeb]

biblical Christ

The historical Christ defined in the Christian scriptures (New Testament) by personal quotations and the testimony of the early Church — as distinct from a number of reinvented Christs.

Which Christ is more likely to be the real Christ?

- The *biblical Christ*? All apostles and all New Testament writers knew Christ intimately or knew about him contemporaneously. All apostles and all New Testament writers, save the apostle John, paid with their lives to proclaim him. As suggested elsewhere, people may die for convictions but not for concoctions. (See also [Mythical foundations?](#).)
- *A reinvented Christ*? Christ-reinventors have typically lived centuries after the observable Christ. Their reinventions have cost them little or nothing.

biblical Christianity

The belief system that embraces the *biblical Christ* and the teachings of the New Testament.

Big Bang

The remarkable controlled rapid expansion (*not* an explosion) that started our universe from what is most widely considered to have been an infinite density, infinite temperature point (the **singularity**), the action of which continues today.

black-body radiation

The type of **electromagnetic radiation** emitted by a black body (an opaque and non-reflective body) held at constant, uniform temperature. [Wikipedia] Sometimes called **thermal radiation**.

brane

In theoretical physics, a brane (short for *membrane*) is an object which can have any number of allowed dimensions. [<http://physics.about.com/od/physicsa-tod/g/brane.htm>]

The central idea is that the visible, four-dimensional universe is restricted to a brane inside a higher-dimensional space, called the "bulk". [Wikipedia]

canon

A rule, or especially a body of rules, or principles generally established as valid and fundamental in a field

of art or philosophy [WordWeb]. As applicable to the New Testament, see also **canonical** below.

canonical

Regarding the Christian scriptures (New Testament), refers to content that the community of Christ-followers generally regarded as authentic and reliable from very early times, the collection of which later became *formalized* as orthodox. I.e., this 'official' **canon** was an acknowledgement of what unofficially had already been accepted as authoritative. (See also [Da Vinci Code deceit #2.](#))

characteristic impedance

The impedance [resistance to electrical current flow] of a uniform alternating-current transmission line of indefinite length... [merriam-webster.com]

Very broadly, the "transmission line" can be free space, through which alternating currents travel as electromagnetic waves or **wave** packets. Such **electromagnetic radiation** is the basis of modern wireless communications like TV, radio, cellular, WiFi, etc. Impedance limits the signal's travel speed. Maximum speed? The speed of light in a vacuum.

...(continued on next page)

In fact, at high frequencies such as microwave the behavioral differences between electromagnetic signals inside and outside a physical transmission line (cable) become blurred, and the signals begin to act a bit like light. 'Waveguides' for microwave are in fact a little like 'light pipes.'^a

Christ

The Messiah, as foretold by the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures. Often used with *the*. [thefreedictionary.com] The word 'Christ' is a title meaning 'messiah' — **not** the last name of Jesus of Nazareth.

In this book the term Christ normally refers to the **biblical Christ**. I almost universally use the title 'Christ' instead of the name 'Jesus' in this book^b because: 1) it's more definitive, whereas 'Jesus' is

^aVisible light is a fluctuating electromagnetic signal like microwave, just at much higher frequencies. Signals in the visible-light spectrum fluctuate at 430–790 THz (trillion cycles/sec), whereas signals in the microwave spectrum fluctuate at 0.3 – 300 GHz (billion cycles/sec).

[See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visible_spectrum and <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microwave>, respectively]

^b...except, necessarily, in quotes of others' text.

used even today a bit loosely, and, frankly, 2) in the opinion of this former skeptic, some skeptics may summarily dismiss helpful discussions^a that include the word 'Jesus' because of its mistaken associations with ignorance and unsophistication in some circles.

Christ-follower

I favor the words 'Christ-follower' over 'Christian' in this book to distinguish those who seek — failures notwithstanding — to make a biblical Christ integral and central in their lives, 24/7. The earliest followers of Christ didn't refer to themselves as 'Christians', a designation first used as a pejorative by those outside the Church — and today used as such in some circles. Among other terms, early followers of Christ referred to themselves as Christ's disciples — which substantially means 'Christ-followers'. Analogous to the term 'Big Bang', which started as Fred Hoyle's pejorative and now gets used routinely, the term 'Christian' eventually became a routine designation.

However, today's meaning of 'Christian' is anything but routine; the term gets applied carelessly and has a broad spectrum of application and connotation. I

^a... up front, without further reading or due consideration.

see the need to return to a first-century 'Christ-follower' designation to refer to those who follow the teachings and principles that the **biblical Christ**, his eyewitness apostles, and all New Testament authors died for (save the apostle John, who nonetheless suffered greatly for his proclamation).

circumstantial evidence

"Information and testimony presented by a party in a civil or criminal action that permit conclusions that indirectly establish the existence or nonexistence of a fact or event that the party seeks to prove.

Circumstantial Evidence is also known as indirect evidence. It is distinguished from direct evidence, which, if believed, proves the existence of a particular fact without any inference or presumption required. Circumstantial evidence relates to a series of facts other than the particular fact sought to be proved. The party offering circumstantial evidence argues that this series of facts, by reason and experience, is so closely associated with the fact to be proved that the fact to be proved may be inferred simply from the existence of the circumstantial evidence." [<http://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/circumstantial+evidence>. Accessed 2/4/2016.]

cognitive dissonance

"...the mental stress or discomfort experienced by an individual who holds two or more contradictory beliefs, ideas, or values at the same time, performs an action that is contradictory to one or more beliefs, ideas or values, or is confronted by new information that conflicts with existing beliefs, ideas, or values."
[Wikipedia]

compartmentalized

(See also **compartmentalization**.) As used in this book, refers to *viewpoints* that see and act upon reality as separate, non-overlapping and non-interacting sub-realities — separate 'boxes'. Examples:

1. Embracing moral principles on Sunday and oblivious to those principles during the business week.
2. A directive *God* in religion; undirective forces in all of nature. *In theory* **methodological naturalism** assumes "...naturalism in working methods, without necessarily considering naturalism as an absolute truth with philosophical entailments...". However, *in practice*, I suggest that avoiding **cognitive dissonance** with the sometimes inevitable interpretive conflicts is virtually impossible without mental **compartmentalization**.

compartmentalization

The process through which many humans have **compartimentalized** their thinking.

A Wikipedia article defines compartmentalization (psychological) this way:

“Compartmentalization is an unconscious psychological defense mechanism used to avoid cognitive dissonance, or the mental discomfort and anxiety caused by a person's having conflicting values, cognitions, emotions, beliefs, etc. within themselves.

Compartmentalization allows these conflicting ideas to co-exist by inhibiting direct or explicit acknowledgement and interaction between separate compartmentalized self states.”

[As of 9/15/2015 at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Compartmentalization_\(psychology\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Compartmentalization_(psychology)).]

cosmic microwave background

Faint **thermal radiation** that pervades all space and is thought to be the remnants of the Big Bang. [Wiktionary] Sometimes called simply the ‘CMB’.

“The CMB is a snapshot of the oldest light in our Universe, imprinted on the sky when the Universe was just 380,000 years old. It shows tiny temperature fluctuations that correspond to regions of slightly different densities, representing the seeds of all future structure: the stars and galaxies of today.” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cosmic_microwave_background, as of 4/1/2016.]

cosmology

The branch of astrophysics that studies the origin and evolution and structure of the universe. [WordWeb]

cyclical

Recurring at regular intervals. [Wiktionary] Recurring in cycles. [WordNet 2.1]

deism

A philosophical belief in the existence of a god (or goddess) knowable through human reason; especially, a belief in a creator god unaccompanied by any belief in supernatural phenomena or specific religious doctrines. [Wiktionary]

deistic

Of or relating to **deism** (see above). [Wiktionary]

dendrite

[As it relates to *neuroscience*] A slender projection of a nerve cell which conducts nerve impulses from a **synapse** to the body of the cell; a dendron. [Wiktionary]

determinism

A philosophical theory holding that all events are inevitable consequences of antecedent sufficient causes; often understood as denying the possibility of free will. [WordWeb] True? Consider [The cognitive uniqueness of human free will](#).

deterministic

Subject to **determinism**. (Defined above.)

double-slit experiment

Long before anyone heard of **quantum physics**, in the early 1800s, Thomas Young saw as we all do that if we focus a narrow beam of light on a screen we see a spot of maximum brightness. However, he observed that if we cut two closely spaced slits in a solid plate, place the plate between the light source and the screen, and move the plate so the light impinges on the two slits, we observe not a single spot or even two spots (corresponding to the two slits). Rather we

see a pattern of bright and dark spots. This happens because the light acts like a group of **waves**. The 'ripples' (intensity maxima and minima) in waves headed in certain directions toward the screen *subtract* from the 'ripples' of other similarly headed waves creating darker spots. The 'ripples' in waves headed in different directions toward the screen *add* to the 'ripples' of other similarly headed waves, creating brighter spots. This is called an interference pattern.

Much more recently, physicists 'fired' submicroscopic particles, such as an electrons, through two slits toward a screen that detects the particles' resting places. Surprisingly, they didn't pile up in one or two areas (like you'd expect from a bullet fired at the screen) but created an interference pattern, just like Young's light beam. I.e., the electrons behaved like light. However, when the scientists attempted to *observe* the particles' path to the screen — if only to determine which slit a particle passed through — the interference pattern disappeared. The electrons piled up in two areas of the screen, just like a series of bullets fired at the screen.

Despite many attempts to explain this 'quantum weirdness', none to date have unequivocally defined what's happening. (See also [quantum weirdness](#).)

For a good pictorial illustration of the double-slit experiment (ignoring some of the accompanying speculations), see Web-page 4 of:

<http://www.mso.anu.edu.au/~charley/papers/OriginofUniversePart2.pdf> [Last accessed on 11/30/2015.

eigenstate

A state of a [quantized](#) dynamic system (as an atom, molecule, or crystal) in which one of the variables defining the state (as energy or angular momentum) has a determinate fixed value. [merriam-webster.com

electromagnetic radiation

Radiation ([quantized](#) as photons) consisting of oscillating electric and magnetic fields oriented perpendicularly to each other, moving through space.

[Wiktionary] Examples: radio waves, microwaves (such as in your oven), infrared (such as from a heat lamp), visible light, ultraviolet light (which causes sunburn), X-rays, and gamma rays.

electron

The subatomic **particle** having a negative charge and orbiting the nucleus [of an atom]; the flow of electrons in a conductor constitutes electricity. [Wiktionary] This is one of the irreducible elementary particles — it's not composed of smaller entities.

entropic

Of, pertaining to, or as a consequence of **entropy**. (See below.)

entropy

1. A measure of the disorder present in a system. 2. A measure of the amount of energy in a physical system that cannot be used to do work.

Entropy is a measure of the disorder of a system. That disorder can be represented in terms of energy that is not available to be used. *Natural processes will always proceed in the direction that increases the disorder of a system.*

For a more complete description, see [What is entropy?](#)

extant

Still in existence; not extinct, destroyed or lost. [WordWeb]

extrapolation

An inference about some hypothetical situation based on known facts. [Wiktionary]

falsifiable

Capable of being tested (verified or falsified) by experiment or observation. [WordWeb]

falsifiability

The condition of being **falsifiable**. (See above.)

First Cause

An agent that is the cause of all things but does not itself have a cause. [WordWeb]

general relativity

See **general theory of relativity**.

general theory of relativity

The theory of gravitation, developed by Einstein in 1916, extending the special theory of relativity to include acceleration and leading to the conclusion that gravitational forces are equivalent to forces caused by acceleration [The FreeDictionary]

The general theory of relativity incorporates the concept of '**spacetime**' — unified, interactive four dimen-

sions of space and time — in which gravity is caused by distortion of the **spacetime fabric**.

genotype

“Your genotype is your complete heritable genetic identity; it is your unique genome that would be revealed by personal genome sequencing.” [<http://www.pged.org/personal-genetics-101/what-is-genotype-what-is-phenotype/>]. Accessed 10/21/15.]

geocentrism

A belief that Earth is the center of the universe and does not move. [Wiktionary]

Gibbs free energy

A **thermodynamic** quantity that expresses the difference between the internal energy of a system (at constant temperature and pressure) and the product of its absolute temperature and entropy. It's the capacity of a system to do work, such as in an exothermic (heat releasing) chemical reaction.

gospel

The word gospel means in Greek ‘good news.’ Typically in the English language — and uniformly in this book — the word gospel refers to the good news that God himself, in **Christ**, offers a solution to our enmity

toward him and toward each other. It substantially refers to God the perfect judge figuratively stepping down from the bench of justice and paying all of a defendant's due penalties — subject to the defendant's acceptance of this arrangement.

Gospel

One of the first four books of the Christian scriptures (New Testament) — which of course describe the **gospel**, as well as much more.

grace

(Christian) The love and mercy given to us by God because God desires us to have it, not because of anything we have done to earn it. [Wikipedia]

Hadith

(Islam) A tradition based on reports of the sayings and activities of Muhammad and his companions. [WordWeb]

hard problem of consciousness

"The hard problem of consciousness (Chalmers 1995) is the problem of explaining the relationship between physical phenomena, such as brain processes, and experience (i.e., phenomenal consciousness, or mental states/events with phenomenal qualities or qua-

lia). Why are physical processes ever accompanied by experience? And why does a given physical process generate the specific experience it does — why an experience of red rather than green, for example?" [scholarpedia.org]

heliocentrism

The theory of the heliocentric model that the planets including Earth orbit the Sun, in contrast to **geocentrism**. [Wiktionary]

holism

The theory that living matter or reality is made up of organic or unified wholes that are greater than the simple sum of their parts. A **holistic** investigation or system of treatment. [WordWeb]

holistic

Emphasizing **holism** (see above).

imaginary number

A complex number that can be written as a real number multiplied by the imaginary unit i [the square root of -1], which is defined by its property $i^2 = -1$. The square of an imaginary number xi is $-x^2$. For example, $5i$ is an imaginary number, and its square is -25 .

Except for 0 (which is both real and imaginary), imaginary numbers produce negative real numbers when squared. [Wikipedia]

imaginary time

An **imaginary number** representing time: ti , which is t times the square root of -1 . (See the preceding definition of **imaginary number**.)

immanent

Naturally part of something; existing throughout and within something; inherent; integral; intrinsic; indwelling. [Wiktionary]

infinite regress

An infinite regress in a series of propositions arises if the truth of proposition P_1 requires the support of proposition P_2 , the truth of proposition P_2 requires the support of proposition P_3, \dots , and the truth of proposition P_{n-1} requires the support of proposition P_n and n approaches infinity. [Wikipedia]

Similarly, as used in this book, an infinite regress arises in a series of causes and effects if effect E_1 depends on effect E_2 , which in turn depends on effect E_3, \dots , which depends on effect E_{n-1} , which depends on effect E_n and n approaches infinity.

cosmic inflation

The exponential expansion of space in the early universe. The inflationary epoch lasted from 10^{-36} seconds after the Big Bang to sometime between 10^{-33} and 10^{-32} seconds. Following the inflationary period, the Universe continues to expand, but at a less accelerated rate...Quantum fluctuations in the microscopic inflationary region, magnified to cosmic size, become the seeds for the growth of structure in the Universe [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inflation_\(cosmology\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inflation_(cosmology))]

inflaton

The inflaton is a hypothetical **scalar field** (and its associated **particle**) that may be responsible for the hypothetical **cosmic inflation** in the very early universe. According to **cosmic inflation** theory, the *inflaton* field provided the mechanism to drive a period of rapid expansion from 10^{-35} to 10^{-34} seconds after the initial expansion that formed the universe. [Wikipedia]

integrative

As used in this book, refers to viewpoints that see reality as an integrated whole, all parts of which overlap and interact; no parts can be legitimately isolated

and shielded from each other. Includes viewpoints that integrate evidence for natural and **supernatural** activity when forming conclusions about reality and which do not divorce spiritual life from everyday practice. [Antonym: **compartmentalized**.]

karma

(Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism) The sum total of a person's actions, which determine the person's next incarnation in samsara, the cycle of death and rebirth. [Wiktionary]

Large Hadron Collider

As of 2016, the world's largest and highest-energy **particle accelerator**, and considered "one of the great engineering milestones of mankind". It was built by the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) from 1998 to 2008, with the aim of allowing physicists to test the predictions of different theories of **particle** physics and high-energy physics. [Wikipedia]

Law of Noncontradiction

It states that contradictory statements cannot both be true in the same sense at the same time, e.g. the two propositions "*A is B*" and "*A is not B*" are mutually exclusive. [Wikipedia]

love magic

The attempt to bind the passions of another, or to capture them as a sex object, through magical means rather than through direct activity. [Wikipedia]

macroevolution

Large-scale patterns or processes in the history of life, including the origins of novel organism designs, evolutionary trends, adaptive radiations and extinctions. [Wiktionary] In most usages of the term I've encountered, macroevolution assumes that such patterns or processes apply up to and including the appearance of modern humans.

M-theory

A generalized theory of eleven-dimensional supergravity that attempts to unify the five superstring theories. [Wiktionary] In non-technical terms, M-theory presents an idea about the basic substance of the universe. [Wikipedia] Also refer to **brane cosmology**, which is related to M-theory.

metanarrative

A grand story that is self-legitimizing. [Wiktionary]. A global or totalizing cultural **narrative schema** which orders and explains knowledge and experience — a

story about a story, encompassing and explaining other 'little stories' within conceptual models that make the stories into a whole. [Wikimedia⁴¹¹]

metaphysical

Pertaining to or of the nature of metaphysics; without material form or substance. [WordWeb]

metaphysics

The branch of philosophy which studies fundamental principles intended to describe or explain all that is, and which are not themselves explained by anything more fundamental; the study of first principles; the study of being insofar as it is being. [WordWeb]

methodological naturalism

An approach to science that assumes "...naturalism in working methods, without necessarily considering naturalism as an absolute truth with philosophical entailments..." [Wikipedia].

Seemingly "without necessarily considering naturalism as an absolute truth with philosophical entailments" denies the **unity** of truth by effectively saying "We mustn't let truth get in the way of science." Thus, for many, methodological naturalism is a manifestation of **scientism**. Instead of seeking **truth generally**

when doing science — unbiasedly accepting the implications of observations *wherever* they lead — such practitioners insist that all explanations must fit into a naturalistic, materialistic ‘box’. They categorically exclude ‘out-of-box’ explanations from consideration.

Even for theistic practitioners, methodological naturalism seems to be a form of **compartmentalization** — a psychological defense mechanism to avoid **cognitive dissonance**. It seemingly functions as a wall between conflicting beliefs: a requirement for purely materialistic (and thus *atheistic*) interpretations of reality in the lab and *theistic* interpretations of reality in non-lab settings. In such cases, I suggest that methodological naturalism comprises a schizophrenic approach to reality that was foreign to some earlier scientific greats. (See [Historical scientists not the smartest?.](#))

mindset

A habitual or characteristic mental attitude that determines how you will interpret and respond to situations. [WordWeb]

multiverse

The *hypothetical* group of all the possible universes in existence. Our universe is a very small part of the multiverse. [Wiktionary] <Emphasis is mine.>

narrative

A narrated account; a story. [WordWeb]

neuron

A cell of the nervous system, which conducts nerve impulses; consisting of an **axon** and several **den-drites**. Neurons are connected by **synapses**. [Wiktionary]

neurotransmitter

Any substance, such as acetylcholine or dopamine, responsible for sending nerve signals across a **syn-apse** between two **neurons**. [Wiktionary]

ontological

Of or relating to **ontology**. [WordWeb] See below.

ontology

The philosophical study of the nature of being, becoming, existence, or reality, as well as the basic categories of being and their relations. [Wikipedia]

organic

With regard to substances, having carbon-based chemistry.

orthogonal

Having a set of mutually perpendicular axes; meeting at right angles. [WordNet 2.1]

pantheism

The belief that the universe (or nature as the totality of everything) is identical with divinity, or that everything composes an all-encompassing, **immanent** God. [Wikipedia]

particle

In this book, refers to so-called *elementary* particles — exceedingly small entities such as **electrons**, protons, photons, etc.

particle accelerator

A device that accelerates electrically charged **particles** to extremely high speeds, for the purpose of inducing high energy reactions or producing high energy radiation. [Wiktionary]

pericope

“A pericope (...Greek... ‘a cutting-out’) in rhetoric is a set of verses that forms one coherent unit or thought, suitable for public reading from a text, now usually of sacred scripture” [Wikipedia]

Planck length

“A unit of length, believed to be the smallest length that has physical meaning...” [Wiktionary] Though unmeasurable in practice, its value is derived from other physical constants to be 1.6×10^{-35} meters.

“The size of the Planck length can be visualized as follows: if a particle or dot about 0.1 mm in size (which is approximately the smallest the unaided human eye can see) were magnified in size to be as large as the observable universe, then inside that universe-sized “dot”, the Planck length would be roughly the size of an actual 0.1 mm dot.” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Planck_length, as of 12/18/2015. I’ve mathematically verified this statement.]

plasma

(Physics) A fourth state of matter distinct from solid, liquid or gas and present in stars and fusion reactors; a gas becomes a plasma when it is heated until the atoms lose all their electrons, leaving a highly electrified collection of nuclei and free electrons. [Word-Web]

plate tectonics

“Plate tectonics says that the Earth's strong outer layer (called the lithosphere, which consists of crust and uppermost mantle) is broken into a mosaic of plates that slowly move over a mechanically weaker layer (the asthenosphere, which is part of the upper mantle). Where these plates interact, major geological processes take place, such as the formation of mountain belts, earthquakes, and volcanoes.” [http://www.globalchange.umich.edu/globalchange1/current/lectures/evolving_earth/evolving_earth.html]

positivism

A philosophy of science based on the view that information derived from logical and mathematical treatments and reports of sensory experience is the exclusive source of all authoritative knowledge, that there is valid knowledge (truth) only in scientific knowledge. [Wikipedia] Similar to **scientism**.

positivist

An adherent of **positivism** (see above).

postmodern

Of or relating to **postmodernism** (see below). [Word-Web]

postmodernism

“A general and wide-ranging term which is applied to literature, art, philosophy, architecture, fiction, and cultural and literary criticism, among others. Postmodernism is largely a reaction to the assumed certainty of scientific, or objective, efforts to explain reality. In essence, it stems from a recognition that reality is not simply mirrored in human understanding of it, but rather, is constructed as the mind tries to understand its own particular and personal reality. For this reason, postmodernism is highly skeptical of explanations which claim to be valid for all groups, cultures, traditions, or races, and instead focuses on the relative truths of each person. In the postmodern understanding, interpretation is everything; reality only comes into being through our interpretations of what the world means to us individually. Postmodernism relies on concrete experience over abstract principles, knowing always that the outcome of one's own experience will necessarily be fallible and relative, rather than certain and universal.

Postmodernism is 'post' because it denies the existence of any ultimate principles, and it lacks the optimism of there being a scientific, philosophical, or religious truth which will explain everything for everybody - a characteristic of the so-called "modern" mind. The paradox of the postmodern position is that, in placing all principles under the scrutiny of its skepticism, it must realize that even its own principles are not beyond questioning. As the philosopher Richard Tarnas states, postmodernism 'cannot on its own principles ultimately justify itself any more than can the various **metaphysical** overviews against which the postmodern mind has defined itself.'" [<http://www.pbs.org/faithandreason/gengloss/postmodern-body.html>]. Accessed 1/12/2016.]

prescience

The power to foresee the future. [WordWeb] (NOTE: Pronounced presh-ee-uhns, not pree-science.)

presupposition

An implicit assumption about the world or background belief relating to an utterance whose truth is taken for granted in discourse. [Wikipedia]

primordial vacuum

Another term used for the same state as the 'Void' — the unknown state of physical reality before the **Big Bang**, or indeed before the birth of any hypothetical **multiverse(s)**. However, I think 'primordial vacuum' is a misleading term, as some physicists *metaphysically assume* that it's a state with properties similar to the vacuum of our spacetime — including our spacetime's energy fields and the possibility of matter and energy creation from quantum mechanical fluctuations.

Our spacetime's emergence from the 'Void' or 'quantum vacuum' in no way necessitates that the 'Void' or 'quantum vacuum' has the same properties as our spacetime (or for that matter any definable properties) — only that it be the domain from which our spacetime and its laws emerged. For example, our universe's physical laws could have been *synthesized* through a **transcendent** SUPERset of physical laws that need not even include our physical laws. (I.e. our physical laws could have been *created* from the SUPERset for the special purposes of our space-time.)

Insistence that the forever-unknown 'Void' or 'primordial vacuum' *must* have properties that we can relate to on our terms is, I suggest, ultimately **scientism** —

a *worldview* that has no tolerance either for **transcendence** or, accordingly, for ultimate explanations beyond the realm of human-limited scientific endeavor.

I appeal here not for less science but more humility.

principle of mediocrity

[The assumption that]...the properties and evolution of the solar system are not unusual in any important way. Consequently, the processes on Earth that led to life, and eventually to thinking beings, could have occurred throughout the cosmos. [Encyclopaedia Britannicaonline]^a

quantized

In physics, to quantize means to restrict the number of possible values of a quantity, or states of a physical entity or system, so that certain variables can assume only certain discrete magnitudes that are integral multiples of a common factor [WordWeb]

^aAccessed 9/27/2013 at:

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1377257/extraterrestrial-intelligence#ref959787>

This assumption has recently come under scrutiny.^{[237](#), [238](#)}

quantum

Used in this book as an adjective referring to phenomena that operate according to/are controlled by the laws of **quantum mechanics**.

quantum entanglement

A **quantum mechanical** phenomenon in which the **quantum states** of two or more objects have to be described with reference to each other, even though the individual objects are spatially separated. [Wiktionary]

Experiments first verified this phenomenon for photons moving in opposite directions at substantial separations; the photon 'spins' were interdependent. More recently (May 2014), scientists reported experimentally reliable ways to entangle spin states of two electrons at a distance. [421](#), [422](#)

Einstein called this 'spooky action at a distance'.

quantum field

Relates to a '**quantum field theory**' extension of **quantum mechanics** in which **particles** can be annihilated, created, and transmigrated from one type to another.

quantum field theory

According to this theory(s), the interaction of two separate physical systems (as **particles**) is attributed to a field that extends from one to the other and is manifested in a **particle** exchange between the two systems. [merriam-webster.com]

quantum fluctuation

With regard to an energy field in space, a quantum fluctuation is the temporary appearance of energetic **particles** out of empty space, as allowed by the [Heisenberg] Uncertainty Principle... [Wikipedia]

A momentary fluctuation in the energy at a point in space due to the Heisenberg uncertainty principle (the principle that there is an absolute limit on the combined accuracy of certain pairs of simultaneous, related measurements, especially that of the position and momentum of a **particle**). [Wiktionary]

It refers to the random interconversion of mass and energy at the **particle** level.

quantum gravity

"The name given to any theory that describes gravity in the regimes where quantum effects cannot be dis-

regarded. At present, there is no such a theory which is universally accepted and confirmed by experience. *Therefore the term 'Quantum Gravity indicates more an open problem than a specific theory.*

...until genuine quantum gravitational phenomena are directly or indirectly observed, we cannot confirm or falsify any of the current tentative theories."

<Emphasis is mine.> [http://www.scholarpedia.org/article/Quantum_gravity. Accessed 2/4/2016.]

A 100-second video on the following Web page gives a good overview of the topic (last accessed 2/3/2016): <http://physicsworld.com/cws/article/multimedia/2013/may/09/what-is-quantum-gravity>.

quantum mechanical

Obeying the principles of **quantum mechanics**.

quantum mechanics

The branch of physics which studies matter and energy at the level of atoms and other elementary **particles**, and substitutes probabilistic mechanisms for classical Newtonian ones. [Wiktionary]

In less technical terms, it refers to the mechanics of extremely small entities. We can define combinations

of positions, energies, velocities, etc. of these entities only with *probabilities* rather than fixed values. For example, if we know an **electron's** energy, we can only say with confidence where we most *expect* it to be under a given set of conditions but *not where it is*. By contrast, in Newtonian (classical) mechanics we can assign essentially fixed values of such quantities to much larger entities with exceedingly high, though not perfect, certainty.

Classical Newtonian mechanics is just a *special case* of **quantum mechanics** applying to large, everyday entities, which collectively behave with finite but negligible **quantum mechanical** uncertainty. Classical mechanics is still used routinely all over the world for most descriptions of everyday mechanical behaviors.

quantum number

One of a set of integers or half-integers characterizing the energy states of a **particle** or system of particles. [TheFreeDictionary] For example, an electron can have a 'spin' *quantum number* either of $+1/2$ or of $-1/2$; those are its only options.

quantum particle generation

See first definition of **quantum fluctuation** above.

quantum physics

See [quantum mechanics](#).

quantum state

A description in [quantum mechanics](#) of a physical system or part of a physical system. Different [quantum states](#) for a physical system show discrete differences in the value of the variables used to define the state. For example, the spin of an isolated electron can take on one of only two values; there are no other [quantum](#) states available for the electron and no intermediate values, since spin is [quantized](#). The quantum state is sometimes described by a set of [quantum numbers](#) that pick out the appropriate values for describing the state. [TheFreeDictionary]

If you've taken a chemistry course, you may recall something about the *quantum states* of an electron inside an atom — the allowed *energy* states of an electron inside the atom of a particular chemical element, such as iron. These energy states are [quantized](#) — *restricted* to certain discrete values. No other energy states are allowed.

quantum vacuum

"In quantum field theory, the vacuum state (also called the vacuum) is the quantum state with the lowest possible energy. Generally, it contains no physical particles...

According to present-day understanding of what is called the vacuum state or the *quantum vacuum*, it is "by no means a simple empty space", and again: "it is a mistake to think of any physical vacuum as some absolutely empty void." According to quantum mechanics, the vacuum state is not truly empty but instead contains fleeting electromagnetic waves and particles that pop into and out of existence." [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vacuum_state. Italics mine.]

This relates to the vacuum **within** our universe, NOT to the unknown PRE-UNIVERSE '*Void*'.

quantum weirdness

This refers to behaviors of entities obeying the rules of **quantum mechanics** that tend to defy conceptual understanding. For example, this weirdness applies to the so-called 'measurement problem' in which **particles** behave like waves until you try monitoring them, at which point they behave like **particles**. Another example is so-called **quantum entanglement**,

in which — under certain conditions — each of two elementary **particles** at widely separated distances can seemingly ‘know’ what the other is doing.

quark

An elementary subatomic **particle** [a component of certain **particles** that comprise an atom] which forms matter. Quarks are never found alone in nature and combine to form hadrons, such as protons and neutrons. [Wiktionary]

redolent

Evocative, remindful, reminiscent [WordNet]

reductionism

1. The theory that every complex phenomenon, esp. in biology or psychology, can be explained by analyzing the simplest, most basic physical mechanisms that are in operation during the phenomenon.

2. The practice of oversimplifying a complex idea or issue to the point of minimizing or distorting it.

[www.thefreedictionary.com]

antonym: **holism**

reductionistic

Considered from the perspective of **reductionism**.

repentance

To “change your mind for the better and heartily amend your ways, with abhorrence of your past sins.” [Amplified Bible] 11

“The repentance (metanoia) called for throughout the Bible is a summons to a personal, absolute and ultimate unconditional surrender to God as Sovereign.” [Wikipedia]

scalar field

A function that gives us a single value of some variable for every point in space. 420

scale height

“Scale height is a general way to describe how a value fades away and it is commonly used to describe the atmosphere of a planet. It is the vertical distance over which the density and pressure fall by a factor of $1/e$.” [http://astro.unl.edu/naap/scaleheight/sh_bg1.html]

schema

An organized pattern of thought or behavior that organizes categories of information and the relationships among them. [Wikipedia]

scientism

The often dogmatic belief that science is the only source of knowledge [Wiktionary]...the final arbiter of *all* knowledge and truth. It is effectively a worldview, related to the waning philosophy of **positivism**; it is a *self-refuting* worldview, the truth of which science can't establish. (See [The problem with scientISM.](#))

scientific

Viewing reality from the perspective of **scientism**.

singularity

A point or region in **spacetime** in which gravitational forces cause matter to have an infinite density; associated with black holes. [Wiktionary] a point in spacetime at which a physical quantity becomes infinite. [Hawking and Mlodinow, *The Grand Design*, 'Glossary'] Defined per the *standard Big Bang* theory as the infinite density, infinite temperature point from which our universe began.

sorcery

Use of **supernatural** power over others through the assistance of spirits; witchcraft. [WordWeb]

spacetime

An n -dimensional continuum consisting of dimensions of both space and time. Normally, *spacetime* is considered as having 4 dimensions... [Wiktionary]

The four dimensions of *our spacetime* are presently thought to be composed of three dimensions of space and one of time. That conception will change if extra dimensions of space, as posited by **string theory**, are found to exist in our universe.

spacetime fabric

This refers to the 'structure' of our four-dimensional **spacetime**. Einstein showed that gravity corresponds to a warping of that structure.

special pleading

"Applying standards, principles, and/or rules to other people or circumstances, while making oneself or certain circumstances exempt from the same critical criteria, without providing adequate justification."

[<http://www.logicallyfallacious.com/index.php/logical-fallacies/164-special-pleading>. Accessed 2/15/2016.]

strings

In physics, the smallest, irreducible components of everything, as posited by **string theory**. Strings are unfathomably tiny, vibrating open or closed loops, the vibrational characteristics of which define the characteristics of each type.

string theory

A candidate unified theory of all physical forces and **particles**; a theory which suggests that subatomic particles are one-dimensional **strings** rather than zero-dimensional points. It also suggests that **space-time** can have up to nine dimensions, plus the dimension of time. [Wiktionary]

supernatural

Not existing in nature or subject to explanation according to natural law. [WordWeb]

supernaturality

The quality or state of being **supernatural** (see above). [WordWeb]

superposition

The placing of one thing on top of another. [Wiktionary]

synapse

The junction between the terminal of a **neuron** and either another **neuron** or a muscle or gland cell, over which nerve impulses pass. [Wiktionary]

theism

The doctrine or belief in the existence of a God or gods. [WordWeb]

theistic

Of or relating to theism. [WordWeb]

theodicy

The branch of theology that defends God's goodness and justice in the face of the existence of evil. [Word-Web]

thermal radiation

The electromagnetic radiation emitted from a body as a consequence of its temperature; increasing the temperature of the body increases the amount of radiation produced, and shifts it to shorter wavelengths (higher frequencies) in a manner explained only by **quantum mechanics**. [Wiktionary]

Sometimes called **black-body radiation**.

thermodynamic

Of or relating to the conversion of heat into other forms of energy. [Wiktionary]

transcendent

Beyond and outside the range of material experience or understanding. [Hybrid of WordWeb definitions of transcendent and transcendence] When I use the word transcendent in this book, I refer to a supernatural state of being with attendant capabilities, knowledge, and perspective unavailable to and even inconceivable by humanity.

transcendence

A state of being or existence beyond and outside the limits of material experience or understanding. [Hybrid of WordWeb definitions of transcendent and transcendence] When I use the word transcendence in this book, I refer to a supernatural state of being with attendant capabilities, knowledge, and perspective unavailable to and even inconceivable by humanity.

TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation)

The use of electric current produced by a device to stimulate the nerves for therapeutic purposes.

Often used with a more restrictive intent, namely to describe the kind of pulses produced by portable stimulators used to treat pain. [Wikipedia]

Upper Paleolithic

The third and last subdivision of the Paleolithic or Old Stone Age as it is understood in Europe, Africa and Asia. Very broadly, it dates to between 50,000 and 10,000 years ago, roughly coinciding with the appearance of behavioral modernity and before the advent of agriculture. [Wikipedia]

unfalsifiable

Not capable of being tested (verified or falsified) by experiment or observation. [WordWeb]

veridical

True. [Wiktionary] Coinciding with reality. [WordWeb] With regard to a few near-death experiences (NDEs) noted in this book, 'veridical' refers to accounts in which:

- The person experiencing the NDE made one or more observations that would normally have been impossible under the circumstances, AND...
- One or more other people *not* experiencing an NDE(s) made and verified those same observations.

'Void'

As used in this book, it refers to the unknown state of physical reality before the **Big Bang** — or indeed before the birth of any universe or hypothetical **multi-universe(s)**.

"...there was nothing before the **Big Bang** as time also started with the Big Bang: there was no 'before' for anything to be happening in. Nobody has come up with a testable explanation of what caused the Big Bang..."²¹⁴

See also the similar, but *misleading*, term **primordial vacuum**.

wave

In physics, a wave is a disturbance or oscillation that travels through space and matter, accompanied by a transfer of energy. [Wikipedia] With regard to **electromagnetic radiation**, such as light, it refers to electrical and magnetic field oscillations that travel through space and matter.

wavefunction

A mathematical function that describes the propagation of the **quantum mechanical wave** associated with a **particle** (or system of particles), related to the

probability of finding the **particle** in a particular region of space. [Wiktionary]

wavefunction collapse

The phenomenon in which a **wavefunction** — initially in a **superposition** of several different possible **eigenstates** — appears to reduce to a single one of those states after interaction with an observer: the reduction of the physical possibilities into a single possibility as seen by an observer. [Wiktionary]

Endnotes

1. Blaise Pascal, *Penseés*, #430, Project Gutenberg edition, p. 118.
2. A clearer, frequently-quoted paraphrase of *Penseés* #430 for which I've found no viable Pascal document reference. Regardless of who wrote the paraphrase, I think it's true.
3. Per my definition, an *honest* skeptic...
 - a. Believes in the existence of objective truth — a body of absolute truth that exists independently of what anyone believes. It's impossible to help someone who claims that "What you believe is true for you, and what I believe is true for me" — a self-refuting statement. The speaker intrinsically makes a global claim about the nature of truth that applies to two or more people, yet says it's true only for him/her.
 - b. Wants truth and seeks it.

- c. When confronted with and convinced of truth is willing to follow where it leads — does not try to rationalize it away.

I admired that last quality in the late Antony Flew, one of the 20th century's best-known atheists. In 2004 "he stated an allegiance to deism...stating that in keeping his lifelong commitment to go where the evidence leads, he now believes in the existence of God."⁶ He later co-wrote the book *There is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*.⁷ Upon reading that book I was impressed that Flew's change of mind was logical and in no way a result of mental feebleness. (Further, a theist who had formerly debated Flew while an atheist talked with him after he became a deist; he came away with no doubts concerning Flew's retained mental sharpness.)

My efforts on this book surely fall far short of perfection.⁸ But even a perfect effort to bridge faith roadblocks would not help an entrenched skeptic. If you fall into that category — particularly if you *don't want* God to exist — you'll

probably find yourself fighting everything I've written.

If you're predisposed to categorically reject 'God stuff', you'll probably stop reading at this point. But before you do, I suggest asking yourself a few 'whys'. Do your barriers relate to any of these common issues:

- Past pain and hypocrisy from religious people? Negative family or church associations?
- Fear of losing acceptance by family, friends, or professional peers who will think you're weak-minded or intellectually inferior if you consider the **supernatural** and spiritual?
- Fear of losing *self*-acceptance for similar reasons? Pride? A need to feel superior? Fear of denying your intellect?
- Not wanting a **transcendent** personal God to exist — or not wanting to consider such a God — because of lifestyle accountability issues? Guilt issues?

Francis Collins — former Human Genome Project director, National Institutes of Health director as of this writing, and former agnostic (and, later, atheist) — noted that...

“There are all kinds of agnostics; some arrive at this position after intense analysis of the evidence, but many others simply find it to be a comfortable position that allows them to avoid considering arguments they find discomfoting on either side. I was definitely in the latter category. In fact, my assertion of ‘I don’t know’ was really more along the lines of ‘I don’t want to know.’ As a young man growing up in a world full of temptations, it was convenient to ignore the need to be answerable to any higher spiritual authority. I practiced a thought and behavior pattern referred to as ‘willful blindness’ by the noted scholar and writer C. S. Lewis.”⁴

- Fear of losing control?
- Long-term emotional and intellectual investments in anti-supernaturalistic bias?

If you can admit to and confront one or more of these issues, then perhaps you’ll find value in this book.

4. Francis Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*, Free Press, 2006, Kindle edition, pp. 15-16.
5. *Ibid*, pp. 51-52.
6. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antony_Flew
Accessed 6/24/2013
7. Antony Flew with Roy Abraham Varghese, *There is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*, HarperOne, 2007
8. Whether you decide affirmatively or unaffirmatively, you are welcome to email *constructive* comments to bridges4hs@hotmail.com. I cannot promise a response but will value your feedback and keep it in mind during revisions.
When commenting unaffirmatively, please keep in mind that my efforts have been a labor of love and consider how you'd like to be addressed if you were in my shoes; please refrain from hostile remarks.
9. I was acutely aware of one such 'why' in the wake of 2012's Superstorm Sandy, which just days before *starting* this paragraph wreaked havoc on the lives and properties of many thousands of people. Other contemporary 'whys' in

the public consciousness relate to ISIS and other world-class monsters; the 9/11, Columbine, Sandy Hook, Washington Navy Yard, and other massacres, recent tsunamis, hurricanes, tornadoes, and on and on. Though I touch analytically on evil and suffering in [God? Then why this mess?!](#) and [Appendix D: Some entropic perspectives on evil](#), I understand that analysis brings no comfort. I hope to write more compassionately and broadly on this subject in a future work.

10. Here in more detail are the kinds of qualifiers I considered when selecting the accounts for [EVIDENCE](#). Some apply only to healing events and others apply to all accounts. Lack of fulfillment is definitely a show-stopper for some qualifiers, but not all. I tend to look at qualifiers in combination, and sometimes a strength in one consideration compensates for a weakness in another. 100.00% certainty about the accounts? No. But I'm fussy, and as a scientist and former agnostic/quasi-agnostic who understands the need for high quality information, I avoid accounts that seem suspect in any way.

- *First-level account/testimony reliability*
 - Is there any reason to suspect the trustworthiness of the reporter? Is he/she known to be an honest reliable person with a positive reputation? (Not foolproof, of course, given that we occasionally hear of 'double lives' situations.)
 - Do the report and reporter have a *ring* of honesty? Are there any *intuitive* alarm bells?
 - Are there reliable witnesses, or does this event appear to be hearsay or even legend?
 - If witnesses, is there any reason to suspect their trustworthiness?
 - Does the reporter include information that's embarrassing to him/her and likely wouldn't include if they were fabricating the account?
 - If a healing miracle, is the healed person trustworthy (though this can have lesser importance if doctors and witnesses are trustworthy)?

- Are there account inconsistencies or false information — internal or external (e.g. in multiple versions), even in incidentals — that suggest possible fabrication?*
- Is the report sensationalized?
- Any evidence of exaggeration?
- Any evidence of obvious hubris? Of self-glorification?
- Is the reporter's motive(s) questionable in any way? Is the reporting blatantly motivated by political gain, attainment of social status, or greed, etc.? (If I summarize an account from a commercial book — which I often do — that commercialization must be counterbalanced with favorable answers to other key questions.)
- Medical-evidence reliability for healing miracles
 - Is there attesting medical documentation, preferably on the care provider's letter-head or other officially identifiable document?

- If 'yes' to the above question, can I get a photo-reproduction of the original medical data? An original-document photo is much preferred over quoted text.
- If I have only textual quotes claimed to have been *copied* from medical reports (no letterheads or other official documents), have the quoted doctors challenged their published statements? Is lack of an official document counterbalanced by positive answers to other key questions?
- Do the terminologies and descriptions in the documentation contradict relevant professional expertise? Do they fit independently verifiable procedures or descriptions that I can check out with or without the help of an independent, disinterested professional?
- Similarly, if questions arise, can an independent, disinterested expert(s) explain and/or verify critical and maybe iffy medical statements?

- Does the timing of medical documentation reasonably fit the timing of the purported **supernatural** healing event (recognizing that an honest physician might reasonably write up something later on request to confirm previously oral statements).
- Is there any evidence, or even warranted suspicion, of physician misrepresentation or dishonest collusion?
- **supernatural** involvement
 - Are there any conceivable naturalistic explanations for a healing phenomenon, both with regard to process and timing? (For example, I consulted two gastroenterologists, including the consulting GI guy for the Short Bowel Syndrome Foundation, who confirmed the natural impossibility of damaged small-intestine *length* regrowth in an adult.
 - Put another way, is **supernatural** involvement overwhelmingly not only the most obvious explanation but also the best

explanation — barring categorical denial of the **supernatural**.

- In a report of **supernatural** healing, has the healing occurred far too quickly to correspond to any conceivable natural biological cause?
- Similarly, is the timing of prayer and time of healing closely connected? (Substantial elapsed time is not a show-stopper, but close timing is more convincing.)
- Could a reportedly **supernatural** healing be an 'encore performance' of a previously natural event?
- Is this event unambiguously associated with compassionate, humble requests to and biblical faith in God. (If purportedly associated with some other **supernatural** entity, the answers to other questions become especially critical.)
- Is this an independent, substantially private, no-hoopla event — a non-sensationalized, no-'professional'-healer event (*not* saying that public healings are automatically invalid)?

Endnotes

- Are secondary individuals beyond the healed person — such as leader(s) and prayERs) — godly, respected, faithful Christ followers petitioning God in humble biblical faith and loving concern?
- Is the healed person and/or healing 'practitioner' associated with the New Age, shamanism, Spiritism, or other occultic practices? Does the healing involve trances and occultic rituals?

As much as I'd like to deny such possibilities, healing claims apparently have been associated with what I loosely call 'negative **supernatural**ity' — which I plan to address in some depth in a forthcoming book. Are such healings real? And if healing of a malady appears real, does any evidence link *healing* agency with *causal* agency?

11. I use Bible references in this book sparingly, but this one's from Luke 13: 3 in the *Amplified Bible*, Copyright © 1954, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1987 by The Lockman Foundation. The *Amplified Bible* is a translation with extra words that

capture the essence of the original languages better than the typical word-for-word translations. Its preface says that "...the amplification merely helps the reader comprehend what the Hebrew and Greek listener instinctively understood (as a matter of course). Take as an example the Greek word *pisteuo*, which the vast majority of versions render 'believe.' That simple translation, however, hardly does justice to the many meanings contained in the Greek *pisteuo*: 'to adhere to, cleave to; to trust, to have faith in; to rely on, to depend on.'"

12. Food for thought as you read these accounts:
Is the phenomenal evidence for an invisible God in these accounts less acceptable to you than the phenomenal evidence for invisible entities in science? In both cases, only the *effects* of the entities are observable. For example, dark matter is by definition invisible, yet astronomers confidently infer its existence from gravitational *effects* on visible matter and **electromagnetic radiation**. They infer the existence of dark energy indirectly from the *effects* of accelerating universe expansion; **particle** physicists have

never seen **quarks**, but rather infer their existence and properties from their *effects*.

Is the mystery of a **transcendent** God less acceptable to you than the mystery of so-called '**quantum weirdness**,' which many scientists have given up explaining and now simply acknowledge as fact?

If so, why?

13. I favor the words '**Christ-follower**' in this book to distinguish those who seek — failures notwithstanding — to make a biblical Christ integral and central in their lives, 24/7.

The earliest followers of Christ didn't refer to themselves as 'Christians', a designation first used as a pejorative by those outside the Church — and today used as such in some circles. Among other terms, early followers of Christ referred to themselves as Christ's disciples — which substantially means 'Christ-followers'. Analogous to the term 'Big Bang', which started as Fred Hoyle's pejorative and now gets

used routinely, the term 'Christian' eventually became a routine designation.

However, today's meaning of 'Christian' is anything but routine; the term gets applied carelessly and has a broad spectrum of application and connotation. I see the need to return to a first-century 'Christ-follower' designation to refer to those who follow the teachings and principles that the biblical Christ, his eyewitness apostles, and all New Testament authors died for (save the apostle John, who nonetheless suffered greatly for his proclamation).

Polls in which 80% of Americans are identified as Christians paint Christianity with a misleadingly broad brush. A substantial percentage of individuals so self-identified deny critical tenets of historic Christianity and often embrace popular cultural norms that contradict it. For example, Barna Group research discussed in 2007 indicated that 84% of young people outside Christianity knew a Christian personally but only 15% saw differences in lifestyle from the cultural norm. [David Kinnaman, *UNChristian*, Baker Books, 2007, pp. 47-48]

An earlier book interestingly called *Why America Needs Religion* (given that the author was an agnostic) noted that...

“Most Christians have what Gordon Allport called an extrinsic rather than an intrinsic religious outlook: religion is not integral to their personal lives but something that they find useful and reassuring. A recent¹⁴ study that applied a 12-item scale of religiousness concluded that the number of ‘everyday saints’ who truly live what they profess amounts to no more than 13% of the US adult population or about 17% of those who consider themselves Christian. Those who do internalize the key values of their faith are the ones whose personal conduct shows a distinctively different pattern.” [Guenter Lewy, *Why America Needs Religion*, William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996, p. 125.]

Another study reported in the book *UNChristian* (op. cit.), pp. 75 to 76, found that, of people aged 18-41 who claimed a commitment to Christ that is still important, only 5 percent had

a **biblical** worldview. It noted that such folks "...live a substantially different faith from other Americans — indeed from other believers."

I suggest that such findings reflect widespread **compartmentalized** thinking, illustrated in the figure at right. In youth-worker Andy Braner's 2011 book, *An Expose on Teen Sex and Dating: What's Really Going On and How to Talk*

About It — written after interviewing hundreds of teens — he discusses the moral consequences of increasingly **compartmentalization** thinking in contemporary teen culture.

"You'll see some kids who put 'Christian' as their religious preference, but if you peruse their

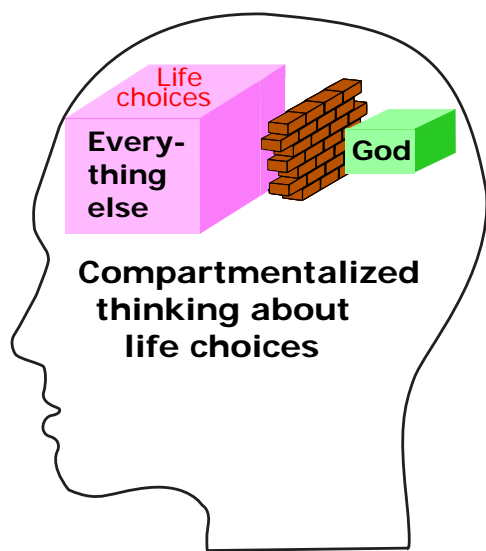


photo albums, you'll see a lifestyle that is anything from the life Jesus called us to live... Today's teenagers can go to a purity rally on Friday night at six o'clock and be in bed with their boyfriend or girlfriend by ten o'clock — and think nothing of it." Such **compartmentalized** thinking isn't limited to teens: "There's no connection between belief and commitment anymore, primarily because *we have modeled* an inconsistent Christian lifestyle."^a <Emphasis is mine.>

Such **compartmentalized** thinking about God, though prominent in this era, is not new — for example, God-on-Sunday-but-business-on-Monday thinking is hardly new. And if some God-believers have this problem, those who ignore or reject God are hardly exempt. For example, I independently know two former close friends — A an agnostic and B a theist — who had a hurtful business-relationship split, ultimately leading to an appropriate lawsuit by

^aAndy Braner, *An Expose on Teen Sex and Dating: What's Really Going On and How to Talk About It*, Navpress, 2011, Kindle edition, Kindle locations 1389-1397.

B. Following the split, A called B, wanting to do things together like they always had. B was shocked. But A, having **compartmentalized** the split, was clueless and responded with “Aww, that’s business!”

Moreover, **compartmentalized** thinking has implications beyond the moral realm. Later in this book, in the [THINKING FURTHER](#) part and beyond, I’ll implicitly and explicitly address compartmentalized thinking as a conscious or subconscious filter that puts God in one isolated box and nature and science in another, resulting in distorted views of reality. In particular, it applies to the practice of **methodological naturalism**.

14. The cited findings were published in 1992 by pollster George H. Gallup, Jr. and an associate. The findings were ‘recent’ as of the 1996 copyright date of the book I’m quoting.
15. By contrast, ongoing major offenses committed by adherents of certain other belief systems are *consistent* with their founder’s teachings. In particular, a minority of the adherents of another prominent belief system declare the

necessity of violence, deception, and conquest against the adherents of all other belief systems — in fulfillment of their founder's later hostile teachings.

Note that in this belief system, the founder's later hostile teachings are considered to abrogate — override — his earlier more conciliatory teachings. (The earlier teachings were recorded when he had little power and was trying to gain followers with minimal success.) A former teacher and cleric of this belief system — who holds a PhD in the history of the belief system and once memorized its holy book — notes the large percentage of its holy book that contains teachings of violence, deception, and conquest.

- The most offensive individuals and groups associated with the word 'Christian' are typically the ones who **least** strive to emulate and yield to a **biblical Christ**.

Sadly, a great many misguided practices, principles, and politics in the so-called 'Crusades' — often used as polemical clubs to batter Christianity — were not at all biblical or reflective of Christ's teachings. Some

were arguably anti-biblical. Association of true, incipient-Church Christianity with the Crusades is a serious mistake.

- By contrast, the most offensive individuals and groups associated with the aforementioned other major belief system are typically the ones who **most** strive to emulate their belief system's founder.

16. Tass Saada, *Once an Arafat Man*, Tyndale House Publishers, 2008. Kindle Edition.
17. Tass's father, a skilled auto-body repairman, overcame refugee status and became a successful businessman. He even repaired the vehicles of royalty — including the king of Saudi Arabia, thereby opening the door to political connections.
18. In three segments (last accessed 12/16/2013):
Segment 1 is at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6DqUlrzGcc&list=PLpwmPz5cguFeSa3M5AgWw7sbPQ2mFmG8d&index=2>
Segment 2 is at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXmJ-uMwTLc&list=PLpwmPz5cguFeSa3M5AgWw7sbPQ2mFmG8d>

Segment 3 is at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=adVLT_om8pI&list=PLpwmPz5cguFeSa3M5AgWw7sbPQ2mFmG8d

19. The words of John 14:6 in the Christian scriptures (New Testament). Tass was unaware of them at the time.
20. I'm sensitive to the possibility that these statements may irritate some readers. However, know that they reflect the sincere experiences of millions of true **Christ-followers**. If they seem meaningless at this juncture, please read on; the rest of the account correlates these words with verifiable changes in Tass's life.
21. Excerpts from Amazon review of *Once an Arafat Man* by a man who has personal knowledge of the author. C. G. Adams's review is titled "Tass is the real deal!" [www.amazon.com/Once-an-Arafat-Man-ebook/dp/B001FA0YZA/ref=sr_1_1?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1332967282&sr=1-1]
22. I've compiled this summary from two books by Steve Saint: primarily *End of the Spear*, SaltRiver, 2005 and also *Walking His Trail: Signs of God along the Way*, SaltRiver, 2007. Both were

Kindle Editions.

23. Mincaye, the warrior who threw the final spear that killed Nate Saint, had initially threatened to kill Rachel and Elisabeth. Then one day he "...told Aunt Rachel that he had decided to follow God's trail. After that, Mincaye became jovial and almost happy-go-lucky."
24. My summary of Mitch Zajack's biographical brochure, *Armed and Dangerous...* (plus my added personal-knowledge comments). The contents of that brochure are available online as of 6/11/2015 at <http://www.lvbaptist.org/mzajak/>.
25. My partial summary of "He Changed My Life" in Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1999.
26. Text from the personal testimony of Marshall Brandon, pastor of the Highland Square Akron campus of Christ Community Chapel, Hudson, Ohio. Private communication, quoted by permission.
27. Summarized from the Christian scriptures (New Testament), primarily from the book of Acts. Its author, Luke, a gentile physician, is known for

his painstaking detail.^a For example, historian Colin Hemer "...confirmed 84 facts in the last 16 Chapters of Acts that have been confirmed by historical and archaeological research." [See a list of these facts in Norman Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, Crossway Books, 2004, pp. 256-260.] See also [Historicity of the Gospel of Luke](#) on page 417.

28. Private communication. Name withheld to protect my source and his associates from reprisals.
29. Viggo Olsen, MD, *Daktar: Diplomat in Bangladesh*, Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1973, pp. 152 -154, 198, and 316.
30. Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, Zondervan, 1998, pp. 15-16.
31. *Ibid*, p. 84-85.
32. The Voice of the Martyrs, *Saul to Paul: From Persecutor to Christ Follower*, Living Sacrifice Book Co., 2012, Kindle edition, Kindle locations 1230-1351.

^aSee also [Historicity of the book of Acts](#) on page 415.

The brief account that references this citation, plus the next two that follow, inadequately capture the impact of these transformations. I recommend reading the book.

Voice of the Martyrs (<http://www.persecution.com>) has extensive knowledge about persecuted Christ-followers — whom it extensively helps —and about their present and former persecutors. It was founded by the late Richard Wurmbrand, who himself was imprisoned and tortured by Romanian communists for 14 years (See my citations of Wurmbrand elsewhere in this book.)

33. Ibid, Kindle locations 76-336
34. Ibid, Kindle locations 337-554.
35. *Communist Exploitation of Religion*, Congressional Testimony of Rev. Richard Wurmbrand, Hearing before the Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Security Laws, of the Committee on the Judiciary, Washington, DC, May 8, 1966.

Last accessed on 6/6/2014 at: <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/59930115/>

36. Richard Wurmbbrand, *Tortured for Christ*, Living Sacrifice Book Company, 2010, Kindle edition, Kindle locations 657-633, 647-649, 689-720, 795-799, 917-918, 950-955, 994-1000.
37. Georges Housney, *Engaging Islam*, Treeline Publishing, 2010, pp. 108 and 111.
38. Nabeel Qureshi, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus: A Devout Muslim Encounters Christianity*, Zondervan, 2014.
39. The *Sahih al-Bukari* **Hadith** revered by Sunni Muslims advocates death for Muslim apostasy in at least three places:
 - *Sahih al-Bukari 4:52:260* — Ali burnt some people and this news reached Ibn 'Abbas, who said, "Had I been in his place I would not have burnt them, as the Prophet said, 'Don't punish (anybody) with Allah's Punishment.' No doubt, I would have killed them, for ***the Prophet said, 'If somebody (a Muslim) discards his religion, kill him.'***"
<Emphases are mine.> [http://www.sahih-bukhari.com/Pages/Bukhari_4_52.php. Accessed 12/14/2015.]

- *Sahih al-Bukhari 9:83:17* — **Allah's Apostle said, "The blood of a Muslim** who confesses that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and that I am His Apostle, **cannot be shed except in three cases**: In Qisas for murder, a married person who commits illegal sexual intercourse and the **one who reverts from Islam (apostate) and leaves the Muslims.** <Emphases are mine.> [http://www.sahih-bukhari.com/Pages/Bukhari_9_83.php. Accessed 12/14/2015.]
- *Sahih al-Bukhari 9:89:271* — A man embraced Islam and then reverted back to Judaism. Mu'adh bin Jabal came and saw the man with Abu Musa. Mu'adh asked, "What is wrong with this (man)?" Abu Musa replied, "He embraced Islam and then reverted back to Judaism." Mu'adh said, "I will not sit down unless you **kill him (as it is) the verdict of Allah and His Apostle.**" <Emphasis is mine.> [http://www.sahih-bukhari.com/Pages/Bukhari_9_89.php. Accessed 12/14/2015.]

40. *Laws Penalizing Blasphemy, Apostasy and Defamation of Religion are Widespread*, Pew Research, Religion & Public Life Project, November 21, 2012, table called 'Laws Penalizing Apostasy'. Available as of 12/2/2013 at: <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/11/21/laws-penalizing-blasphemy-apostasy-and-defamation-of-religion-are-widespread/>
- My identification of the 19 countries as dominantly Muslim — 91.2% average, varying between 61.4% and 99.8% — is based on 2010 data in: <http://features.pewforum.org/muslim-population> --- accessed on 12/10/2013. Parts of Nigeria — 47.9% Muslim — also have anti-apostasy laws.
41. *The World's Muslims: Religion, Politics and Society*, Pew Research Center, Forum on Religion & Public Life, April 30, 2013, pp. 46 and 55.
- As of 12/2/2013, available at: <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2013/04/worlds-muslims-religion-politics-society-full-report.pdf>
42. <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/11/21/laws-penalizing-blasphemy-apostasy-and-defama->

[tion-of-religion-are-widespread/](#)

Accessed 12/2/2013.

43. Joel C. Rosenberg, *Epicenter 2.0: Why the Current Rumbblings in the Middle East Will Change Your Future*, Tyndale House, 2008. Kindle Edition.
44. Tom Doyle, *DREAMS AND VISIONS: Is Jesus Awakening the Muslim World?*, Thomas Nelson, 2012, Kindle edition, Preface.

Later in the 'Muslims encounter Christ; accept the risks. Why?' chapter I summarize snippets from four accounts (out of several) in this important book. Author Doyle notes the following about the accounts he reports:

"The stories in this book are about real people I know personally or are known by my family's closest friends in the Middle East. *If we couldn't verify the experience, we left it out—no Christian fairy tales here.*" <Emphasis is mine.>

(NOTE: Some of the names in his accounts — and in my summaries — are pseudonyms.)

Doyle is the Middle Eastern branch director of e3 ministries:

“Tom and his wife JoAnn began working in the heart of the Islamic world shortly after the terrorist attacks of September 11. His ministry to pastors in this region has opened many valuable doors for him to build key relationships in places like Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Syria and Palestinian territories of Israel.”

[http://www.e3partners.org/
Page.aspx?pid=4364](http://www.e3partners.org/Page.aspx?pid=4364)

Accessed 11/30/2013

45. *Ibid*, p. 132.
46. *Ibid*, p. 97.
47. *Ibid*, Chapter 6.
48. *Ibid*, Chapter 2
49. *Ibid*, p. 7.
50. *Ibid*, Chapter 7.
51. *When an ISIS Fighter Wants to Talk*, Voice of the Martyrs, May 29, 2015.
As of 6/5/2015, available for listening at <https://>

</secure.persecution.com/radio/> and for mp3 download at <https://soundcloud.com/the-voice-of-the-martyrs/>. Find the content I reference, plus a bit of context, in minutes 5:30 to 9:30.

52. Viggo Olsen, MD, *Daktar: Diplomat in Bangladesh* (op. cit.), pp. 222 - 224.
53. *The Real Holy War, The Voice of the Martyrs*, January, 2015, pp. 4-9.
54. My friends related this account to me in late 2011, the year in which the events occurred. Their names must remain anonymous because socio-political sensitivities could compromise the personal safety of individuals and the effectiveness of related ministries.
55. Quoted in Lee Strobel [a former atheist], *The Case for Christ*, Zondervan, 1998, p. 322.
56. My summary of an account related by Joel Rosenburg in *The Gathering Storm* conference, simulcast October 22, 2011.
57. *Voice of the Martyrs*, April 2013, pp. 7-8.
58. *Voice of the Martyrs*, September 2013, p. 9.
59. Tom has related this account to me both personally and publicly.

60. Manila was huge then — around 13 million people in greater Manila — and even larger today. In 2010, Manila was the world's most densely populated city with 1,652,171 living within city limits and 16.3 million living in Metro Manila, "...the metropolitan region encompassing the City of Manila and its surrounding areas."
[<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manila> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metro_Manila.]
61. Viggo Olsen, MD, *Daktar: Diplomat in Bangladesh* (op. cit.), pp. 137 - 138.
62. Summarized from: Floyd McClung, *Living on the Devil's Doorstep*, YWAM Publishing, 1988, pp. 196-197.
63. Summarized from: H.B. Garlock with Ruthanne Garlock, *Before We Kill and Eat You*, Regal Books, 2003, pp. 130 - 134.
64. Seems weird? However, one could argue that it's a modern day confirmation of something the **biblical Christ** told his ancient followers: "Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit" [Mark 13:11].

65. Summarized from: Jim Cymbala, *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*, Zondervan, 1997, pp. 109-110, except as otherwise cited.
66. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brooklyn_Tabernacle
67. Primary-content summary of *Angels³⁴⁷ on the Rooftop* by Patty McGarvey, former manager of the U.S. Archives of the Christian & Missionary Alliance in Colorado Springs, Colo. As of this writing, the original account may be viewed at <http://www.alliancelife.org/article.php?id=293> Availability verified 6/3/2013.
68. Summarized from: Jeff Manion, *Radical Trust*, Devotionals Daily, HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 1/8/2014.
69. Judith MacNutt, *Encountering Angels*, Baker Publishing Group, 2016, Kindle edition, pp 56-57.
70. *Ibid*, pp. 59-60.
71. *Ibid*, pp. 64-66.
72. *Ibid*, pp. 30-31.
73. Summarized from: Joyce Williams, ed., *God sightings*, Beacon Hill Press, 2009, pp. 163-166

74. Most of the information in this account comes from Bruce Van Natta himself through my personal communications with him, through *medical records* that he has supplied to me — *most important*, and from pages 45-55 of his book, *A Miraculous Life: True stories of supernatural encounters with God*, Charisma House. Kindle Edition.

I initially learned about Bruce's account from a third author (Max Davis, *The Insanity of Unbelief: A Journalist's Journey from Belief to Skepticism to Deep Faith*) who more thoroughly looked into medical records and certain other details of the case.

75. Blausen.com staff, "Blausen gallery 2014", *Wikipedia Journal of Medicine*, DOI: 10.15347/wjm/2014.010. ISSN 20018762. I've cropped the bottom of the original and modified contrast.

I accessed this graphic via the wikipedia article cited next.

76. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Small_intestine#cite_note-Elsevier-3. Accessed 4/27/2016.

77. <http://www.bartleby.com/107/248.html#txt168>. Accessed 4/27/2015.
78. Resection refers to "Surgical removal of all or part of an organ, tissue, or structure." [<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/resection>]. (Accessed 5/8/2013.)
79. "The average length of the small intestine in an adult human male is 6.9 m [690 cm]...divided into three structural parts:
- Duodenum
 - Jejunum
 - Ileum."
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Small_intestine]. (Accessed 5/8/2013.)
80. <http://www.mananatomy.com/digestive-system/duodenum>
Accessed 5/8/2013
81. Max Davis, *The Insanity of Unbelief: A Journalist's Journey from Belief to Skepticism to Deep Faith*, Destiny Image, Inc., Kindle Edition, Kindle Locations 955-1189.
82. Summarized from:

- Greg Spencer's testimony in the video *Jesus of Testimony* — Nesch Productions LLC, 2014 — starting at time 01:13. You can watch this informative video for free [<http://www.jesusoftestimony.com/watch/>], download a nominal-cost HD version at that same URL (recommended for seamless viewing), or purchase a DVD [<http://www.jesusoftestimony.com/store/>].
 - Medical and other evidence provided by Greg to the Nesch brothers (the video's producers), who have displayed it briefly in the video and made it available to me.
 - Private phone conversations with observers Travis Hunt on 12/12/2014 and Randy Webb on 12/17/2014 (and very briefly on 1/5/2015).
83. One such internet source is http://www.fact-book.org/wikipedia/en/a/ag/age_related_macular_degeneration.html
84. http://www.lyricsfreak.com/k/keith+green/rushing+wind_20077385.html

85. <http://healthyliving.msn.com/health-wellness/how-vital-are-your-organs>
Accessed 5/8/2013
86. http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Small_intestine
Accessed 6/7/2013.
87. Per my personal communications with Van Natta on 5/11/2013 through 6/7/2013.
88. Bruce Van Natta, *A Miraculous Life: True stories of supernatural encounters with God* (op. cit.), pp. 54 - 55.
89. A response to my personal communication on 5/24/2013 with Andrew E. Jablonski, founder and CEO of the Short Bowel Syndrome Foundation (SBSF). Dr. Vanderhoof has been the health care professional for SBSF for 23 years.
90. My communication with Dr. Michael Frankel, Gastroenterology Associates, Cleveland OH, on 5/25/2013.
91. *Spirit and Power: A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals*, Pew Forum On Religion & Public Life, 2006, p. 137, '**All**' statistics (**general populace**) with 'Yes' answers to the question: "Have you ever experienced or witnessed a divine healing

of an illness or injury?" Available as of 2/6/2015 at <http://www.pewforum.org/2006/10/05/spirit-and-power-a-10-country-survey-of-pentecostals3/>

92. *Current world population (ranked)*, GeoHive, February 6, 2015. At http://www.geohive.com/earth/population_now.aspx as of 2/6/2015.
93. "All Christian churches in China practise some form of healing, including Three-Self churches. In fact, according to some surveys, 90 per cent of new believers cite healing as a reason for their conversion. This is especially true in the countryside where medical facilities are often inadequate or non-existent."
[Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang, 'Independence in Africa and Asia', p. 124, in Hugh McLeod, ed., *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Volume 9 World Christianities c.1914–c.2000*, Cambridge University Press, 2006. As of 2/8/2015, the cited page could be viewed via the following Google hit: <https://books.google.ca/books?isbn=0521815002>]

94. Craig Keener, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts (Volumes 1 & 2)*, Baker Academic, 2011.
95. *Answering the Biggest Objections to Christianity (Q&A with Dr. Ravi Zacharias)*, Christ Community Chapel, April 2015. Available as of 4/27/2015 at <http://ccchapel.com/Hudson/Resources/Media/Miscellaneous/Answering-the-Biggest-Objections-to-Christianity/>.
96. To see the injury locations, refer to the spine diagram at http://www.askmenhealth.org/c_sci00.php. (Available as of 4/27/2015.)
97. Refer to Ema McKinley and Cheryl Ricker, *Rush of Heaven: One Woman's Miraculous Encounter with Jesus*, Zondervan, 2014, Kindle edition.
98. <http://www.webmd.com/brain/reflex-sympathetic-dystrophy-syndrome>. Accessed 5/6/2-15.
99. *Complex Regional Pain Syndrome*, National Institutes of Health, NIH Publication 13-4173, June 2013. As of 5/11/2015, available at: http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/reflex_sympathetic_dystrophy/detail_reflex_sympathetic_dystrophy.htm

100. *MS Contin*, Drugs.com, see under 'MS Contin Dosage and Administration'. Available as of 5/14/2015 at:
<http://www.drugs.com/pro/ms-contin.html>.
101. <http://salvationarmynorth.org/2012/08/jesus-heals-paralyzed-salvation-army-volunteer/>
Accessed 8/21/2015.
102. Available as of 6/1/2015 at: <http://www.lung.org/lung-disease/pneumonia/understanding-pneumonia.html>.
103. Gary Habermas, *Beyond Standard Apologetics Categories: A New Typology of Empirical Evidences*, Evangelical Philosophical Society Annual Meeting, 2012. As of 6/1/2015 available for viewing at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzhrURINf_I. Gary relates this account near the end of his talk at roughly the 43:20 minute time point.
104. One thing you need to understand: the need for intervention in this situation extended well beyond Doris's medical welfare. As described in more detail in a later endnote²⁶⁰, our daughter Pamela had a rare and devastating skin disorder that required daily — and sometimes more fre-

quent — bandaging over most of her body. Pamela needed Doris at home.

So why didn't God heal chronically ill Pamela, who suffered every day of her 28 years? I have no clear answers to that question. However, miraculous healings are overwhelmingly exceptions, possibly for *special purposes*. (If every ill person were healed, most of us might live practically forever. Talk about population explosions!) Pamela's life amidst the severity of her illness was an inspiration to many others. Neither she nor we would have picked that painful route, but if God exists and his perspective transcends ours, then mysteries must exist that he understands and we can't.

For more about the seeming selectivity of *obvious supernatural* intervention, see [Miracles are illogical and violate nature?](#) on page 340.

105. Some folks have noted the amazing number of 'coincidences' that *Christ-followers* experience when they pray.
106. Stanley Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996, pp. 46-56.

107. http://teacher.nsrj.rochester.edu/phy_labs/appendix/appendix.html. Accessed 5/22/2013. This article containing these four steps includes an excellent discussion of the scientific method.
108. Gerald Rau notes throughout his remarkably balanced book the ways in which philosophical commitments influence interpretations of scientific evidence. [Gerald Rau, *Mapping the Origins Debate: Six Models of the Beginning of Everything*, InterVarsity Press, 2012]. I present examples of such influence elsewhere in this book.
109. Available as of 1/9/2015 from NASA at <http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/infographics/infographic.view.php?id=10824>. I *added* the words "Big Bang" and "The 'Void' (Unknowable)", as well as the yellow and green arrows.
110. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recombination_\(cosmology\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recombination_(cosmology)). Last accessed 4/25/2016.
111. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes_Kepler Accessed 5/21/2013.

112. Johns Hopkins science historian Lawrence M. Principe, *Science and Religion*, The Teaching Company, 2006, Lecture 2: "The Warfare Thesis"
113. Liza Lentini, *20 Things You Didn't Know About... Galileo*, Discover Magazine, Monday, July 02, 2007. As of 5/30/2013, available at: <http://discovermagazine.com/2007/jul/20-things-you-didn2019t-know-about-galileo>
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<http://www.christianpost.com/news/global-poll-most-believe-in-god-afterlife-49994/>
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breaks some of the rules of traditional procedural programming. If **transcendent humans** (**transcendent** relative to their computer creations) have the power to deviate from their created 'laws', why wouldn't a **transcendent** God have the power to deviate from his created laws — or, better, as I argue elsewhere — *transcend* our universe-specific SUBset of laws from a SUPERset of laws (see [Miracles TRANSCEND nature](#))?

131. Norman Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, Crossway, 2004, pp. 205-208.
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143. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Witch-hunt>
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144. <http://www.scaruffi.com/politics/dictat.html>
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I got this data from a Piero Scaruffi page titled, "The worst genocides of the 20th and 21st Centuries." In addition to providing extensive footnotes, Scaruffi qualifies the data as follows: "...a tentative list of modern mass murderers and estimated number of people killed by their orders (excluding enemy armies). In many

cases (notably Stalin's and Mao's cases) one has to decide how to consider the millions who died indirectly because of their political decisions. The Chinese cultural revolution caused the death of 30 million people (*according to the current Chinese government*), but many died of hunger. Stalin is held responsible for the death of millions by Ukrainians, but 'only' half a million people were killed by his order." <Emphasis is mine.>

Scaruffi lists main sources for the information on his page. My independent web search reveals variant, sometimes more-conservative estimates. However the magnitudes of Scaruffi's numbers are in line. Therefore, to simplify source attribution and reader verification, I've referenced only Scaruffi's page.

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160. Rudolf Bultmann, *New Testament and Mythology and Other Basic Writings*, selected, edited, and translated by Schubert M. Ogden, Fortress Press, 1984, pages 1 and 4.
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192. Charles Colson and Anne Morse, *Tough Questions about God, Faith, and Life*, Tyndale House, 2006, pp. 72-73.
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assembled on the first day of the week (Sunday) to renew their joy of this unique miracle. They commonly assembled in synagogues or in their private homes, known as house churches. In the latter, women were often very prominent, not just as worshipers but also as leaders."

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vice to the world of scholarship, Ramsay also gained three honorary fellowships from Oxford colleges, nine honorary doctorates from British, Continental and North American universities and became an honorary member of almost every association devoted to archaeology and historical research. He was one of the original members of the British Academy, was awarded the Gold Medal of Pope Leo XIII in 1893 and the Victorian Medal of the Royal Geographical Society in 1906."

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Yancey's data appears to be significant but limited. Per Chadwick, in agreement with data Yancey presented elsewhere, "The survey questioned samples of faculty members in social science, physical science, and humanities departments about their preference for hiring members of twenty-seven different political, religious, sexual, and social groups. The results make a unique contribution to the bias literature, as the survey data confirm both public suspicion and speculation found in previous studies and anecdotal stories: that university professors in general are somewhat liberal and try to exclude members of conservative religious denominations and conservative political and social groups from joining their university."

The response rate to the online survey was poor, limiting the breadth of the sample. Though Yancey seemingly tried to thinly camouflage his research objectives with a 'collegiality' flavor, Chadwick speculates that some questionnaire recipients may have seen through the intent and been reluctant to admit bias. I've not read

Yancey's referenced book but have viewed online posts in which he presents data but inadequately notes his research methodology.

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- NOTE:** When I checked this URL on 1/7/2016, it no longer worked. Should you wish to verify the referenced quote, write me at bridges4hs@hotmail.com. I'll be happy to email you a PDF of the full text, which I made in September 2013.
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224. The following illustration gives perspective to a total probability of $3/(10^{84})$ to permanently sustain unicellular life. (That's *drastically* 'conservatized' relative to Ross's $1/(10^{578})$ number.)
1. To simplify mental calculations, let's assume an even higher, even more drastically conservatized probability of $1/(10^{82})$.
 2. Let's represent the number 10^{82} as a square array of dimes: 10^{41} rows of dimes with each row containing 10^{41} dimes — a 'mat' 10^{41} dimes long and 10^{41} dimes wide. (Each

side is $\sqrt{10^{82}} = 10^{41}$ dimes long, just as each side of a square array of 10^{82} dimes would be $\sqrt{10^{82}} = 10^{41}$ dimes long.)

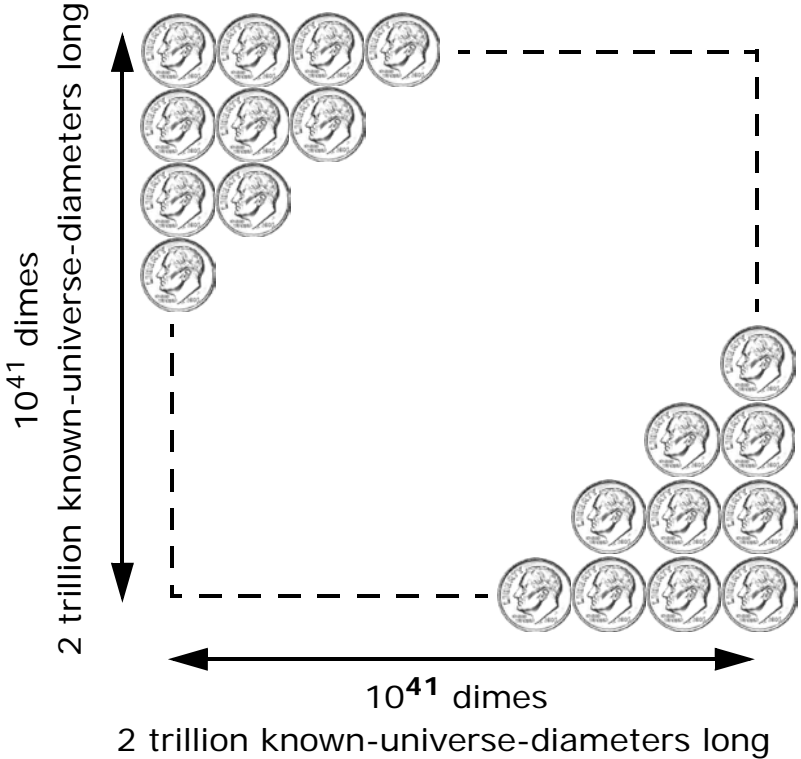
3. A dime is 0.018 meter (18 mm) in diameter. Therefore, the length of a row of 10^{41} dimes — each touching its next-door neighbors — would be 10^{41} dimes \times 0.018 meters/dime = 1.8×10^{39} meters — the same as 1.8×10^{36} kilometers (km). Let's round that number to 2×10^{36} kilometers (km) for simplicity.
4. The presently *known* universe diameter is $\approx 93 \times 10^9$ light years. A light year is $\approx 10^{13}$ kilometers (km). Therefore, the known universe diameter is $\approx 93 \times 10^{22}$ km = $\approx 100 \times 10^{22}$ km = 10^{24} km. So our dime array is $\approx 2 \times 10^{12}$ (2 trillion) *known-universe-diameters* long^a and equally wide. See [Figure 34](#).

^aCalculated as follows:

$$\frac{2 \times 10^{36} \text{ km per row of } 10^{41} \text{ dimes}}{10^{24} \text{ km per universe diameter}} = \frac{2 \times 10^{12} \text{ universe diameters per row of } 10^{41} \text{ dimes}}{1}$$

2×10^{12} universe diameters is the combined length of 2,000,000,000,000 — 2 trillion — *known* universes like ours 'touching' side-to-side.

Figure 34 Square array of 10^{82} dimes



5. Imagine now that just *one* randomly chosen dime out of the 10^{82} has been painted red.

Endnotes

6. I now enlist my friend Lily the Ladybug,²³³ who is **VERY** special! She can do the impossible: fly — without air and food — so *exceedingly* much faster than the speed of light (defying relativity) and live so *exceedingly* long that she can fly all over the entire dime array ([Figure 34](#)).^a



- a. Lily blindfolds herself.
- b. She *randomly* flies around over the dime array for a *loooooong* time and finally lands on it *just once*.
- c. She removes her blindfold and checks the color of the dime she's standing on.



*A drastically conservatized probability of $1/(10^{82})$ for the 676 fine tunings needed to permanently sustain unicellular life is the probability that Lily randomly lands on the red dime **on her first try**.*

^aAssume that the *actual* universe is at least 2 trillion times the length and width of the *known* (observable) universe and can accommodate the entire dime array.

225. See <https://www.quora.com/What-observation-s-in-our-universe-if-any-would-ultimately-qual-ify-as-a-strong-empirical-evidence-for-the-existence-of-other-independent-universes-each-with-unique-arrays-of-physical-constants-and-laws.>)
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Available as of 10/2/2013 at:
<http://www.princeton.edu/main/news/archive/S33/52/89I01/index.xml?section=science>
238. *Probability of ET Life Arbitrarily Small, Say Astrobiologists*, MIT Technology Review, July 25, 2011.
Available as of 10/2/2013 at:
<http://www.technologyreview.com/view/>

[424795/probability-of-et-life-arbitrarily-small-say-astrobiologists/](http://www.technologyreview.com/view/424795/probability-of-et-life-arbitrarily-small-say-astrobiologists/)

239. *Earth Ejecta Could Have Seeded Life on Europa*, MIT Technology Review, August 22, 2011.

Last accessed on 1/13/2014 at:

<http://www.technologyreview.com/view/425093/earth-ejecta-could-have-seeded-life-on-europa/>

240. David Rogstad, *Digging on Mars with Phoenix*, Reasons to Believe, June 27, 2008.

Available as of 1-13-2014 at:

<http://www.reasons.org/articles/digging-on-mars-with-phoenix>

241. Fazale Rana, *Bacteria Found in NASA Clean Rooms Likely Traveled to Mars*, Reasons to Believe, January 13, 2014.

Available as of 1/13/2014 at:

<http://www.reasons.org/articles/bacteria-found-in-nasa-clean-rooms-likely-traveled-to-mars>

242. Alberto G. Fairén and Dirk Schulze-Makuch, *The overprotection of Mars*, Nature Geoscience, Vol. 6, July 2013, pp. 510-511. Available as of 1/7/

2015 at <http://www.nature.com/ngeo/journal/v6/n7/full/ngeo1866.html>. Full text access with free subscription to Nature.com (as of 1/7/15). These authors note the following:

“The general consensus is that the process of interplanetary transfer of life is not only possible, but even likely. Terrestrial microorganisms would be able to survive the process of being hurled from their mother body, enduring harsh interplanetary conditions, and finally crashing on to another planet. *The argument is particularly viable for the transfer of life from Earth to Mars*, because the survival rate is enhanced for re-entry into a *thinner atmosphere such as that of Mars.*” [See the next endnote in sequence ²⁴³]. <Emphases are mine.>

“In view of these findings, we propose that Earth life has most likely already been transferred to Mars. Life has been present on Earth for at least 3.8 billion years, so there has been plenty of time for the transfer process to occur naturally through impact events. Also, the frequency of impacts was

substantially higher in the past than it is today. Even after considering the difficult dynamics of transport from Earth to Mars against the Sun's gravity sink we can easily conclude that Earth materials have probably been transferred to Mars. The random nature of meteorite impacts across the surface of Mars suggests that any samples containing life from Earth are unlikely to have spared the astrobiologically interesting regions, both recently and in the distant past."

243. A thinner atmosphere results in less atmosphere-entry frictional/shock-wave heating, and therefore ostensibly a lower probability of damaged life on/in Earth rocks and dust sent to Mars's surface than on/in Mars rocks and dust sent to Earth's surface. Consider examples of the extreme frictional and shock-wave heating of meteorites and other bodies entering Earth's atmosphere — typically heating the surfaces to incandescence and melting them, and sometimes causing weaker (lower metal content) objects to explode in mid-air:

- The apartment-house-sized meteor that created a blinding-bright glow and severe shock wave over Chelyabinsk, Russia in 2013 and then blew up due to the enormous thermal stress. [<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-21470205>, last accessed 3/12/2015. Also see *Meteor Strike*, a very informative 52-minute program about this event on Nova. Last accessed 3/12/2015 via Netflix.]
- The meteor that caused a brief daylight-like glow as it exploded over Bucharest, Romania the night of January 7, 2015. [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZjNfd5KS7yM>. Last accessed 3/12/2015.]
- Common ‘shooting stars’, which are really tiny dust particles glowing incandescently upon entry into our atmosphere. [<http://phys.org/news/2015-01-cosmic-puzzle-comets-stars.html>]

Present-day Mars has an atmosphere 100 times ‘thinner’ than on Earth.

Moreover, it has a lower surface gravity, resulting in lower atmospheric-entry velocities and a greater atmospheric **scale height**, leading to

more gradual deceleration. Earth objects entering Mars's atmosphere therefore heat up less than Mars objects entering Earth's atmosphere. A related model has examined frictional heating effects on dust particles entering the ancient Mars atmosphere — ostensibly, particles the sizes of shooting stars. The model has suggested that organic materials on the surfaces of dust particles entering ancient Mars's atmosphere from space were roughly ten times more likely to survive than on dust entering Earth's atmosphere.

[G. J. Flynn, *Organic matter on the early surface of Mars: an assessment of the contribution by interplanetary dust*, Twenty-fourth Lunar and Planetary Science Conference, 1993, Part 1: A-F p 493-494. Full article printable for free as of 1/27/2015. See <http://adsabs.harvard.edu/abs/1993LPI....24.493F>.]

Flynn's model suggests that space-delivered pre-biotic molecules were more likely have been precursors of life on Mars than on Earth. Moreover, I submit, the model equally suggests that microorganisms — exceedingly complex composites of organic molecules — would far more

likely survive a trip from Earth into Mars's atmosphere than from Mars into Earth's atmosphere, thereby supporting considerations that Earth may have been more likely to seed life on Mars than the reverse.

244. See Donald Hassler *et al*, Mars' Surface Radiation Environment Measured with the Mars Science Laboratory's Curiosity Rover, *SCIENCE*, volume 343, January 24, 2014. Available (for free, after registration, as of 4/26/2016) at: <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/343/6169/1244797.full>.

The Mars rover 'Curiosity' found that high energy ionizing radiation impinges on the Martian surface with far greater intensity than comparable radiation on earth:

"The radiation exposure on the surface of Mars is much harsher than that on the surface of the Earth for two reasons: Mars lacks a global magnetic field to deflect energetic charged particles, and the martian atmosphere is much thinner (<1%) than that of Earth, providing little shielding against the

high-energy particles that are incident at the top of its atmosphere.”

The authors refer to two types of energetic particles that penetrate the atmosphere of Mars: galactic cosmic rays (GCRs) and solar energetic particles (SEPs).

Both GCRs and SEPs interact with the atmosphere and, if energetic enough, penetrate into the martian soil, or regolith, where they produce secondary particles (including neutrons and γ -rays) that contribute to the complex radiation environment on the martian surface, which is quite unlike that observed at the Earth’s surface. GCRs are high-energy particles [10 megaelectron volt per nuclear particle (MeV/nuc) to >10 GeV/nuc]...

“Because of their high energies, GCRs are difficult to shield against and can penetrate up to several meters into the martian

regolith." [The regolith is soil and associated heterogeneous components].

The lack of radiation mitigation by a thicker atmosphere has probably been an issue for most of Mars's life-potential history:

"Whether the bulk of the martian atmosphere was lost *before the Noachian era* (~3.7 to 4.0 billion years ago), *as recent isotope ratio measurements by Curiosity suggest*, or toward the end of the Noachian era, it is thought that the martian surface has had little protection from energetic particles for most of its history." <Emphases are mine.>

The "before the Noachian" period referred to above refers to the Martian Late Heavy Bombardment (LHB), during which meteors intensely bombarded Mars's surface. Except for somewhat lower collision velocities of the meteors, Mars's LHB is considered to have been comparable to earth's LHB, the 'Hadean Era', *which is generally assumed to have destroyed any possible pre-Hadean life forms*. (In fact, too-short-a-time between the end of the earth's

Hadean era 3.8 billion years ago and the first appearance of life drives some origin-of-life researchers to consider 'panspermia': earth's life originated elsewhere and somehow migrated here.)”

Even *radiation-resistant* microorganisms that we know of on earth could not survive indefinitely in such an environment:

“Energetic particles ionize molecules along their tracks. The energy deposited by ionization or excitation greatly exceeds that required to break many molecular bonds—including those in DNA, other organic molecules, and water—thus, ionizing radiation is extremely damaging to biomolecules through both direct and indirect mechanisms. Thus, measurements of the surface and subsurface radiation environment are critical for estimating the survival probability and survival times of possible dormant life forms found in the martian soil, regolith, rock, and ice. For this, the dose rates can be used to calculate the time it would take for different bacterial species to accumulate a

lethal dose of radiation in different subsurface depths. Even the radioresistant organism *D. radiodurans* would, if dormant, be eradicated in the top several meters in a time span of a few million years."

And if *NOT dormant* — *i.e.* actively living? Presumably *much* worse.

The authors do suggest an 'out' for already *existing* and *dormant* microbes:

"However, inferred recurring climate changes in the post-Noachian era, due to variations in the planetary obliquity on time scales of several hundred thousand to a few million years, could lead to recurring periods of metabolic activity of these otherwise *dormant* life forms. In this case, it is hypothesized that accumulated radiation damages could be repaired..." <Emphasis is mine.>

But, I suggest, *dormancy is not an option during abiogenesis* — *initiation* of life from non-life. Any such processes would arguably have been *extremely* susceptible to interference, *especially*

susceptible at every stage to bio-chemical damage caused by high-energy ionizing radiation. Therefore, I suggest, *these findings cast doubt upon proposals for abiogenesis originating on Mars.*

And, I suggest, such radiation-hostile considerations inevitably apply to many other planets that might be proposed as hosts for life.

245. Mark G. Fox-Powell *et al*, *Ionic Strength Is a Barrier to the Habitability of Mars*, *Astrobiology*, June 2016, 16(6), pp. 427-442. From the abstract:

"A considerable body of evidence indicates the existence of hypersaline surface waters throughout the history of Mars...We demonstrate experimentally that high ionic strength, driven to extremes on Mars by the ubiquitous occurrence of multivalent ions, renders these environments uninhabitable despite the presence of biologically available water. These findings show how the respective geological histories of Earth and Mars, which have produced differences in the plan-

ets' dominant water chemistries, have resulted in different physicochemical extremes which define the boundary space for microbial habitability."

As of 9/20/2016, abstract available at:

<http://online.liebertpub.com/doi/10.1089/ast.2015.1432>

246. Astrophysicist John Gribbin, *Alone in the Universe: Why Our Planet is Unique*, John Wiley & Sons, 2011.

247. Astrobiologists Peter Ward and Donald Brownlee, *Rare Earth: Why Complex Life is Uncommon in the Universe*, Copernicus, 2000.

Summarized well in the book jacket:

"Ever since Carl Sagan and Frank Drake announced that extraterrestrial civilizations must number in the millions, the search for life in our galaxy has accelerated. But, in this brilliant and carefully argued book, Ward and Brownlee [agnostics, incidentally] question underlying assumptions of Sagan and Drake's model, and take us on a search for life that reaches from the volcanic hot

springs deep on our ocean floors to the frosty face of Europa, Jupiter's icy moon. In the process, we learn that, while microbial life may well be more prevalent throughout the Universe than previously believed, the conditions necessary for the evolution and survival of higher life—and here the authors consider everything from DNA to plate tectonics to the role of our Moon—are so complex and precarious that they are unlikely to arise in many other places, if at all.”

248. Confirmation: “No serious historians of science or of the science-religion issue today maintain the warfare thesis.” Johns Hopkins science historian Lawrence Principe, *Science and Religion*, The Teaching Company, 2006, Lecture 2, ‘The Warfare Thesis’.
249. Collins is “an American physician-geneticist noted for his discoveries of disease genes and his leadership of the Human Genome Project (HGP). He currently serves as Director of the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland.” Dr. Collins, a former atheist who once looked for arguments to support his atheism, is

open about his Christianity
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Collins
Accessed 5/25/2013.]
You can read and hear his reasons for faith
online. [257](#) [258](#)

250. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadean>
Accessed 10/2/2013.

251. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abiogenesis>

252. In the preface to his book *The Fifth Miracle: The Search for the Origin and Meaning of Life*, physicist Paul Davies noted that:

“When I set out to write this book, I was convinced that science was close to wrapping up the mystery of life's origin. The dramatic evidence for microbes living deep underground promised to provide the ‘missing link’ between the prebiotic world of biochemical soups and the first primitive cells. And it is true that many scientists working in this field confidently believe that the major problems of bio-genesis have largely been solved. Several recent books convey the confident message that life's origin is not

really so mysterious after all. However, I think they are wrong. Having spent a year or two researching the field, I am now of the opinion that there remains a huge gulf in our understanding. To be sure, we have a good idea of the where and the when of life's origin, but we are a very long way from comprehending the how. This gulf in understanding is not merely ignorance about certain technical details, it is a major conceptual lacuna^a...

...Many investigators feel uneasy about stating in public that the origin of life is a mystery, even though behind closed doors they freely admit that they are baffled. There seem to be two reasons for their unease. First, they feel it opens the door to religious fundamentalists and their god-of-the-gaps pseudoexplanations. **253** Second, they worry that a frank admission of ignorance will undermine funding, especially for the search for life in space." [Paul Davies, *The Fifth Mir-*

^aA blank gap or missing part [WordWeb]

acle: The Search for the Origin and Meaning of Life, Simon & Schuster, 2000, pp. 17-18]

253. Some creationists sadly have indeed proposed “god-of-the-gaps pseudoexplanations” — including ‘flood geology’ to explain earth’s layers and fossils. However, I hope the scientists Davies refers to don’t implicitly so-characterize everyone who posits God’s involvement in origins. For proper perspective, I highly recommend a remarkably balanced look at a *spectrum* of origins beliefs by Gerald Rau, *Mapping the Origins Debate: Six Models of the Beginning of Everything*, InterVarsity Press, 2012.

Also consider checking out a book written by former Human Genome Project director and present National Institutes of Health director Francis Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*, Free Press, 2006. Though I’m not totally comfortable with Collins’s position, I think his perspective is worth consideration.

Obviously I think God was and is involved in life. But whether or not you agree with my approach

to this subject, hopefully you'll find it thoughtful and thought-provoking.

254. Perhaps illustrated in a 2013 Scientific American article titled *Why chemists should study the origin of life*. Chemist Ashutosh Jogalekar not only acknowledges but celebrates — as interesting science — that:

“Most problems in science are open-ended, but OOL [origin of life] is literally a problem without end. There is no conceivable way in which we will hit on the single, unique solution that jump-started life at a molecular level. We can inch tantalizingly closer to the plausible, but there is still a gigantic leap between the plausible and the certain. Should we despair? Absolutely not. If science can be defined as the “endless frontier”, then OOL is the poster child for this definition. OOL will promise us an unending

string of questions and plausible explanations until the end of time."

[Ashutosh Jogalekar, *Why chemists should study the origin of life*, Scientific American, March 12, 2013.

<http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/the-curious-wavefunction/2013/03/12/why-chemists-should-study-the-origin-of-life/>

Last accessed on 9/11/2013.]

255. Hubert Yockey is a physicist and information theorist who, under atheist fire in an online forum I read, once claimed to be an 'anti-creationist'. Notwithstanding, per his information-theory calculations he "...believes that 'the origin of life is unsolvable as a scientific problem.'" [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hubert_Yockey. Accessed 5/17/2013.]
256. John Lennox, *Miracles (VeriTalks)*, The Veritas Forum, 2013, Kindle edition, pp. 17-20.
257. <http://www.cnn.com/2007/US/04/03/col-lins.commentary/>
Accessed 5/25/2013.

258. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MIOFqyFYfrU> Accessed 5/25/2013.
259. John Lennox, *God and Stephen Hawking*, Lion Hudson, 2011, Kindle Edition, Kindle Locations 64-70.
260. Our daughter Pamela was unusually active in the womb for a girl. We now wonder whether that activity related to pain.

Pamela had no epidermis on her feet at birth — just raw open sores — and lesions elsewhere. She spent the first month of her life in intensive care, during which the doctors discovered that she had an extremely rare genetic skin condition called *recessive dystrophic epidermolysis bullosa* (RDEB):

- *recessive* → genetically recessive (Doris and I each contributed a gene; recessive variants of diseases/disorders are often severe because two genes are involved).
- *dystrophic* → destructive.
- *epidermo* → relating to the epidermis, the outer layer of skin.
- *lysis* → relating to the dissolution or destruction of cells;
- *bullosa* → with blistering. (Roughly half of infants born with this genetic disorder don't live to see their first birthdays.)

She received

superb care, but mostly palliative^a or surgical interventions (including multiple hand de-webbing surgeries, esophageal surgeries, and a foot amputation); she stopped counting the number of surgeries after #25. Research has not found a cure.

The majority of her body surface needed bandaging every day of her life, sometimes more than once; I've estimated that the carton-loads of bandages used over her life would have cumulatively filled her bedroom to the ceiling at least once and maybe twice. She suffered every day of her entire 28 years of life, sometimes with excruciating pain. In her later years most of her back was raw, needing applications of a Lidocaine gel that ultimately reduced the pain for a while but initially caused intense burning.

The job layoffs I mentioned in [The just-in-time job](#) on page 218 had one beneficial side effect: changes of health-insurance providers, any one

^aPer WordWeb, "moderating pain or sorrow by making it easier to bear."

of whose lifetime coverage limits may not have covered Pamela's extensive medical treatment.

Pamela ultimately died from an aggressive form of squamous-cell carcinoma, the usual outcome for the few RDEB patients who survive as long as she did: 28 years.

She died with a great faith in the God who allowed her to suffer, and she was an inspiration to others, both at school and during her treatment. In the pre-op room before every one of her 25+ surgeries, she prayed aloud — substantial prayers — *with* and *for* the involved doctors and nurses; none of the staff ever objected.

Her faith was not a symptom of stupidity, as indicated by three Latin words next to her degree: *summa cum laude*.

261. Keith O'Brien, *The case against evidence*, The Boston Globe, November 7, 2010. Available as of 1/4/2016 at http://www.boston.com/boston-globe/ideas/articles/2010/11/07/the_case_against_evidence/.

262. Below I highlight a few key snippets from the following report:

Joseph Peterson *et al*, *The Role and Impact of Forensic Evidence in the Criminal Justice Process*, Revised Final Report, National Institute of Justice, June 10, 2010. Available as of 1/4/2016 at <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/231977.pdf>.

This study, concerning the use of forensics in criminal cases, involved the detailed analyses of randomly sampled *official* data from 2003 criminal cases in five jurisdictions — Los Angeles County, Indianapolis, and the Indiana State Police Laboratory System in Evansville, Fort Wayne, and South Bend. The analyses covered data from the time of the police incident reports through final court dispositions. The crimes included 859 aggravated assaults, 1,263 burglaries, 400 homicides, 602 rapes and 1,081 robberies.

Brief highlights of key findings

I've tried to select these quotes representatively — amidst a wealth of contextual details — from the 'Executive Summary', starting on PDF-page

11. Though another author might select a somewhat different set of quotes, I'm confident that the ultimate conclusions would be similar.

Aggravated assaults

"Physical evidence/substrates were collected in 30% of incidents...In only about 12% of cases where evidence was collected was the evidence submitted to the crime laboratory...The strongest predictor of conviction was victim medical treatment. The primary impact of the physical evidence was clearly at the point of arrest and that impact decreased as the case moved forward through the justice process. Approximately 90% of case convictions were obtained through pleas."

Burglaries

"Police collected physical evidence and substrates in 19.6% of burglaries. Latent Prints made up 84% of the evidence collected....Overall, 95% of convictions were resolved through plea bargaining. Given the high rate of plea outcomes, the presence of

physical evidence had little effect on mode of case disposition."

Homicides

"A very high percentage (97%) of homicides resulted in physical evidence/substrates being collected...Cases with *crime scene evidence* were approximately 21 times more likely to be **charged** than those without evidence. However...none of the *lab examined forensic variables* were significant predictors of **conviction**." <Emphases are mine.>

Rapes

"Approximately 64% of incidents had physical evidence or substrates collected...Laboratory examined forensic evidence increased the odds of DA case **charges** by over five times. The strongest predictors of case **charging**, however, were victims' reports and victims' receipt of medical treatment. [Conflict between last two sentences? JBL] The strongest predictors of **conviction** were victims' reports to the police and direct

arrest techniques...Cases where *physical evidence was collected* resulted in **convictions** 87.3% of the time as opposed to 66.7% of the time in cases *without physical evidence collected.*" <Emphases are mine.>

In other words, a high percentage of rapists got convicted **without** the availability of physical evidence.

Robberies

"Physical evidence and substrates were collected in only 24.8% of the robbery incidents...[But] Multivariate analysis indicated that physical evidence collected at crime scenes had a significant impact on **arrests**...*Seventy-eight of the 93 cases charged, where physical evidence was collected, resulted in conviction (83.9%). Fifty-eight of the 65 cases without physical evidence collected resulted in conviction (89.2%).*" <Emphases are mine.>

In other words, in the robbery cases *without* the availability of physical evidence, the conviction rate was roughly the same (even a bit higher)

than in cases *with* the availability of physical evidence.

Significance

Though physical evidence (which is not necessarily 'scientific' evidence) and forensic evaluations generally provide advantages in the criminal justice process, the cited analyses show that a large percentage of criminal convictions depend *substantially* — and many *entirely* — on **NONscientific** factors.

The point here is not at all to find fault with the legal system generally or forensics specifically — actually, I find the forensic tools and methods available and used today *extremely* impressive — but rather to emphasize that in the legal arena, just as in personal life, *a large number of critical decisions get made regularly **WITHOUT the benefit of science.***

263. I last watched this documentary on Netflix on 2/4/2016. I identified Illsley's role in this case on 2/4/2016, via an Alaska newspaper article about the murder:

http://peninsulaclarion.com/stories/041202/ala_041202ala00140001.shtml#.VrOF3v32a_p.

264. J. Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity: A Homicide Detective Investigates the Claims of the Gospels*, David C. Cook, 2013, p. 54.
265. *Ibid*, in prosecutor Serrato's endorsement of Wallace's book on p. 3.
266. <http://www.britannica.com/topic/circumstantial-evidence>. Accessed 2/4/2016.
267. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientism>
268. Thomas Burnett, *What is Scientism?*, American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), 2014. Last accessed on 7/12/2014 at: <http://www.aaas.org/page/what-scientism>
269. Austin L. Hughes, *The Folly of Scientism*, The New Atlantis, Number 37, Fall 2012, pp. 32-50. Last accessed on 7/12/2014 at: <http://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/the-folly-of-scientism>
270. Susan Haack, *Six Signs of Scientism*, 2009. Last accessed 1/18/2015 at: <http://www.uta.edu/philosophy/faculty/burgess-jackson/Haack,%20Six%20Signs%20of%20Scientism.pdf>

271. Bill Pratt, *Why is Scientism Self-Refuting?*, Tough Questions Answered, 2012.
Last accessed on 7/12/2014 at: <http://www.toughquestionsanswered.org/2012/01/30/why-is-scientism-self-refuting/>
272. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Behavioral_modernity
Accessed 7/24/2013.
273. L. Gabora and S. Kaufman, *Evolutionary perspectives on creativity* in (J. Kaufman & R. Sternberg, Eds.) *The Cambridge Handbook of Creativity*, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 279-300.
Gabora and Kaufman's review focuses on behaviorally modern humans.
As of 8/2/2013 a prepress copy of the book chapter was available at online at:
<http://scottbarrykaufman.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Gabora-Kaufman2010.pdf>
Also as of 8/2/2013 a differently styled copy (earlier/published separately?) was available at:
<http://arxiv.org/ftp/arxiv/papers/1106/1106.3386.pdf>

274. *Ibid*, p. 287.
275. Marta Lippi *et al*, *Multistep food plant processing at Grotta Paglicci (Southern Italy) around 32,600 cal B.P.*, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences US (PNAS), 2015, Vol 112 no. 39, pp. 12075-12080. Abstract available as of 10/7/2015 at: <http://www.pnas.org/content/112/39/12075.abstract>.
276. Fazale Rana and Hugh Ross in *Who Was Adam?, 2nd Expanded Edition*, RTB Press, 2015, Kindle edition, Kindle locations 1331-1472.
- Note that this book as a whole explores the issue of human origins far more broadly than I, in detail, including substantially balanced looks at genetic and other biochemical findings.
277. Christopher Stringer and Robin McKie, *African Exodus: The Origins of Modern Humanity*, Henry Holt, 1996. pp. 195-196, as quoted by Fazale Rana and Hugh Ross in *Who Was Adam?, 2nd Expanded Edition*, *op cit*, Kindle locations 1318-1325.
278. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, *The rapid rise of human language*, ScienceDaily, March 31, 2015. Available as of 6/11/2015 at

www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/03/150331131324.htm.

279. Johan Bolhuis, Ian Tattersall, Noam Chomsky, Robert Berwick, *How Could Language Have Evolved?*, PLOS Biology, Volume 12, Issue 8, August 2014. Downloadable for free as of 4/13/2015 at: <http://www.oalib.com/paper/3104697#.VSwD4abD-Cg>.
280. Matthew Pennell *et al*, *Is there room for punctuated equilibrium in macroevolution?*, Trends in Ecology & Evolution, January 2014, Vol. 29, No. 1, p. 23. Available as of 5/1/16 at [http://www.cell.com/trends/ecology-evolution/pdf/S0169-5347\(13\)00199-7.pdf](http://www.cell.com/trends/ecology-evolution/pdf/S0169-5347(13)00199-7.pdf).
281. Pierre-P Grassé, *Evolution of Living Organisms: Evidence for a New Theory of Transformation*, Academic Press, 1977, p. 8.
282. Roy F. Baumeister *et al*, *Some Key Differences between a Happy Life and a Meaningful Life*, Journal of Positive Psychology, 2013, Vol. 8, No. 6. pp. 506-516. A pre-pub PDF of the article was available as of 9/4/2015 at: <http://faculty-gsb.stanford.edu/aaker/pages/documents/>

[SomeKeyDifferencesHappyLifeMeaningfulLife_2012.pdf](#).

283. David McCasland, *The Value of One*, Our Daily Bread, October 5, 2013. http://odb.org/2013/10/05/the-value-of-one-3/?utm_source=feed-burner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+odb%2Ffeed+%28Our+Daily+Bread%29. Last accessed 1/18/2015.
284. As quoted in the January 2014 issue of *Readers Digest* magazine [*Readers Digest*, Vol. 183, No. 1095, January 2014, p. 152.]
285. Austin Cline, *What is Materialism? About History of Materialism, Materialist Philosophy*, 'Materialism and Determinism' section, atheism.about.com, December 4, 2014. Available as of 3/25/2016 at: <http://atheism.about.com/od/philosophyschoolssystems/p/materialism.htm>
286. Edward Slingerland, *What Science Offers the Humanities*, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 289.
287. *Ibid*, p. 293.
288. <http://blogs.vancouversun.com/2013/01/11/wise-atheist-wins-3-million-to-research-religion-and-morality/>

289. Marvin Minsky, *The Society of Mind*, Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1988, p. 307.
290. Galen Strawson, interview by Tamler Sommers, *You Cannot Make Yourself the Way You Are*, The Believer, March 2003. Available as of 3/17/2016 at: http://www.believermag.com/issues/200303/?read=interview_strawson.
291. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Property_dualism, under the heading 'Biological naturalism'. I last accessed this on 4/8/2016.
292. Steven Pinker, *The Modern Denial of Human Nature*, Penguin Books, 2002, p. 240.
293. John R. Searle, *Freedom and Neurobiology*, Columbia University Press, 2013, p.11.
294. Rodney Brooks, *Flesh and Machines: How Robots Will Change Us*, Pantheon Books, 2002, p. 174.
295. Richard Dawkins, *Let's all stop beating Basil's car*, Edge.org, 2006: What is your dangerous idea?. Available as of 3/23/2016 at: <https://www.edge.org/response-detail/11416>.
296. Nancy Pearcey, *Saving Leonardo*, B&H Publishing Group, 2010, p. 153. Pearcey heard this

Manzari-Dawkins exchange on an audio tape. (The name of the questioner, Manzari, is revealed in her book only in an endnote.)

297. Carol Iannone, *A Critic in Full: A Conversation with Tom Wolfe*, National Association of Scholars, Academic Questions (vol. 21, no. 2), Aug 11, 2008. Available as of 3/24/2016 at: https://www.nas.org/articles/A_Critic_in_Full_A_Conversation_with_Tom_Wolfe.
298. I want to give appropriate credit here. Many of the book pages and articles that I've reviewed (as originals, in context) and cited in this subchapter were helpfully called to my attention by citations in Pearcey's book *Finding Truth* (see below).
299. Nancy Pearcey, *Finding Truth*, David C. Cook, 2015, Kindle Edition, p. 171.
300. Theoretical-physicist-turned-priest John Polkinghorne, *Science and Theology*, Fortress Press, 1998, p. 58.
301. *Corruption and abuse mark Burma's cyclone recovery*, Radio Australia, January 18, 2012. <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/international/radio/onairhighlights/corruption-and-abuse->

- [mark-burmas-cyclone-recovery](#). Accessed 7/30/2015.
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303. *Myanmar: Cyclone Nargis 2008 Facts and Figures*, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, May 3, 2011. Available as of 7/30/2015 at <http://www.ifrc.org/en/news-and-media/news-stories/asia-pacific/myanmar/myanmar-cyclone-nargis-2008-facts-and-figures/>.
304. *Lisbon earthquake of 1755*, Encyclopaedia Britannica. Available as of 12/7/2015 at <http://www.britannica.com/event/Lisbon-earthquake-of-1755>.
305. Francois-Marie Voltaire, *Correspondence*, translated with an introduction by Theodore Bestirring, 13 vols., Gallimard, 1975-. As quoted in: Susan Neiman, *Evil In Modern Thought*, Princeton University Press, 2002, p. 141.

306. Dr. Paul Brand and Philip Yancey, *The Gift of Pain*, 1997, p. 187.
307. Philip Yancey, *Finding God in Unexpected Places*, WaterBrook Press, 2008, pp. 57-60.
308. Benedict Carey, *For the Worst of Us, the Diagnosis May Be 'Evil'*, New York Times, February 8, 2005. Available as 12/5/2015 at http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/08/health/psychology/for-the-worst-of-us-the-diagnosis-may-be-evil.html?_r=0.
309. *Entropy and the Second Law of Thermodynamics: How the Universe Works*, California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly), 2003. As of 6/1/2015, available at: <http://www.calpoly.edu/~rbrown/entropy.html>.
310. Israel Bar-Yehuda Idalovich, *Symbolic Forms as the Metaphysical Groundwork for the Organon of the Cultural Sciences, Vol. 1*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014, p. 399. See also similar definition in Webster's New World College Dictionary. (Accessed on 8/3/16 through <http://www.yourdictionary.com/entropy>.)

311. K.C. Cole, *HERS* column, New York Times, March 189, 1982. Available as of 6/1/2015 at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1982/03/18/garden/hers.html?pagewanted=print>.
312. George Goethals *et al*, eds., *Encyclopedia of Leadership*, Sage Publications, 2004, p. 326.
313. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genome_instability. (Accessed 10/15/2015.)
314. For [Christ-follower](#)s only. Contains theological references in which the general audience of [God? Then why this mess?!](#) may have little interest.

I suggest that evidence of past and present directive influence — that we're more than [Just animals?](#) and [Just stuff?](#) — and observations of human nature and behavior substantially support this 'initially-only-good' model independently, *without* biblical reference. However, here also are some *biblical* considerations with which [Christ-follower](#)s will be comfortable:

- Multiple passages state or imply that the first people 1) *did not* initially know evil, 2) had the choice to know evil or not, and 3)

sadly decided — with the help of adversarial input — that knowing evil would be ‘cool’.

- The following ‘initially-only-good’ logic seems reasonable:
 - If now, **after** the introduction of evil, the indwelling *SPIRIT* in [biblical Christ-followers](#) (who’ve humbly trusted in, relied on, leaned on Christ) **deters** evil in those who *submit* to the *SPIRIT*’s influence.
 - Then initially, **before** the introduction of evil, the indwelling *SPIRIT* in the first humans **prevented** evil in them.

315. I only reluctantly speculate about mitigation of ‘natural evil’ (‘gratuitous evil’) — an emotional issue for some, especially those experiencing or having recently experienced natural devastation or serious disease. Words are cheap. As I write this sentence, I’ve just finished watching gut-wrenching footage of the 2011 Richter-scale 9.0 earthquake and tsunami in Japan — just a tiny sample of all-too-numerous public and personal disasters.

Nonetheless, if a **transcendent** directive God were behind the **Big Bang**, per [Arguments for a](#)

[Big Bang initiator](#), and therefore was behind the natural laws that began with the beginning our time dimension, wouldn't he have the power to override what he created? Recall my suggested physical-law SUPERset in [Miracles violate nature?](#) and my computer-developer illustration. [130](#)

- If God can influence human thinking, as in [Who transformed these lives?](#) and [Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?](#), couldn't he have influenced human thinking then so as to sequester harmful thoughts?
- If God can influence human thinking, as in [Who transformed these lives?](#) and [Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?](#), couldn't he have influenced the much more primitive thinking of animals such that they became docile herbivores — vs. implementers of 'nature red in tooth and claw'?

For example, the giant panda is a carnivore — with a carnivore gut — who overwhelmingly acts like an herbivore.^a (Next page).

Could God have influenced the mentalities of

other animals to eat plants instead of other animals...or humans?

Of course, *we're* now typically carnivores, but all who have vegan friends know that eating meat isn't, and therefore wasn't, necessary.

- If, as in [Miracles impossible?](#), God can regenerate unregenerable complex human organs, couldn't he interfere with the reproduction of harmful disease vectors (such as the mosquito, the world's deadliest animal by a long shot); even we can partially eradicate mosquitos, couldn't God do so completely? Couldn't he sequester harmful mutations of microorganisms — the majority of which, even today, are beneficial^a (Next page) or even essential?
- If God was behind the **Big Bang**, per [Arguments for a Big Bang initiator](#), and therefore

^aSee http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giant_panda under 'Diet'. The giant Panda's intestinal flora also needed to change — but that didn't need to happen instantaneously...and wouldn't have needed to happen instantaneously in other animals either before humans arrived.

was behind the natural laws that began with the beginning of our **spacetime**, could he not have prevented natural disasters in populated areas?

Some of nature today is simultaneously good and bad from our perspective — e.g. plate tectonics supposedly refresh necessary minerals on the earth's surface but also can have harmful effects. Could God have sequestered the negatives by planned timing, demographics, mitigated volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, tsunamis, etc.? Could he have gradualized tectonic-plate movements to mitigate buildup of hyperstresses that, when released, result in catastrophic earthquakes?

Even barring direct intervention in natural hazards, could he not have perfectly

^aMicrobiologist Anne Maczulak refers to bacteria as "...occasional enemies as well as constant allies..." [Anne Maczulak, *Allies and Enemies: How the World Depends on Bacteria*, FT Press Science, 2010, Kindle Edition, Kindle locations 2648-2649.]

directed human minds to stay away from harmful zones?

- What about pain? It's reasonable to assume that the first humans had nociceptors — the kinds of nerve endings that, when adversely stimulated, most commonly result in the pain that none of us like. *Acute* pain has protective value^a. But what about *chronic* pain, like my daughter's and maybe yours? If the first minds were initially influenced by God to avoid harmful situations, and if disease were mitigated, then wouldn't even acute pain generally have been avoided?

*If so **initially**, why not **now**?* That's the focus of the rest of [God? Then why this mess?!](#).

316. <http://www.prb.org/Publications/Articles/2002/HowManyPeopleHaveEverLivedonEarth.aspx>.

^aConsider Dr. Paul Brand's and Phil Yancey's book, *The Gift of Pain*. Brand is a physician who worked with victims of leprosy, which destroys pain receptors. Brand notes the horrific loss of digits and limbs when lepers, lacking the body's normal warning system, inadvertently harm themselves. Brand emphasizes the criticality of this warning system for our wellbeing.

317. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life_expectancy#cite_note-Expectations_of_Life-19
318. I suggest that an evil someone was around to 'help' the first humans make that negative choice — someone who had already made that negative choice long before. I've reluctantly broached the subject of 'angels'³⁴⁷ previously — including extra-D considerations under [Supernatural in extra spacial dimensions?](#), hopefully at least mitigating the idea of 'superstition' with regard to such entities.

If a **transcendent** God exists, is the idea of created messengers/assistants irrational? If we humans want assistants — for example, employees — is it irrational to think that a **transcendent** God might want some too? And if humans have both faithful, honest, hardworking assistants and untrustworthy, dishonest, and lazy assistants (ultimately *ex*-assistants?), then — assuming the freedom to embrace or reject God's control — is it irrational to think that a **transcendent** God might have both good assis-

tants and evil assistants (ultimately *ex*-assistants?) as well?^a

Might the temptation facing the first humans ultimately have been a *power* issue? Contrast...

- ...the option to be satisfied with an enormous array of good and pleasurable options within benevolent boundaries.
- ...the power to set their own boundaries, good or bad — however unqualified they were to do so and however ignorant of the consequences.

Aren't we humans sometimes like cows who have a whole meadow to graze and yet stick their heads through the fence to get grass on the other side?⁴¹³

Consider whether the existence and presence of evil (*ex*)assistants is logical. Comparing them with the evil we see in humans, wouldn't such

^aThis parallel has its limitations, of course. Human behavior is not 'digital'/'black and white' but variable in a complex way — 'grayscale'/'analog.' I suggest that the differences between God's good assistants and evil (*ex*)assistants might be more 'digital'.

(ex)assistants delight to suggest bad options to humans, options that accentuate *their* influence by damaging *God's* influence — another power issue. Might such power plays promote the propagation and perpetuation of evil today?

Might the 'first lobbyist' have initially been sequestered from humans, *except* with regard to the humans' one bad-choice option?

I hope to address this issue in more depth, with supporting evidence, in a separate future book.

319. This 'baby lab' video illustrates Yale University studies of infant ethical perceptions: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRvVFW85IcU> (available as of 9/25/2015).

The first part of the video affirms inherent concepts of justice, even in three-month-old babies — in contradiction to years of common psychologist and philosopher insistence that babies are ethical 'blank slates'.

Later observations presented in this same video affirm inherent selfishness as well — which of course parents of toddlers have observed for millennia *outside* of the lab. Selfishness is not put into children; **un**selfishness must be taught.

320. Truly, the title 'lobbyist' is way too gentle and narrow relative to the following more descriptive *biblical* titles: destroyer, accuser, enemy, the evil one, man of lawlessness, murderer, father of lies, dominion of darkness, prince of this world.

321. I realize that broaching the topic of **supernatural** evil entities entails risk: the risk of being labeled stupid, naive, or flakey for giving serious consideration to entities that many *Western* moderns, including some theologians, regard as merely symbolic or mythical — despite, I maintain, evidence to the contrary. However, those who've taken time to read earlier parts of [THINKING FURTHER](#) hopefully realize by now that I don't look at issues superficially.

I'm unalterably convinced by case reports and even personal experience that: 1) these influences exist, 2) they operate in what one respected author calls *The Invisible War*,³²² and 3) they play a major role in promoting the world's evil and suffering. I submit that these hidden entities influence not only heinous personalities and events but also everyday intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts — most often by influencing our *thinking*. (I suggest that such influences

alone justify considering the *mind* more than just *brain*, as discussed later in [Just stuff?](#).)

I further submit that scientifically sophisticated and intellectually proud Westerners dismiss these influences at their peril. We cannot resist an enemy we fail to acknowledge with resources we fail to accept. As I've argued elsewhere in this book, science is insufficient to cover and explain all of life's phenomena. Even the most brilliant scientist makes most of life's decisions — even critical life decisions — based on non-scientific data and reasoning. Insistence otherwise is not science but scientISM.

I've partially completed a major appendix dedicated to the topic but ultimately removed it from this book. Because of widespread misunderstanding or outright dismissal of these issues, such a document requires an exceedingly careful treatment that exceeds the scope of this 3rd edition. I may later expand the removed appendix into an independent book. However, *Christ-follower* readers may benefit now from the references listed in the endnote directly below ([322](#)).

322. *I address this endnote exclusively to Christ-follower readers.* I substantially avoid issues of negative **supernatural** (in plain words, the demonic) for honest-skeptic readers because I've already challenged them enough! But the following references will benefit you *if you're open to such issues* — which Christ *repeatedly* and emphatically addressed and about which you too should be aware. (*If you think Christ was 'mistaken', then to you he cannot be more than a dead ancient human in which you should place no confidence.*)

- The following account offers strong confirmation in the **existence** of negative **supernatural** entities. You must either accept it as true or call the author a liar; not much in between. I refer to this exceptional account **only as evidence for existence** of negative **supernatural** entities — *not at all* as evidence of the *most* pervasive, generally hidden activities of such entities that Christ-followers should be concerned about.

Richard Gallagher, *A Case of Demonic Possession Among the Many Counterfeits*, New

Oxford Review, March 2008. Available as of 5/25/2016 at:

<http://www.newoxfordreview.org/article.jsp?did=0308-gallagher>.

- The following citations address that most important, everyday, mostly hidden activities that we should be concerned about: negative influence on human thinking.
 - Graham Dow, *The Case for the Existence of Demons*, Churchman, 1980. Available as of 6/20/2015 at: http://churchsociety.org/docs/churchman/094/Cman_094_3_Dow.pdf.
 - Chip Ingram, *The Invisible War*, Baker Books, 2006. Ingram relates several personal experiences that lend credence to the *war* analogy.
 - Karl I. Payne, *Spiritual Warfare*, WND Books, 2011.
 - Neil T. Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker*, Harvest House Publishers, 2000.
 - Don Basham, *Deliver Us from Evil: A Pastor's Reluctant Encounters with the Powers of Darkness*, Chosen Books, 1972.

Endnotes

The modern-theology-trained author starts from a point of skepticism, becomes reluctantly less skeptical through unsought experiences with affected people, and ultimately becomes firmly convinced in the face of a multitude of such transformations.

323. This statement may be scant comfort for those in the midst of suffering: "God could intervene a lot — and I'm sure he emphatically wants to, being undoubtedly *much* more unhappy about our bad choices and our experiences of natural evil than we are: he sees it ALL and grieves!" *Analysis doesn't heal hurts*. Yet, if you were to feel certain that God indeed cares about your suffering, even while not preventing it in the first place or removing it thereafter, would that help you to endure? Would that comfort you at least a tiny bit concerning the enormity of world suffering as well as your own?

My personal pipe dream? A 1984 Wendy's burger commercial asked what is now a catchphrase question about substance: "Where's the beef?" With regard to assertions that God legitimately cares about evil and suffering while not

intervening, “Where’s the beef”? For example, have we a concrete example of **God himself suffering** despite having the power to prevent and remove it? Is such a thing even imaginable?

Yes. It’s not my idea. It’s recorded history, if you can accept that a **transcendent** personal God 1) exists, 2) has the power to bring humanity into existence, 3) therefore has the power to experience humanity himself, 4) *and did* — in a horrendous way. (See also [The solution](#) on page 465.) Given that his suffering was entirely gratuitous — undeserved — and preventable, does that at least provide perspective (albeit not answers) concerning our own gratuitous suffering?

I’ve already described my daughter Pamela’s 28 years of suffering. The sister-in-law of a friend got hepatitis C as a result of blood transfusion. At least two million people are killed annually by the world’s deadliest animal: the mosquito. Natural disasters destroy or wreck lives all over the world. Gratuitous suffering. Does God care? I think he does and, per a few of the book’s accounts and many more, sometimes mitigates

consequences and/or gives the ability to endure and even benefit from suffering.

Would we like better? Of course! Might we look at suffering differently if we could see and comprehend all the interconnections between people, events, and time since the **Big Bang**?^a Probably.

324. It's been well said that true freedom is not the absence of a master but the presence of the *right* master. I suggest that we humans have, in varying degrees, rejected the *right* master — the **transcendent** God — in favor of the *wrong* masters: our **entropic**, oft wrong-headed **selves**. We're *not equipped* for full self-**autonomy**. *Beyond* that, I submit that the limited abil-

^aRecall [Extra time dimensions and God?](#) on page 365.

ities we have to live properly are compromised by the mental influence of **supernatural** evil.

Russian Czar Peter the Great, upon learning that a gardener he'd struck died from the injury, reportedly exclaimed,

"Alas, I have civilized my subjects, I have conquered nations, but I have not been able to conquer myself."^a

Though few of us have brought death to others in anger, I suggest that the core of Peter's problem is ours too: ***We cannot conquer ourselves***. We need help from a **transcendent** source that is 1) outside of and over our space-time, 2) therefore *not subject* to our spacetime, and 3) therefore *not subject* to its negative **entropic** effects. (Again, I think God has not left us without help; we're NOT purely **entropic**; God built in certain countermeasures, but we often ignore and sometimes horribly overrule them.)

^a Matthew Denton, *Anecdotes: Moral and Religious*, Ward and Co., 1850, p. 135. Viewable as of 6/14/2015 at: <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=wLE-IAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&hl=en&pg=GBS.PA135>.

325. Why isn't annihilation an alternative?

You might say, "Well, God could instead just *annihilate* the forever (eternal) parts of I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you people → *pffft!* Just like that!" Really? If the answer to [Just stuff?](#) is 'No', then what's the most probable cut-off point for what's left after death? Some arbitrary 'extended lifetime' or infinite extension into some dimension of time? If the latter, can the infinite be made finite?

But suppose annihilation *were* an option, and God were willing to exercise it, who would qualify for '*pffft?*'

- Should Hitler get off with '*pffft?*' No 'redo' participation for him but, hey, why should he care? He doesn't *exist* to care. So justice is NEVER done for Adolf's atrocities. (Was shooting himself in the head in his bunker justice...or cowardice?)
- Should an I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you Mr. Niceguy get off the hook with '*pffft?*' Suppose you were God and Mr. Niceguy effectively told you to stuff his thousands of offenses — and dozens of 'significant'

offenses — because he was too good (and too sophisticated) to accept your costly offer, what would *you* do?

Wouldn't perfect justice demand penalties, even for a 'minor' offender with 'only' dozens of 'significant' offenses on his rap sheet and thousands of lesser offenses? Should a *perfect transcendent* judge be more lenient than an *imperfect* human judge — especially after the *perfect* judge offers to pay Mr. Niceguy's penalties himself and Niceguy refuses the offer?

Would a non-corrupt judge in *your* justice system summarily dismiss firmly established charges?

326. What about ignorance and cultural blocks?

You might say, "A great many I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you people have not heard of God's 'deal' and/or are locked into belief systems they've grown up with. It's unfair to have the same expectations of them." Look again at the list of acceptance criteria in [The solution](#):

1. Recipient humility — perhaps the biggest stumbling block; pride is a hallmark charac-

teristic of 'I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you' people.

2. Acknowledgement both of a) the **need** for reconciliation between God's justice and love and b) God's *actions* that bought that reconciliation.
3. Acknowledgement of and apology for an I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you stance — the core of the human problem and attendant consequences.
4. A sincere will to trust in and lean on God and do right. This means 'repentance' — a turn-around. 'Sincere will to trust in and lean on God' is unfortunately antithetical to an 'I'll-do-it-my-way-thank-you' mentality.

I submit that *everyone*, regardless of background, can fulfill qualifications 1, 3, and 4 *without hearing anything* about qualifications 2a and 2b, most particularly 2b. (*Everyone* knows they do wrong and that, if God exists, he must disapprove, so there's some sense in which *everyone* knows qualification 2a.) Is fulfillment of qualifications 1, 3, and 4 natural? No. But, I submit, God prods the minds of *everyone* in that direc-

tion, regardless of background. Some 'listen' better than others.

What about qualification 2 — Acknowledgement of a) the need for reconciliation between God's justice and love and b) God's *actions* that bought it.

- Consider first those who've already fulfilled qualifications 1, 3, and 4 *after* the acts referred to in qualification 2b — e.g. those people who've lived over the last two millennia. I suggest that God helps or has helped those people to learn of qualification 2. That's why God sends missionaries. ³²⁷ That's why God works with visions and dreams in Muslims (refer to [Jew-hating PLO sniper strives to reconcile Arabs & Jews](#) on page 128 and [Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?.](#)) That's why God prompts relatives, neighbors, friends, and associates to tell others about qualification 2, despite risks of rejection and scorn. That's why God prompts people like me to write books like this. That's why the Bible — which discusses qualification 2 in multiple places — is available in over 4000 languages [[*Endnotes*](http://</div><div data-bbox=)

worldbibles.org/] and is the world's best-selling book.

- What about those who've already fulfilled qualifications 1, 3, and 4 *before* the events of qualification 2b — i.e. those who've lived *before* the last two millennia?^a I submit that for people fulfilling qualifications 1, 3, and 4, qualification 2 would almost be a no-brainer if known. Qualification-1-3-4 people are virtually *already* turn-back-the-clock-please people. If God has **prescience** (see [Extra time dimensions and foreknowledge?](#)), then he knows who of them would fulfill qualification 2 if given the option. I submit that he'll deal rightly with those people. If we mere humans have concern about fairness and justice, where did that come from? Is it not reasonable that a **transcendent** God would have far more concern?
- What about those who've already fulfilled qualifications 1, 3, and 4 but for any other

^aGod made one ancient people, the Israelites, aware of the 'another-pays-my-penalties' concept of qualification 2, as well as explicitly aware of qualifications 1, 3, and 4.

reason don't get to hear about qualification 2? What if some qualification-1-3-4 people are *not* told about qualification 2 through missionaries, visions, relatives, neighbors, friends, associates, written material, etc. and/or have no access to the Bible? Again, I submit that for people fulfilling qualifications 1, 3, and 4, qualification 2 would almost be a no-brainer if known. Qualification-1-3-4 people are virtually *already* turn-back-the-clock-please people. If God has **prescience** (see [Extra time dimensions and foreknowledge?](#) on page 371, then he knows who of them would fulfill qualification 2 if given the option. I submit that he'll deal rightly with those people. Again, if we mere humans have concern about fairness and justice, where did that come from? Is it not reasonable that a **transcendent** God would have far more concern?

327. Here's my summary account of a young boy who a) was well on the road to fulfilling qualifications 1, 3, and 4, b) asked an unknown God

to send someone to tell him more, and c) got missionaries. Coincidence? You decide.

In the mid-20th century a boy named Oliofo grew up in a Papua New Guinea village where everyone — including him — believed that everything was caused by spirits. In particular they thought that an evil spirit caused every bad event. For example, an enemy's witchcraft was presumed to cause negative personal events. Case in point: Oliofo spoke in a whisper during the darkness of night for fear that the poison man — a witch-doctor type person — might hide nearby, catch his voice in a tin can, and use it to cast an evil spell.

However, Oliofo loved the wild birds and animals and sensed that a *good* spirit must have made them and the other beautiful things in his environment. Perhaps the same Spirit made him too. And if evil spirits helped the poison man to do bad things, Oliofo thought, maybe the good spirit could help him to do good things. So,

alone by the river, he prayed for a messenger to come and tell him about the good spirit.

In fact, Oliofo continued to pray like this every morning for three years until a missionary arrived and taught him the **gospel**. Oliofo understood and accepted the God of the Bible as the good spirit he sought. Oliofo eventually became a teacher himself and taught the **gospel** from village to village. Many people — even fierce warriors and killers — submitted their lives to the **biblical Christ** and were changed.

The above is a key-parts summary of a larger account told by Mrs. Hap Parsons, the wife of a missionary who helped Oliofo.

[Ruth Harner, *Send Someone to Tell Me!*, Child Evangelism Fellowship, 1977.]

328. Johns Hopkins University science historian Lawrence M. Principe, *Science and Religion*, The Teaching Company, 2006, Lecture 5: "Church, Copernicus, and Galileo."
329. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Age_of_Enlightenment, "Historiography" section.

330. The primary survey to which I refer is by Lawrence Cahoon, *The Modern Intellectual Tradition: From Descartes to Derrida*, The Teaching Company, 2010, an excellent 36 lecture series that actually moves a bit beyond Derrida.

However I've likewise been exposed to modern philosophies and theologies through other Teaching Company courses such as *The Birth of the Modern Mind: The Intellectual History of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* and *Philosophy of Mind: Brains, Consciousness and Thinking Machines*, as well as through RC Sproul's *Modern Theology* lectures and readings about and in works of Rudolf Bultmann and Paul Tillich. My motivation has been to understand how thinking moved to its present state. These studies have helped greatly, confirming the oft-repeated statement, "*Ideas* [regardless of merit or goodness/harmfulness] *have consequences!*"

331. Regarding an Alexandrian plague about A.D. 250, Dionysius, a third-century Christian bishop noted that the pagans, "...thrust aside anyone who began to be sick, and kept aloof even from their dearest friends, and cast the sufferers out

upon the public roads half dead, and left them unburied, and treated them with utter contempt when they died.'" By contrast, "'[V]ery many of our brethren, while in their exceeding love and brotherly kindness, did not spare themselves, but kept by each other, and visited the sick without thought of their own peril, and ministered to them assiduously and treated them for their healing in Christ, died from time to time most joyfully...drawing upon themselves their neighbors' diseases, and willingly taking over to their own persons the burden of the sufferings of those around them.'"

During a 4th century plague in which the Romans panicked and fled, emperor Julian the Apostate complained that "'The impious Galileans [what he called the Christians he detested] relieve both their own poor and ours...It is shameful that ours should be so destitute of our assistance.'"

Alvin J. Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed the World*, Zondervan, 2009, Kindle locations 3234-3242 and 2726-2730.

332. Historian Glenn S. Sunshine, *Why You Think the Way You Do*, Zondervan, 2009, Kindle Edition, locations 1880 -1893.
333. All of the information in this subsection (except the first and last sentences) is from Johns Hopkins science historian Lawrence M. Principe, *Science and Religion*, The Teaching Company, 2006, Lecture 2: 'The Warfare Thesis'.
334. Bernard Barber, *Resistance by Scientists to Scientific Discovery*, *Science*, Vol. 134, September 1961, pp. 596 - 602. As of 6/12/2013, avail. at: <http://web.missouri.edu/~hanuscind/8710/Barber1961.pdf>
335. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignaz_Semmelweis
Accessed 6/8/2013.
336. Fujian Song et al, *Publication bias: what is it? How do we measure it? How do we avoid it?* *Open Access Journal of Clinical Trials*, Volume 2013:5, pp.71-81. Available as of 2/4/2016 at: <https://www.dovepress.com/publication-bias-what-is-it-how-do-we-measure-it-how-do-we-avoid-it-peer-reviewed-article-OAJCT>

337. Richard Horton, *Offline: What is medicine's 5 sigma?*, *The Lancet*, Volume 385, No. 9976, p. 1380, April 11, 2015. Available as of 8/14/2015 at: [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(15\)60696-1/full-text?rss%3Dyes](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(15)60696-1/full-text?rss%3Dyes)
338. The **general theory of relativity** has passed a large variety of tests, one quite recent: *Einstein's Gravity Theory Passes Toughest Test Yet*, *Science Daily*, April 25, 2013
As of 5/18/2013, online at: <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/04/130425142250.htm>
339. Astronomer Hugh Ross notes that,
"Over a four-year period, starting in 1966, George Ellis, Stephen Hawking, and Roger Penrose affirmed that any expanding universe governed by **general relativity** and that also contains at least some matter and energy must possess a singular origin in the finite past. But they went further. *In fact, they carried the solution of Einstein's equations farther than anyone else had. In doing so, they discovered that the operation of*

general relativity guarantees a singular boundary not just for matter and energy but also for space and time. In other words, if **general relativity** accurately describes the dynamics (movements of matter and energy) of the universe, both the stuff that makes up the universe and the dimensions in which that stuff exists share a common origin, a finite beginning. Physicists call this finding the space-time theorem of general relativity, and it carries profound philosophical and theological significance...Space and time had a beginning. Therefore, space and time must be created entities." <Emphasis is mine.>

Ross notes that Roger Penrose — referring to a 14-decimal-place astronomical confirmation of **general relativity** in 1993 — said that the data...

"'...makes Einstein's general relativity, in this particular sense, the most accurately tested theory known to science!'"

[Hugh Ross, *Beyond the Cosmos*, 3rd. ed., Signalman Publishing, 2010, Kindle Edition, Locations 337-349 and 363-364, out of 4263 total.]

340. Astronomer Hugh Ross and biblical scholar John Rea, *Big Bang - The Bible Taught It First!*, in Facts for Faith, Issue 3, Reasons to Believe, March 1, 2000.
Available as of 7/1/2014 at <http://www.reasons.org/facts-faith/issue03>
341. Brian Greene, *The Fabric of the Cosmos: Space, Time, and the Texture of Reality*, Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2007, Kindle Locations 240-246.
342. Corey S. Powell, *The Possible Parallel Universe of Dark Matter*, from July/August issue of Discover magazine, July 11, 2013. Available as of 6/15/2016 at: <http://discovermagazine.com/2013/julyaug/21-the-possible-parallel-universe-of-dark-matter>.
343. I'd like to acknowledge here astronomer Hugh Ross's 'what-if' extra-dimensionality ideas in *Beyond the Cosmos* (op. cit.). His ideas have substantially founded and inspired mine.
344. Lisa Randall, *Understanding Multiple Dimensions*, 4-minute video, available online as of 5-25-2013 at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TuL7gSMzLIU>

345. <http://home.web.cern.ch/about/physics/extra-dimensions-gravitons-and-tiny-black-holes>.
346. A whole 'novella', first published in 1884, helps us to consider the lives of fanciful two-dimensional beings in Flatland from our superior three-dimensional perspective. [Edwin A. Abbott, *Flatland: a romance of many dimensions*, Dover Publications, 1992. Also available as a free Kindle book.]
347. 'Angels' simply refer to messengers of God (the literal Hebrew meaning). However, I use the term 'angel' with reluctance, because it often carries appended mythical and cultural baggage; and the angels-with-wings idea IS myth. There's virtually no scriptural support. **Christ-follower** readers, note the following:

"As to their outward appearance, it is evident that they bore the human form, and could at times be mistaken for men (Ezek[ial] 9:2; Gen[esis] 18:2,16). *There is no hint that they ever appeared in female form. **The conception of angels as***

winged beings, so familiar in Christian art, **finds no support in Scripture** (except, perhaps Dan[iel] 9:21; Rev[elation] 14:6, where angels are represented as 'flying'). The cherubim and seraphim (see CHERUB; SERAPH) are represented as winged (Ex 25:20; Isa 6:2); winged also are the symbolic living creatures of Ezek (Ezek 1:6; compare Rev 4:8)." <Emphases are mine.> [*International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, Electronic Database Copyright © 1996, 2003, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc.]

Such distortions sadly fuel some folks' mistaken 'supernatural = superstition' perceptions.

348. This illustration was inspired by astronomer Hugh Ross's similar (albeit less detailed) illustration in his book *Beyond the Cosmos* (op. cit.) For further thought, consider that during one of Ross's math courses in college, the professor described — and illustrated in a film — how a 3D basketball located in four dimensional space (just one extra dimension) could be turned inside out without cutting the surface. [Hugh Ross, *Beyond the Cosmos*, 3rd ed., Signalman

Publishing, 2010, Kindle edition, Kindle locations 232-240.]

349. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brane_cosmology, accessed on 5/18/2013.

350. Per one physicist, even our universe could have a second dimension of time. [<http://phys.org/news98468776.html>. Accessed 10/14/13.] However, per Nobel physics laureate David Gross, all proposals for a second dimension of time as part of our universe (vs. in the domain of God) have encountered issues. [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kwl-nlXMa5M>. Accessed 10/14/13.]

351. A frequent skeptic's question (and, interestingly, sometimes a child's question): "If there's a God, who created God?" Proposed answer: "God is eternal and therefore uncreated."

Ironically, until the 20th century, some scientists rejected the idea of an *eternal* First Cause while simultaneously assuming an *eternal universe*. That is, they ironically had no problem conceiving an eternal *universe* while being unable to conceive of an eternal *being*. For example, Einstein's equations of *general relativ-*

ity indicated the universe was not static, implying a beginning — which he could not accept — so he threw in a cosmological-constant fudge factor to make the universe static. After Edwin Hubble showed conclusively in 1929 that the universe *was* expanding, Einstein called *his* 'cosmological constant' the biggest blunder of his career.

NOTE Today's cosmological constant for dark energy is different.

352. I got this concept initially from Hugh Ross in *Beyond the Cosmos, 3rd. ed* (op. cit.) However, 2004-Physics-Nobel-Laureate David Gross's brief lay-friendly YouTube comments confirmed the nature of a 2D time-plane concept when answering a question about the possibility of two time dimensions in our universe. He noted dilemmas for *us* operating with two time dimensions. [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kwl-nlXMa5M>. Accessed 1-21-2014] However, a perfect, beneficent uncaused **First Cause** with access to two (or more) time or time-like dimensions poses no such dilemmas — and enables us to examine certain theological mysteries with thought experiments.

353. Hugh Ross, *Beyond the Cosmos*, 3rd. ed. (op. cit.), Kindle locations 2716-2745.
354. Here is one simple example, of many. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all report on Christ's temptation in the wilderness. ***Disregarding opinions about these passages***, compare the *degrees of detail* in Mark's and Matthew's accounts:
- *Mark 1:12-13* — At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him. [NIV]
- Matthew 4:1-11* — Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'People do not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If

you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him. [NIV]

In comments about the Matthew passage, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* notes that,

"In the past many scholars took this **pericope** and its parallel (Luke 4:1-13) as *imaginative embellishments* of Mark's much briefer account. But J. Dupont ("L'Arriere-fond Biblique du Recit des Tentations de

Jesus," NTS 3 [1956-57]: 287-304) has argued persuasively that Mark's brevity and the ambiguity of such statements as "he was with the wild animals" (Mark 1:13) implies that Mark's readers were familiar with a larger account to which Mark makes brief reference. [Frank Gaebelin, ed., *Expositor's Bible Commentary (12 Vols.)*, Zondervan, 1990, comments about Matthew 4:1-11.] <Emphasis is mine.>

This comment implies that the critics claimed "*imaginative embellishments*" because of the greater detail in Matthew's account, not because of content merit. Yet what's the glaringly obvious reason for the difference in details? Per **abductive reasoning**, what's obviously the *best* explanation? It's this: *Mark simply put less emphasis on this particular event for the purposes of his communication.*

Let's compare the differences between the Mark and Matthew accounts to differences between two accounts of a hypothetical modern scenario.

- Mary buys a stereo system on Amazon. It has a five-star rating, is a very good deal, is

beautiful, and meets her objectives perfectly. She excitedly e-mails about the purchase to Frank and Susie, mentioning it's appearance, a couple of review comments, the 123XYZ model number, and the \$349 price.

- Frank is an audio buff. He later talks with John, who's interested in buying a stereo. Frank makes several recommendations to John. During this conversation he simply notes that Mary bought a highly-rated 123XYZ system for \$349 on Amazon.
- Susie is very happy for Mary and repeats to Nancy most of what Mary wrote — substantially in her own words, of course (accurately, though not precisely).

Based *solely* on relative detail, if all you've heard/read are Susie's and Frank's accounts,

- Are both Susie's and Frank's accounts true?
- Or has Susie imaginatively embellished the facts?

Similarly, based *solely* on relative detail,

1. Are both Mark's and Matthew's accounts true?
2. Or has Matthew imaginatively embellished the facts?

I suggest that selection of option '2' stems not from honest logic about relative detail but from *categorical bias* against the *content* of Matthew's account specifically and perhaps personal rejection of the **biblical Christ** generally. I suggest that it's a flimsy *excuse* to reject the *content* without honestly grappling with its merits.

Some reporting differences in the New Testament are admittedly not as clear-cut as this example. And critics are of course free to honestly express personal doubts. However, they are *not legitimately* free to *hide* such doubts behind unwarranted wholesale rejections of report-style and report-detail variations. Unfortunately, however, such misleading pretense seems not infrequent among New Testament critics.

Biased rejection of differences in *accurate* author reporting — in different words, in different levels of detail, and from different perspec-

tives — also seems symptomatic of [Confusing criticism with skepticism](#).

355. Andrew Steane, *Faithful to Science: The Role of Science in Religion*, Oxford University Press, 2014, Kindle Edition, p. 19.

356. The results of one major intercessory prayer study^a did *not* affirm the efficacy of intercessory prayer. However, the regimented nature of that study seemed to approach God more as a cosmic vending machine than as a person with values and relationship expectations of the prayERs. Moreover,

“Notably, one of the three groups of intercessors, the only Protestant group included in the study, Silent Unity, Lee’s Summit, MO, has a theology and practice of intercessory prayer that differs so widely from Pentecostal prayer [and, I’d add, general Evangelical Christ-follower prayer] that the study analyzed an essentially different phenomenon: i.e., Unity is a New Thought group that

^ahttp://web.med.harvard.edu/sites/RELEASES/html/3_31STEP.html. (Accessed 4/30/2013.)

understands prayer not as supplication to a deity outside the self, but as an exercise of the divine/human power of mind." [<http://www.fyiliving.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/prayer.pdf>. Accessed 10/4/2014].

357. Randolph. C. Byrd, *Positive therapeutic effects of intercessory prayer in a coronary care unit population*, Southern Medical Journal, Volume 81, No.7, July 1988, pp. 826-829.

An abstract of this paper was available as of 6/18/2013 at:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/3393937>.

Also, as of 6/18/2013 I could download the full paper from the following site:

<http://www.godandscience.org/apologetics/coronary.html>

358. http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/on-faith/rise-in-italian-catholic-church-attendance-attributed-to-francis-effect/2013/11/11/dd957e1e-4b0b-11e3-bf60-c1ca136ae14a_story.html

Accessed 7/29/2015.

359. "The Turkish secularist model can be described as 'secularism with an Islamic flavour', to grasp the contradiction between the institution of a strict separation of religion and state and the actual preferential treatment for Sunni Islam. There is indeed a huge difference between the formal interpretation of the country's secular legislation and the informal practices by government officials, police officers and judges, which in fact are often discriminatory against Christians."

[D. Pastoor, *Turkey: Secularism with an Islamic flavour and persisting obstacles to religious freedom*, Open Doors International, 2013.

<http://blog.plataformac.org/download/religious-freedom/Pastoor%20-%20Turkey%20Secularism%20with%20an%20Islamic%20flavor%20and%20persisting%20obstacles%20to%20religious%20freedom%20-%202013.pdf>

Accessed 8/20/2013.

360. Philip Yancey, *Prayer: Does it make any difference*, Zondervan, 2006.

361. Ironically, the first-century slavery that the New Testament *described* (**not advocated**) was *not* race-based, *and* slaves "...merged easily into the population." The New Testament, while not calling for abolition (likely impossible in that environment), admonishes slave owners to treat slaves kindly and effectively admonishes granting of freedom for a particular individual (see book of Philemon). "Another difference between Roman slavery and its more modern variety was manumission – the ability of slaves to be freed. Roman owners freed their slaves in considerable numbers: some freed them outright, while others allowed them to buy their own freedom." [Quotes from: http://www.pbs.org/empires/romans/empire/slaves_freemen.html Accessed 9/2/2013.]
362. Kwang-Tae Kim, *North Korea Executes Christian For Distributing Bible: Rights Group*, Associated Press, 7/24/2009. As of 9/3/2013, available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/07/24/north-korea-christian-execution_244340.html
363. Ravi Zacharias, *National Day of Prayer Address*, RZIM, 8/25/2013

<http://www.rzim.org/just-thinking/national-day-of-prayer-address/>

Accessed 8/25/2013.

364. Richard Wurmbrand, *Tortured for Christ* (op. cit.), Kindle locations 2507-2515.
365. *Ibid*, Kindle Locations 188-191. Wurmbrand didn't write from an armchair. He suffered greatly for his ministry in hostile countries, and his story is another example of great transformation.
- “...at age fourteen I was as convinced an atheist as the Communists are today. I had read atheistic books, and it was not just that I did not believe in God or Christ—I hated these notions, considering them harmful for the human mind.”
366. *Ibid*, Kindle Locations 407-413.
367. *Ibid*, Kindle Locations 1885-1886.
368. Eddy M. del Rio, MD, *Humanity's Built-In G-Suit: A Product of Evolution or Creation?*, Reasons to Believe, April 2014. Available as of 6/12/13 at:
<http://www.reasons.org/articles/humanitys->

[built-in-g-suit-a-product-of-evolution-or-creation](#).

369. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supernova>
Accessed 6/20/2013.
370. http://www.scholarpedia.org/article/Hard_problem_of_consciousness
Accessed 7/15/2013.
371. Patrick Grim, *Philosophy of Mind: Brains, Consciousness, and Thinking Machines*, The Teaching Company, 2008.
372. Dualism: "In philosophy of mind, dualism is the assumption that mental phenomena are, in some respects, non-physical, the relationship between mind and matter, and is contrasted with other positions, such as physicalism, in the mind–body problem...Dualism is closely associated with the philosophy of René Descartes, which holds that the mind is a nonphysical substance. Descartes clearly identified the mind with consciousness and self-awareness and distinguished this from the brain as the seat of intelligence."
[\https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/

Cartesian dualism

Accessed 6/20/2013]

373. Sebastian Seung, *Connectome: How the Brain's Wiring Makes Us Who We Are*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Trade, 2012, Kindle Edition.
374. <https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn12301-man-with-tiny-brain-shocks-doctors>. Accessed 10/9/2015.
375. Purely 'just-stuff' coincidence? Or did the following events result from remote, non-sensory, outside-of-brain, **not**-just-stuff mental inputs?
- "My wife and I were asleep. It was about 2 AM. I heard someone say MAX! It woke me up with a start and I sat up. We didn't have kids then. It was only me and my wife. It sounded like it came from the next room. I thought... woah... that was weird.
When I sat up I woke up my wife. I told her and we went back to sleep. Just a dream.
The next morning we got a call. My dad was killed in a head on collision. Sometime around 2 AM.
That's all I know."

[Max Jones, answer to *What's the most inexplicable experience you've ever had?*, April 2, 2014, <https://www.quora.com/Whats-the-most-inexplicable-experience-youve-ever-had>.]

- “Many years ago I was a young man living in the big city near my folks’ smaller town. One night in the wee hours, I had a startling dream. I dreamed one of my best friends lived near my folks, shaking me awake telling me my dad was hurt. I awoke, went bathroom, splashed my face, calmed down, went back to bed.

About an hour later I really was awakened by that same friend standing at the foot of my bed telling me my dad was hurt, they couldn't reach me (I hadn't paid the phone bill) and that he would take me to the ER.

Dad was hurt on the job at the same time I had the dream. He sustained a bad head injury and brain damage, but recovered almost completely after several years.”

[Kent Hartland, comment to the Quora post just above. Quora is an online Q&A forum.]

- “I was 6. One night at 2:38 am I woke to my grandfather standing at the foot of my bed. He told me that he loved me but that we wouldn't be seeing each other for a while, but that he would keep a watch over me. He then asked me to get up and go tell my parents. Mom didn't believe me but said that she would call the family in the morning. She called at 6 am our time (9 am NY time)...Grandpa had died at about 2:45 am...3000 miles away.

[Kris Rosvold, answer to *What's the most inexplicable experience you've ever had?*, January 17, 2016, <https://www.quora.com/Whats-the-most-inexplicable-experience-youve-ever-had>.]

- “I was visiting my grandparents. There is this restaurant we frequented. It had amazing and cheap Chinese food. My cousin and I used to bike up there. I loved it. One fine evening, my cousin suggested that we bike up there. I was free and bored. I agreed. An hour before we were to leave, my grandmother who had never had any

problem with us biking or the restaurant begged us not to go. I wanted to know why. She said she had a bad feeling. I checked the news. There was nothing wrong with the town.

And moreover, they lived in a quiet and boring suburb where nothing interesting ever happened. No crime, no riots, no demonstrations, no threat to security. However she was adamant that we do not leave the house. And this was very unlike her.

So we grudgingly complied. We were supposed to be sitting there at around 8pm. Instead we were at home when it happened. In the exact same restaurant. There was a gas explosion. Several people died. The place burned down.

I don't know what it was that gave my grandmother the 'bad feeling'. But she saved our lives."

[Himel Sarkar, answer to *What's the most inexplicable experience you've ever had?*, May 7, 2016, <https://www.quora.com/>

[Whats-the-most-inexplicable-experience-youve-ever-had.](#)]

- Lastly, one of my own experiences. Perhaps less impressive, but it's first-hand.

Some years ago, near the end of my early-morning sleep, I dreamt about an old friend who lived in another state and whom I'd not communicated with or thought about for a long time (at least a year or two, other than perhaps via an exchange of Christmas cards months before). Shortly after I woke up to start the new day, that friend called me, indicated he was nearby, wanted to visit (he'd never been to my house before), did visit, and reported some sad news (and he was hurting).

Was the dream some kind of 'prep' for my friend's out-of-the-blue visit?

376. Most Americans (at least) believe in heaven — and therefore believe in immortality. Respondents to a 2007 Baylor University study indicated that 62.3% of them absolutely believe heaven exists and another 19.6% believe it probably exists, for a total of 81.9%.

[http://www.thearda.com/quickstats/qs_71.asp
Accessed 6/21/2013.]

Put another way, about 82% believe that we are or probably are more than just 'stuff'. That we have 'souls.' That we don't just rot upon physical death. That the core of us somehow survives. Put yet another way, the majority of us are effectively substance *dualists* — whether or not we've ever heard the term *dualism*.³⁷² We don't think our *minds* are **only** a bunch of neurons and other types of brain cells that store who we are as persons during a few decades of physical life but ultimately become worm food.

377. https://www.researchgate.net/post/What_is_consciousness_What_is_its_nature_and_origin14
Restricted site. Last accessed in mid-2015.
378. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Near-death_experience
Accessed 6/21/2013.
379. *Fighter Pilots and NDE's (near-death experiences)*
<http://www.youtube.com/>

[watch?v=uEJL_L9RHJY](#)

Last accessed 7/9/2013.

380. Süster Strubelt, *The Near-Death Experience: a Cerebellar Method to Protect Body and Soul Lessons from the Iboga Healing Ceremony in Gabon*, *Alternative Therapies*, 14 (1), 2008, pp. 30-34.

As of 7/9/2013, available at:

<http://www.ebando.org/en/docs/strubelt.doc>

381. Emily Cook *et al*, *Do Any Near-Death Experiences Provide Evidence for the Survival of Human Personality after Death? Relevant Features and Illustrative Case Reports*, *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 1998, pp. 377-406.

http://sedna.no.sapo.pt/death_scresearch/pdf_docs/12.3_cook_greyson_stevenson.pdf

Last accessed 7/9/2013.

382. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihaK0ubzckg&feature=c4-over-view&list=UUKMhHJniwJzW3DjUxozPnQA>

383. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6R654H_qOvA.

Accessed 6/19/2013.

384. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pam_Reynolds_case
Accessed 6/21/2013.
385. Ravi Zacharias, *Can Man Live Without God*, W Publishing Group, 1994. As of 6/19/2015, this excerpt was viewable online at:
<https://books.google.com/books?id=tG2sCAAQBAJ&dq=Can+Man+Live+Without+God&q=svetlana#v=onepage&q=svetlana&f=true>
386. Stephen Hawking, *The Universe in a Nutshell*, Bantam, 2001.
387. *Ibid*, p. 59.
388. *Ibid*, p. 60.
389. Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow, *The Grand Design*, Random House Publishing Group, 2010, Kindle Edition.
390. *Ibid*, Kindle locations 40-41.
391. *Ibid*, Kindle locations 440-441.
392. *Ibid*, Kindle locations 1648-1651.
393. *Ibid*, Kindle locations 1268-1272.
394. *Ibid*, Kindle locations 1300-1302

395. *Ibid*, Kindle locations 1313-1314
396. *Ibid*, Kindle locations 1324-1329
397. *Ibid*, Kindle locations 1344-1345
398. *Ibid*, Chapter 7.
399. Alexander Vilenkin, *Did the universe have a beginning?*, The State of the Universe (symposium), Cambridge University, 3/21/2012. Available as of 7/15/2012 at: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/itunes-u/state-universe-stephen-hawking/id634951459?mt=10>.
400. William Lane Craig, *The Grand Design — Truth or Fiction?*. Available as of 7/15/2015 at <http://www.reasonablefaith.org/the-grand-design-truth-or-fiction>.
401. Ikjyot Singh Kohli, review of Lawrence Krauss, *A Universe from Nothing*, on Amazon, December 16, 2013. [Last accessed on 1/12/2016 at <http://www.amazon.com/review/R39M6SDWOJW8PP>]
402. <http://www.physlink.com/Education/AskExperts/ae281.cfm>. Accessed 8/29/2015.

403. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interpretations_of_quantum_mechanics, last accessed 7/21/2015.
404. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inflation_\(cosmology\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inflation_(cosmology)). Accessed 7/25/2015.
405. C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, HarperCollins, 2009, Kindle edition, Kindle locations 80-81 (In Lewis comments about the book in preface).
406. *Ibid*, p. 44.
407. <http://www.persecution.com/public/ourfounders.aspx>. Accessed 7/1/2015.
408. *Islamic jihad: The principle of al-Taqiyya*. This informative and thoughtful article is available as of 7/8/2015 at: <http://www.provethetibible.net/T2-Hist/Islam-8-al-Taqiyya.htm>
409. Assuming that negative **supernatural** entities exist — which you know I'm convinced is true, then we'd *expect* them to lie. Considering ISIS behaviors, does the entity whose directives ISIS supposedly fulfils sound like a messenger of truth?

410. C.S. Lewis — a person who himself suffered substantially and whose former atheism was motivated by the problem of evil — said this in his book *The Problem of Pain*:

“Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world...Pain shatters the illusion that all is well...that what we have, whether good or bad in itself, is our own and enough for us.” C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (1940; reprinted by HarperSanFrancisco, 2001)

As quoted in Jana Harmon, *C.S. Lewis on the Problem of Pain*, C.S. Lewis Institute, 2012
Recommended reading; accessed 9/5/13 at:
http://www.cslewisinstitute.org/webfm_send/1543

411. <http://www.answers.com/topic/metanarrative>
Accessed 12/23/2013.

412. Paul Copan, *True for you but not for me*, Revised edition, Bethany House Publishers, 2009, p. 27.

413. The late CS Lewis offers insights concerning human vulnerabilities to temptation in his *Screwtape Letters*. In that obviously fictional but otherwise thought-provoking novel, one of God's evil ex-assistants gives advice to another:

“Never forget that when we are dealing with any pleasure in its healthy and normal and satisfying form, we are, in a sense, on the Enemy's ground. I know we have won many a soul through pleasure. All the same, it is His invention, not ours. He made the pleasures: all our research so far has not enabled us to produce one. All we can do is to encourage the humans to take the pleasures which our Enemy has produced, at times, or in ways, or in degrees, which He has forbidden. Hence we always try to work away from the natural condition of any pleasure to that in which it is least natural, least redolent of its Maker, and least pleasurable.

An ever increasing craving for an ever diminishing pleasure is the formula."

[C.S. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*, HarperOne, 2009, p. 44.]

414. *The Big Religion Chart*
<http://www.religionfacts.com/compare/religions>
415. <http://www.newsweek.com/ayaan-hirsi-alithe-global-war-christians-muslim-world-65817>. Last accessed 6/6/2016.
416. Ravi Zacharias, *Ravi Zacharias on the Law of Non-Contradiction*, speech delivered at Harvard, uploaded Feb 15, 2010
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9pDs1wlmsHg>. Accessed 12/11/2013]
[My description includes information from a similar recounting of this same experience at:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVsNEIOX-TQc>
Accessed 12/4/2013.]
417. CS Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis Signature Classics, HarperCollins, 2009, Kindle Edition, Kindle locations 802-808.

418. See, for example, www.opendoorsusa.org/, www.persecution.com/, and www.news-week.com/ayaan-hirsi-alithe-global-war-christians-muslim-world-65817
419. <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/>. Accessed 6/2/2016
420. MIT course notes, Fields, p. 1-3. <http://web.mit.edu/viz/EM/visualizations/coursenotes/modules/guide01.pdf>
Accessed 6/24/2013.
421. *Scientists Crack Quantum Teleportation*, Science News (AAAS), May 30, 2014. Available as of 6/12/2014 at: <http://news.sciencemag.org/sifter/2014/05/scientists-crack-quantum-teleportation>
422. John Markoff, *Scientists Report Finding Reliable Way to Teleport Data*, New York Times, May 29, 2014. Available as of 6/12/2014 at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/30/science/scientists-report-finding-reliable-way-to-teleport-data.html?hpw&rref=science&r=1>
423. *Jesus of Testimony* (video), Nesch Productions LLC, 2014, Gary Habermas comments starting

at minute 110. [<http://www.jesusoftestimony.com/watch/>] As of 11/12/2015.

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