

Rationality

From Ignoramus To Rationalist

Alan Bunning

Rationality: From Ignoramus to Rationalist
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Preface

When it comes to the topic of religion, I constantly marvel at the amount of misinformation and faulty arguments that have been espoused over the years. The illogical conclusions drawn by various dogmatic groups make a neutral observer just want to cringe. On one extreme, I have encountered religious zealots that rely on nothing but flimsy evidence, urban legends, and blind faith to promote their religions. And on the other extreme, I have encountered atheists who are not intellectually honest and spew hateful and bitter rhetoric against anyone who would contradict their materialistic worldview.

When I was younger, I was agnostic in my belief toward God but once made the mistake of praying, “God if you really exist, then reveal yourself to me.” It was not long after that that I eventually came to believe in God. I have subsequently spent most of my life challenging those beliefs to confirm whether or not they are true. In college, I took the Bible as Literature class taught by an agnostic, the Philosophy of Religion class taught by a Buddhist, and the History of Christianity class taught by a secularist. By carefully examining the evidence objectively, the effect of these courses only went to strengthen my belief in God. Because of my background in computer science, it was important to be able to establish a basis for a rational belief in God that is based entirely on logic and reason alone. I have since talked with thousands of individuals from almost every philosophical background, and have used this non-religious rational approach to lead many of them to the exact same conclusion. Thus, it seemed good for me also to write an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, and this book is the culmination of those findings.

There is no doubt that I have probably written enough on this topic to make just about everyone mad. The biggest problem I find is that some people make assumptions without even reading this book and then make canned responses to things that are not even said. With a book of this nature, perhaps some error might be found that needs correcting, *but I am not responsible for answering objections to arguments that I didn't make!* If you find any errors in what *is* written, please bring them to my attention for I am more than willing to amend this book to correctly reflect the truth. I will try to respond to any honest questions, but I am not so interested in engaging disingenuous people who simply want to make frivolous arguments to defend their dogma. I am not trying to pick a fight with anyone and I respect everyone's right to believe whatever they want. But I trust that using a more rational approach will help defuse the inflammatory tactics employed by religious sensationalists. It is my hope that this book will help everyone who is a seeker of the truth to advance in their journey regardless of their philosophical background. All I ask is that you approach this topic with an open mind and then let the chips fall where they may. Enjoy!

Alan Bunning

“And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” – Jesus of Nazareth

Introduction

Warning: this book will try to convince you to change your way of life...and it might be successful! That is, if you are willing to rationally approach the topic of God with an open mind. Rationality is defined here as *adopting the most logical course of action given all available evidence*. Such evidence could come from any academic discipline that provides verifiable data, whether it be scientific, archeological, historical, etc. Are you up to the challenge? While rationality is useful in almost every area of life, this book primarily focuses on the topic of rationality as it applies to the supernatural. If there really is a God as described by some religions, then everything else in life would be secondary. Rationality should not be confused with any other philosophy (such as “rationalism”¹) since philosophy is “a search for a general understanding of values and reality by chiefly *speculative* rather than observational means” (emphasis added).² If someone wants to speculate about metaphysical theories or imagine alternative realities, that is fine; but unless they are supported by observational evidence, they are not options for a rationalist.

Unfortunately, most people today do not seem to be guided by logic or reason at all, but by feelings, self-gratification, cultural influences, ideologies, etc. Perhaps it is logical for them to do so. 😊 Most of them like the way they live their lives just fine and have no reason to change. Their motto is, “Whatever feels good, do it” or in Biblical terms, “Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die.”³ They are not particularly logical and they don’t really have any reason to be. You have probably met several people like that. And though you might not realize it yet, this may apply to some of you too! Indeed, many like to think of themselves as rationalists, and yet they do not actually live their lives in a logical manner because *their actions are inconsistent with their stated beliefs*.

Rationality: adopting the most logical course of action given all available evidence.

But is it logical to assume that logic is even the best method? That in itself would be circular reasoning as you cannot use logic to prove the superiority of logic! The rationalist, however, accepts the presupposition that logic, truth, and reason can be relied upon and are simply a superior way of looking at the world. Nothing demands that these abstract concepts be preferred, and yet for some reason people assume that the mind is rational and the universe is understandable.^{§2.3.2} Even though people may fall short of their ideals, virtually everyone still seems to accept the premise of rationality as a desirable way to live.

The basic problem, however, is that most people are simply not rational. People first need to learn how to think rationally and then they need to learn how to live their lives accordingly. Before we go any further though, we first need to establish some basic ground rules...

***i.1* Principles of Rationality**

It is no use trying to reason with a person who does not accept logic and reason. An East Texas Proverb says, “Before engaging in a battle of wits, make sure your opponent is armed.” Some people do not even try to be rational but merely put up a defensive front to maintain their belief system out of pride. When it becomes painfully obvious that their position does not make sense, they put their hands over their ears and say, “Blah, blah, blah...I’m not listening to you.” Such people are clearly not operating from a rational frame of reference for they fail to understand even the most basic rules of logic and reason. This book assumes that you are an educated person who is able to think critically. It is written to appeal to normal, reasonable people who do not already have an axe to grind. Let’s clarify a few basic concepts up front to make sure that everyone is operating from a rational framework.

***i.1.1* No Religion Allowed**

Religion is commonly defined as a “commitment or devotion to a religious faith or observance”.⁴ Today, this is usually considered to be synonymous with having “blind faith” in something which is otherwise irrational. Atheist Bertrand Russell exposes the nature of this blind faith:

“We may define ‘faith’ as the firm belief in something for which there is no evidence. Where there is evidence, no one speaks of ‘faith’. We do not speak of faith that two and two are four or that the earth is round. We only speak of faith when we wish to substitute emotion for evidence. The substitution of emotion for evidence is apt to lead to strife, since different groups substitute different emotions.”⁵

If something is “religious” then it is usually not considered to be scientifically verifiable (observable, repeatable, and falsifiable). Religion is therefore not objective, but subjective. Because of this, any unsubstantiated spiritual claims and religious forms of blind faith are irrelevant to the rationalist.

A person can believe whatever he wants and call it his religion. Someone could pick up a rock off the ground and claim that it is God. He may tell you that if you don’t believe in his rock, you will go to Hell. And as incredible as it seems, he may get other people to believe him! This is how you can end up with approximately 4,200 religions in the world.⁶ Indeed, in 1997 Marshall Applewhite was able to convince 38 people to commit suicide so that their souls could ascend to a higher plane by hitching a ride on a spaceship hiding in the tail of the Hale-

Bop comet.⁷ Such religious claims, however, are of little interest to rationalists. We can tolerate your right to believe anything you want, for you have the right to be wrong.^{§1.1.3} Many religious people are sincere about their beliefs, and yet they are sincerely wrong. Some don't even care what you believe as long as you believe in something. In these cases, *their religion is not about truth, it is about belief*. Once their mind is set on a certain belief system, nobody will probably be able to convince them otherwise.

In the same way, some scientists are also “religious” as they cling to their pet theories, manipulate their statistics to support their point, and then throw away all other data that contradicts their belief. As the *New Scientist* observes, “The history of science is replete with frauds and fakers.”⁹ If history is any indication, there will always be some false scientific theories that continue to persist until there is a sufficient outcry of data to oppose them. Just as in the cases of Copernicus and Galileo, the current scientific establishment still often resists change by using the same “appeal to authority” fallacy that the religions use, except that this has been relabeled today as “consensus science”, as if the truth can be determined by a committee vote. Remember the consensus of scientists once believed that the earth was flat! To the rationalist, all *unsubstantiated* claims should equally be considered “religious” regardless of whether or not they have been previously dressed up in scientific terms.

“There are degrees of idiocy [among religions]...But I reject them all, because for most people...it's nothing more than a substitute brain. And a very malfunctioning one.”⁸
– Gene Roddenberry

Most religions use a presuppositional approach to gain converts: believe in our religion because we know we are right, it is culturally accepted, or an authoritarian figure said so. Religions usually begin with their tenets of faith, and then afterward try to use logic to defend their presuppositions. Steve Eley rightly ridiculed this approach with the following parody:

“Invisible Pink Unicorns are beings of awesome mystical power. We know this because they manage to be invisible and pink at the same time. Like all religions, the Faith of the Invisible Pink Unicorns is based upon both logic and faith. We have faith that they are pink; we logically know that they are invisible because we can't see them.”¹⁰

This type of reasoning is no different than the religions that tell you, “Repent and believe in God or you will go to Hell” without even establishing that there is a Hell or which god can keep you out of Hell. The proselyte is simply asked to accept a religion's belief system assuming that once they do they will see that it explains everything quite nicely. The problem is that there are many such religions, including atheism, and they all claim to explain everything quite nicely. A rationalist is not attracted to this approach because he would have to try every religion without any logical basis for them. Presuppositional apologetics would not be such a bad technique if the thing being believed just happens to be true, but

the problem is that apart from evidence there is no way to know. All of the religions cannot be simultaneously true as they profoundly contradict each other, and the consequences in believing in the wrong God could potentially send you to Hell.^{§1.1.2}

i.1.2 Evidence-Based Reasoning

In contrast to a religious presuppositional approach, a rationalist relies on evidence-based reasoning to guide his behavior. Many religions simply choose to believe in something and thus evidence, science, and logic are irrelevant to them. Again, anybody has the right to believe anything they want, but a rationalist asks, “What is the evidence for your belief?” No one may be able to *disprove* that a certain rock is God, but instead we ask you what is the *evidence* that your rock is God? Now that is a different question!

A rationalist understands that everyone lives their life by faith to some degree, but the question is what is the *basis* for your faith? Having a belief in something is not anti-intellectual if it is based on evidence. The problem is that most people confuse a reasoned faith with the “blind faith” promoted by religions. Atheists, for example, live their lives by faith every day in almost everything they do. They live by faith when they sit on a chair without first examining its structural integrity, eat food without knowing exactly where it’s been, or fly in airplanes with pilots they have never met. There are no guarantees, and certainly no proof, for almost anything we do in life. And many of these things could represent life threatening situations. The roof could cave in at any moment, you could catch a disease from someone you meet, and you could die in a crash anytime you drive down the road. Yet we still place our trust in systems that appear to be reasonable based on evidence. For example, before you sit on a chair, there is no proof that it will support your weight, but from a cursory glance it appears to have a similar structure to other devices which have supported you in the past, and based on that evidence you sit down on it. A rationalist’s faith is not blind since there is *a reasonable expectation that systems are dependable based on a proven track record through what has been reliably demonstrated in the past*. This is a rational position.

Thus, a rationalist does not necessarily demand *proof* for everything, for almost nothing in life is proven, but he does require *evidence*. Only an ignoramus demands that everything must first be proven.^{§1.2} Indeed, very few things can be proven except in certain limited applications such as mathematics. And anything that can be proven necessarily depends on a set of *unproven* assumptions. Even a formal proof requires *faith* in its axioms. If something can be proven then it should be proven, but for everything else we rely on evidence. Secular philosopher Mortimer Alder states:

“The commonsense view is the one that all of us embrace when we reject the self-contradictory and self-refuting position of the extreme skeptic as being not only unreasonable, but also impracticable. There is hardly an aspect of our daily lives that would be the same if we were to embrace

instead of rejecting the position of the extreme skeptic. We are firmly committed to the view that truth and falsity are ascertainable by us and that, with varying degrees of assurance, we can somehow discriminate between what is true and what is false. Almost everything we do or rely upon is grounded in that commitment.”¹¹

Accordingly, Nietzsche once said, “That which needs to be proved cannot be worth much.”¹² Indeed, there are many things in life that can never be proven, but they may still be true just the same.

The scientific method in particular is a very useful form of evidence and should be used whenever possible, but it is limited to a small subset of phenomena that are observable, testable, and repeatable. For example, science cannot prove whether a particular historical event happened (which is not repeatable), but it can supply evidence as to whether it is credible or not. In the field of astronomy, no one has ever travelled a million light years to prove the distance to a particular star (which is not testable), but a science of “best guesses” is based upon interpretations of data. Nor can science prove that someone inwardly loves you (which is not observable), but it may be true nonetheless. Science deals with facts, not subjective opinions, emotions, speculations, or judgments.

If there is no evidence to support a claim, then it should be treated with suspicion. Religious claims cannot be treated any differently. For some reason, when it comes to religion, many people think it gives them a license to be completely irrational. But religious truth does not get a special exemption. While some religions want you to “empty your mind”, we want you to start using it! A religious claim should not be accepted with less evidence than anything else, but neither does it require more proof than anything else. Any claim should be objectively evaluated based on its merits, regardless of whether it seems religious or not. Some demand that religious claims require *more* proof than non-religious claims because the stakes are higher, but they are certainly no higher than all the life-threatening activities previously mentioned. And forget about your life, what about your money! When you invest your money with a financial institution, there is no proof that it will pay off or that you will even get your money back, but hopefully there is some evidence that it will. After investigating different financial options, it is not unreasonable for a person to invest their money even though there are no guarantees. This is a reasoned form of faith which still carries some risk, but it is not blind faith.

***i.1.3* Intellectual Consistency**

In order for any belief system to be correct, it must *at least* be intellectually consistent. In this regard, philosopher Francis Schaeffer proposed the following criteria:

“I want to suggest that scientific proof, philosophical proof, and religious proof follow the same rules. We may have any problem before us that we wish to solve; it may concern a chemical reaction or the meaning of man. After the question has been defined, in each case proof consists of two steps: A. The theory must be non-contradictory and must give an answer to the phenomenon in question. B. We must be able to live consistently with our theory.”¹³

In regard to step A, if a belief system contradicts itself or cannot account for all known data, then it must either be modified or discarded. If it passes this test, this by itself does not prove that it is correct, because there may be multiple concurrent belief systems that can pass this test. Indeed, it is actually quite simple to create any number of self-consistent, non-falsifiable belief systems. Consider the claim that a particular rock is God, for example:

Skeptic: What power does the rock have?
Religious: Well, for starters, it created the world.
Skeptic: How do you know that?
Religious: Well, you are here, aren't you?

The rock religion is able to provide self-consistent answers to all questions posed to it. “See how clever it is? It doesn't require a shred of proof. Most paranoid delusions are intricate, but this is brilliant.”¹⁴ Accordingly, if you will just believe the rock religion, you will see how nicely it explains everything in the universe. 😊 Of course, being self-consistent does not mean that a belief system is correct, but at a minimum it must *at least* be self-consistent in order to be a plausible alternative.

If a belief system passes step A, then it should be subjected to step B and examined for its “livability”. If your belief system cannot be put into practice, then what good is it? It is one thing to adopt a particular belief system, but quite another thing to live according to it. The world is full of hypocrites who do not live according to the rules of their *own* stated religion. A hypocrite is defined as “a person who acts in contradiction to his or her stated beliefs or feelings”.¹⁵ They may say one thing, but do another. An atheist who lives consistently with his belief system would be more rational than a Christian who does not live according to his belief system. Regardless of whether or not your worldview is valid, you are automatically disqualified from being a rationalist if you are not living consistently with your *own* stated belief system. If you do not live in a manner consistent with your own belief system, then you should consider the possibility that perhaps you do not really believe it. And if it proves to be impossible to live a life consistent with your belief system, then it is not really a viable candidate for a rationalist.

***i.1.4* Objectivity**

The ability to be objective seems to be almost entirely lost on this generation. George Orwell wrote, “This kind of thing is frightening to me, because it often gives me the feeling that the very concept of objective truth is fading out of the world.”¹⁶ Objectivity is defined as “expressing or dealing with facts or conditions as perceived without distortion by personal feelings, prejudices, or interpretations”.¹⁷ Those who don’t think that anyone can be objective, probably are not themselves. An objective person is able to keep their emotions in check and examine an issue as if they were a neutral third-party observer. They are willing to examine an argument from the opponent’s viewpoint and consider what is fair. They are able to put aside any personal bias and prejudice and are willing to swallow their pride and admit it when they are wrong. A rationalist is not emotionally invested in the outcome, but must stoically be able to go where the facts lead, regardless of the consequences. Oh, how rare it is to find someone of such noble character these days!

The problem is that many people like to think that they are objective, but they clearly are not. Some skeptics in particular claim to be objective, but they often turn out to be pseudo-intellectuals because they ignore the hard facts that contradict their position. Many of them are not objective at all but merely put up a front to defend their secular religion at all costs. They are really no different than other religious adherents that have nothing but blind faith to defend their religious worldview. As James “The Amazing” Randi once said, “No amount of belief makes something a fact.” A rationalist must simply learn to deal with the cold hard facts.

A rationalist may not be perfect, but it is his goal to be as objective as possible; and when it is shown that he is not being objective, he quickly corrects himself. Such humility is a related trait of a rationalist that is also rare today. The lack of humility disqualifies many religious zealots and dogmatic atheists whose arrogance and condescension prevent them from acknowledging even some of the simplest truths. English author G.K. Chesterton wrote, “A man was meant to be doubtful about himself, but undoubting about the truth; this has been exactly reversed.”¹⁸ If a rationalist gets offended, he will quickly get over it, for truth does not hold grudges. There is no place for maintaining a position out of pride or ego, because a rationalist is only interested in the truth.

***i.1.5* Seekers of Truth**

Socrates is credited with the principle, “Follow the argument wherever it leads.”¹⁹ A rationalist is a seeker of truth. A seeker of truth is one who wants to know the truth regardless of what it is or where it leads, even if it could cost them their reputation. Unfortunately, most people do not seem to be seekers of the truth. Winston Churchill said, “Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing had happened.”²⁰ Indeed, when they are pressed, most people will admit that they are not really seekers of

truth for they are merely preoccupied with their routines of school, work, and pleasure. Are you still there? If you are not a seeker of truth, then rather than quitting at this point, we would like to convince you to become one.

Pontius Pilate is remembered for asking the infamous question, “What is truth?”²¹ Truth is that which is real and factual. Truth is neither relative nor subjective. Indeed, you are free to believe whatever you want, but that does not make it true. As American novelist Philip K. Dick pointed out, “Reality is what refuses to go away when I stop believing in it.” You may refuse to believe in gravity, but when you jump off the top of a building you will fall just the same. Anyone who believes that there is no such thing as absolute truth and that everything is relative is an ignoramus.^{§1.1.1} If there is no truth, then the fields of science, mathematics, engineering, etc. have all been wasting their time. Would you want to drive over a bridge designed by an engineer who doesn’t accept the truths of physics? And why do your teachers keep marking your problems wrong if all the answers are equally true? 😊

Of course, there are many subjective theories, philosophies, and religions, but rather than blindly accepting them, a seeker of truth tries to objectively evaluate their claims. Any religious claims must be held up to the same level of scrutiny as any academic discipline – no more and no less. Again, there can be no different standard for “religious” truth than for “scientific” truth. Logic is neither religious nor non-religious. Religions do not get a free ride to shield their spiritual truths from scrutiny and then ignore all the “evil” scientific truths which oppose them. As Saint Augustine of Hippo once said, “All truth is God’s truth”.²² Unfortunately, this is problematic for most religions which base their claims on nothing more than presuppositional apologetics.

Some of you are already satisfied with your lifestyles and the truth will only get in your way. Jim Davis’ comic strip character Garfield said, “The truth shall set you free, but first it will make you miserable.” Consider this passage concerning the truth from the movie “The Matrix”:

“Like everyone else you were born into bondage, born into a prison that you cannot smell or taste or touch. A prison for your mind....After this there is no turning back. You take the blue pill, the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill, you stay in Wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes. Remember, all I’m offering is the truth, nothing more....I didn’t say it would be easy, Neo. I just said it would be the truth.”²³

Ah yes, “Ignorance is bliss”, or as William E. Davidsen put it, “Stupidity, like virtue, is its own reward.” If you are not interested in the truth, then you might as well believe whatever you want. You can try to twist the truth to conform to your preferred lifestyle, or you can accept the truth and change your lifestyle. You are being invited to accept the latter, but it may not be easy.

If the truth could potentially make your life worse, then why seek the truth at all? If your house is on fire, you could ignore that fact and be happy and worry free, that is until you burn to death! But if you acknowledge the truth and flee, you may indeed suffer some inconveniences, but you may live much longer. You

are free to believe that the earth is flat or that the universe revolves around the earth and all may be well, but you will find fewer contradictions in life if you will acknowledge the truth. Those who are seekers of the truth already know that *the truth is its own reward*. And if you don't understand that yet, then you are probably not a rationalist.

i.2 **Advancement to Rationalist**

The principles of rationality are rarely disputed and are almost universally understood. Do you agree to abide by these ground rules? Most atheists, agnostics, and skeptics readily accept these premises and like to think of themselves as rationalists even though it will be later shown that this is generally not the case. At this point you are merely asked to commit to the principles of rationality and then see where it leads you. For once you have agreed with these principles, it is only necessary to hold you accountable to them because the conclusion will be inescapable. Then, if someone later deviates from this path, it will not be necessary to re-convince them of the rational position, but only to show them where they have erred. Because of human nature, sometimes it is necessary to repeatedly hit people over the head with hard facts until they relent of their irrationality. This book will not be able to follow everyone around and answer every frivolous objection that may be raised, but if you are truly committed to the principles of rationality that won't be necessary.

This book is broken into chapters which correspond to various levels of truth that people are usually willing to accept. As you look down the list of chapters, you may doubt this progression or wonder how it can possibly be supported by evidence, but this is precisely why this book was written. Each progressive step is firmly established by logic and evidence alone without any appeal to any unsubstantiated religious claims. Most people will find themselves somewhere along this continuum. Where would you place yourself?

Ignoramus – one who is not really certain about anything.

Atheist – one who does not believe in the existence of the supernatural.

Agnostic – one who is uncertain about the existence of the supernatural.

Supernaturalist – one who believes that supernatural phenomena exist.

Theist – one who believes in the existence of a God or gods.

Abrahamist – one who believes in the Judeo-Christian God.

“Christian” – one who professes belief in Jesus Christ.

Rationalist – one who actually follows the teachings of Jesus Christ.

There is nothing hidden in the fact that once you accept the principles of rationality, the evidence alone will lead you to become a follower of Jesus Christ. Believing in Jesus does not require religion, it is a logical deduction. Once you are resolved to follow the truth, the truth will inevitably lead you to this conclusion. Are you surprised? Before you object, notice that there is a clear distinction between the last two categories of “Christians” and Rationalists. A

“Christian” is commonly defined as “one who professes belief in the teachings of Jesus Christ”,²⁴ but a rationalist, on the other hand, goes one step further and actually *follows* the teachings of Jesus Christ, and thus would be considered a “true Christian”. And there is a huge difference! Many if not most of the members of the “Christian” religion are not rationalists and do not really follow Jesus Christ. Such “Christians” have slaughtered thousands during the Crusades, committed financial fraud, molested children, and persecuted minorities. These people may have been members of churches, but they were not actually followers of Jesus Christ. W. S. Landon commented, “The religion of Christ is peace and good-will – the religion of Christendom is war and ill-will.”²⁵ Many people see much hypocrisy within Christianity and conclude that they don’t want anything to

“I have got nothing against Jesus, it’s his fan club that I can’t stand.”

– Bumper Sticker

do with it. Every Sunday morning, “Christians” get dressed up and sit in pews, listen to organ music, light candles, and do responsive readings in elaborate church buildings with stained-glass windows – all of which have absolutely nothing to do with Jesus Christ or his teachings.²⁶ *Jesus never advocated any of those things* as they are merely done in his name by many today who claim to be “Christians”. But being a follower of Jesus doesn’t mean you have to follow his followers! Mahatma Gandhi summed it up well, “I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ.”²⁷

Why should you become a follower of Jesus Christ? Because as you will see, it is the most logical conclusion based on all the available evidence! If you think of yourself as a rational person, then this book is designed to lead you to the logical conclusion of rationality. This book maintains a non-religious approach, beginning at a neutral starting point of logic and reason. You are not asked to follow Jesus based on blind faith or any other religious gobbledygook, but only because that is where the facts lead. It will require no more faith than it does to choose a career or to enter into marriage. If you are open to the idea of following Jesus Christ but have been hindered for intellectual reasons, then this book is for you! Some people once set out to be rationalists but then got side-tracked by other false philosophies along the way; this book provides the *evidence* that will enable them to make progress along the path of rationality again. Many of you, however, will only be able to advance in that direction one step at a time though. You may be tempted to jump to a particular chapter that answers a particular question, and you are welcome to do that, but realize that many of you only hold the beliefs you do because of a presuppositional approach. You may already believe in a particular God, for example, but you may not have any rational basis for doing so. You may have simply been raised that way or been taught it by your culture. But when your personal beliefs are challenged, you may easily be persuaded to accept another viewpoint because you had no rational foundation for your former beliefs in the first place. Thus, you are encouraged to read the book through starting from the beginning in order to establish a firm foundation for what you believe and why you believe it.

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- ⁴ “Religion”, *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., Merriam-Webster: Springfield, MA, 2003; <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/religion>, accessed July 15, 2020.
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- ⁸ Yvonne Fern, *Gene Roddenberry: The Last Conversation*, p. 119, Pocket Books: New York, 1996.
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- ¹⁴ James Cameron and William Wisher, Jr., *The Terminator*, Orion Pictures Corporation: October 26, 1984.
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- ¹⁶ George Orwell, “Looking Back on the Spanish War”, c. 1942; George Packer comp., *Facing Unpleasant Facts: Narrative Essays*, p. 154, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Co.: Orlando, FL, 2008.
- ¹⁷ “Objective”, *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., Merriam-Webster: Springfield, MA, 2003; <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/objective>, accessed July 15, 2020.
- ¹⁸ Gilbert K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, p. 55, John Lane Company: New York, 1908.
- ¹⁹ Plato, *The Republic*, bk. 3, sect. 394d, c. 380 BC.
- ²⁰ Charles G. Sampas, “Sampascoopies”, Lowell Sun, p. 4, Lowell, MA, September 6, 1945,
- ²¹ John the Apostle, *Gospel of John*, 18:38, c. 85 AD.

²² Saint Augustine of Hippo, *On Christian Teaching*, II.75, c. 397 AD.

²³ Andy and Larry Wachowski, *The Matrix*, Warner Brothers: March 31, 1999.

²⁴ “Christian”, *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., Merriam-Webster: Springfield, MA, 2003; <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Christian>, accessed July 15, 2020.

²⁵ Walter Savage Landor, “Conversation VII: William Penn and Lord Peterborough”, *Imaginary Conversations of Literary Men and Statesmen*, 5th vol., p. 323, James Duncan, Paternoster Row: London, 1829.

²⁶ Alan Bunning, *The Church: According to the Bible*, 3rd edition, Lulu Press: Raleigh, NC, November 14, 2020.

²⁷ Possibly derived from the quotation, “Oh, I don’t reject Christ. I love Christ. It’s just that so many of you Christians are so unlike Christ.” Dibin Samuel, “Mahatma Gandhi and Christianity”, *Christianity Today*, August 14, 2008;

<http://in.christiantoday.com/articledir/print.htm?id=2837>, accessed July 15, 2020.

“Always learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” – Paul of Tarsus

Chapter 1:

From Ignoramus to Atheist

An ignoramus is one who is not certain about anything. In classical philosophy terms, this would normally include various types of nihilism which claim that nothing exists in reality, and life is without purpose. But since most people don't seem to know what a nihilist is, the term “ignoramus” is used instead. (Besides everyone usually knows at least one person who is an ignoramus 😊). There are not many true ignoramuses in the world and most of them never started out that way. Most people who act like ignoramuses are usually just being *intellectually dishonest* with themselves. They normally are certain about a good many things in life as they go to work, eat food, and sleep, but it is only when confronted with hard facts that contradict their purposeless worldview that they suddenly begin acting like ignoramuses.

This most commonly occurs among atheists who claim that they accept scientific evidence, except whenever that evidence supports the existence of God.^{§34} Rather than accept those scientific findings, they turn into ignoramuses and say, “How can we really know anything for sure?” All of a sudden, science can't be trusted anymore and they begin to assert that perhaps nothing may exist, it could all be an illusion. And then when pressed further, they eventually claim that nobody can know for sure that anything exists. Sometimes they don't even know for sure that they exist! Okay, perhaps you don't exist. But then why are you bothering to read this if you don't exist? Because you are an ignoramus! Once someone gets to this point, it is usually fruitless to argue with them for there is no reason to debate with someone who doesn't exist! Instead, here is some advice: “Don't argue with a fool, borrow his money.” 😊

“Never attribute to malice that which is adequately explained by stupidity.”¹

– Hanlon's Razor

Fortunately, the ignoramus condition does not appear to be permanent as they usually return back to their normal selves the next day and seem to know all sorts of things about the concrete world they live in once they go back to work, eat food, and sleep again in the real world. It is often very difficult to get anywhere logically with someone after they have degenerated into an ignoramus. Sometimes you may seem to be making progress with them, but then when you confront them with evidence again, they revert right back to their old ignorant selves. Albert Einstein is credited with saying, “Two things are infinite, the

universe and human stupidity, and I am not yet completely sure about the universe.”²

1.1 Philosophical Nonsense

An ignoramus is essentially ~~delusional~~ “reality challenged”. They often get lost in a smorgasbord of philosophical gobbledygook that has no basis in reality. Ah, grasshopper, do you hear the sound of one-hand clapping? It is okay to have an open mind, but don’t be so open minded that your brain falls out! ☺ G. K. Chesterton points out, “When people cease to believe in God, they don’t believe in nothing, they believe in anything.”³ Ignoramuses flit from philosophy to philosophy and theory to theory but never seem to care that their imaginations of “what might be” are contradicted by the hard scientific realities of “what is”. From Shakespeare’s play, King Henry the Fourth:⁴

Glendower: “I can call spirits from the vasty deep.”

Hotspur: “Why, so can I, or so can any man; But will they come when you do call for them?”

Once an ignoramus has degenerated to the point that they believe that nobody can know for sure that anything really exists, perhaps this song popularized by Mr. Roger’s Neighborhood would be appropriate (sung to the tune of “Row, Row, Row Your Boat”):⁵

Propel, propel, propel your craft,
Gently down liquid solution,
Ecstatically, ecstatically, ecstatically, ecstatically,
Existence is but an illusion.

If you are not really sure that you actually exist, perhaps you could be convinced by the act of thinking:

“I think, therefore I am.” – *Rene Descartes*

“I think, therefore I am, I think?” – *George Carlin*

“I think that I think, therefore I think that I am.” – *Ambrose Bierce*

“I get mail, therefore I am.” – *Dilbert*

“I think, therefore Descartes exists.” – *Saul Steinberg*

“I think I am having fun, therefore I am.” – *Alan Bunning*

If that doesn't work, perhaps you could be convinced by the act of doing:

"To be is to do." – *Immanuel Kant*

"To do is to be." – *Jean-Paul Sartre*

"Do be do be do." – *Frank Sinatra*

"Scooby Dooby Do." – *Scooby Do*

"Do be a Do Bee." – *Miss Louise, Romper Room*

"Do wah diddy diddy dum diddy do." – *Manfred Mann*

Other than that, perhaps nothing will be able to convince you that you exist. Why? Because you are just an ignoramus! But all is not lost for you. As Brian Oldfield said, "No one is entirely worthless. They can always serve as a bad example." Or as comedian David Letterman put it, "Everyone has a purpose in life. Perhaps yours is watching television." ☺

1.1.1 Relativism

A relativist is a type of ignoramus who believes, "There are no absolutes because everything is relative." But that in itself is an absolute statement! That is as illogical as the "liar's paradox" tautology: "This statement is false!" Relativists believe in the absolute truth that there is no absolute truth. What hypocrisy! Relativists make many other similar ignorant statements such as:

- ***"What's true for you may not be true for me."*** Do you think you can suspend the laws of gravity if you simply choose not to believe in them? If nothing is true beyond your own set of beliefs, then logically you can never be wrong about anything – the sign of a true ignoramus!
- ***"There is no right and wrong."*** Relativists usually only say this to justify themselves when they probably have done something wrong. Notice that they still act as if lying, stealing, and murder are definitely wrong, at least whenever it is happening to them. Would it be okay for someone to kill you? Why not, it may not be considered to be wrong according to the murderer!
- ***"Judge not, lest ye be judged."***⁶ An ignoramus will often rebuke those who they perceive to be judgmental and thus are themselves guilty of being judgmental towards the judgmental! And of all things, they are quoting from the Bible which stands in judgment of them.

Obviously, the laws of the universe don't stop working just because you don't believe in them. There is objective truth that exists outside of your mind. Most relativists are hypocrites *in practice* because they continue to live their lives according to various truths of science and morality despite what they say. They appear to be quite certain of many truths when they dispute their utility bills, curse at people who cut them off on the road, and argue with referees at sporting events. Ignoramuses are thus disqualified from being rationalists because they do not live their lives consistently with their own belief systems. This is also true in

the area of morality because most relativists believe that it is wrong to harm others, which in itself would then be a hypocritical moral judgment. A *true* relativist, however, believes that harming others could just as equally be considered good since everything is relative. This is the sign of a true ignoramus!

1.1.2 Pluralism

Similar to relativism is religious pluralism. A pluralist is a type of ignoramus who naively believes all religions are basically the same. As Jonathan Swift once wrote, “What religion is he of?...Why, he is an anythingarian.”⁷ Since ignoramuses don’t think anyone can really know anything, they are liable to believe anything! A pluralist often makes ignorant statements such as:

- “*All religions are equally true.*” Perhaps there are some elements of truth in many different religions, but logically all of them cannot simultaneously be true since they contradict each other. While many religions share several common moral principles, many of their core beliefs are entirely incompatible: Judaism contradicts Islam, Hinduism contradicts Satanism, Christianity contradicts the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster, etc.
- “*Everyone worships the same God who goes by different names.*” How naive! While one particular god may be called by different names in different cultures, all gods are definitely not the same, and sometimes there are several conflicting gods within the *same* culture. In ancient Greece, for example, Zeus, Hades, and Poseidon were definitely not all the same god and none of them were the equivalent of Theos.
- “*All roads lead to the same place.*” Assuming there is another place to go to after you die, different religions claim to lead people to very different places. Nirvana is not the same as Heaven, for example, and you cannot get to both places by the same means. And if someone believes, “All ignoramuses will go to Hell”, that is not the same place either. 😊

Thus, a rationalist who follows truth, logic, and reason cannot be a religious pluralist. The incompatible claims of various religions will be discussed in more detail later.^{§5.2.3} Anyone is free to practice whatever religion they want, but that does not mean that all of them can simultaneously be correct. Only an ignoramus would believe that! Pluralism, however, should not be confused with religious tolerance.

1.1.3 Tolerance

A rationalist fully respects a person’s right to believe whatever they want, but that does not mean that the rest of us have to believe it too! American journalist H. L. Mencken wrote, “We must respect the other fellow’s religion, but only in the same sense and to the extent that we respect his theory that his wife is beautiful and his children smart.”⁸ Most ignoramuses are usually tolerant of other

religions because they don't know if any of them are true anyway. They are willing to go along with just about anything so as not to hurt anyone's feelings. After all, what could be the harm in that? If someone believes it is okay to drive the wrong way down the highway, then what right does anyone have to tell them that they are wrong? 😊 If a religious fanatic believes that God wants them to murder all ignoramuses, then the ignoramuses should be fully tolerant of their beliefs too, right?

An ignoramus will claim to be tolerant of everyone's beliefs, except that they are usually *intolerant* of people they think are intolerant! An ignoramus just doesn't seem to like the fact that someone can actually be right about something. How intolerant of your school teachers to mark your answers wrong! An ignoramus tends to be tolerant of the most illogical nonsense imaginable, but they do not seem to tolerate anyone who claims to know the truth. What they fail to realize is that *the truth is inherently intolerant of all of the other positions that are false*. A rationalist knows that the truth simply is, and whether or not it gives someone warm fuzzy feelings is irrelevant. "Why can't we all just get along?" has little to do with whether something is true or not. If someone wants to believe that a particular rock is God, we can respect his right to believe it, but a rationalist is only interested in truth that can be supported with evidence. A rationalist even respects a person's right to be an ignoramus, but just don't expect us to become one too!

1.2 Unobtainable Proof

Part of the ignoramuses' problem is that they think they must have proof for everything before they will believe it. Quite amazingly, they often demand this proof right after they get done explaining that there is no such thing as absolute truth! Ignoramuses try to hide behind the requirement of proof and yet they live by *faith* every day without any proof at all in almost everything they do.^{§i.1.2} They cannot prove that their parents love them, or that they will receive their next paycheck, or that they will even wake up again the next morning. Remember, some of you can't even prove that you exist! (And yet I can prove that you read this sentence.)

When an ignoramus demands proof from others, what they usually mean is that they want proof for anything that contradicts what they want to believe. Their arguments become more and more absurd as they begin to question everything with "What if...?" What if it is all an illusion and nothing really exists? What if all the scientists are in on one big conspiracy? What if you were created one second ago and simultaneously implanted with all the memories that you have? Or what if you are just an ignoramus who has trouble facing reality? Can you prove that this is not the case? Ignoramuses demand proof, but do not use the same standard of proof in the way they live their lives, nor do they accept proof when you provide it to them. After all, the very concept of a proof would imply that there is truth!

1.3 Advancement to Atheist

An ignoramus would certainly take a big step forward once they learn to face reality. When someone decides to stop acting like an ignoramus, they are often able to quickly advance several levels of rationality. Once they are finally able to deal with concrete evidence, there is no telling how far logic and reason may eventually take them. Most ignoramuses do not really seem to be serious about their position anyway and just throw out these ludicrous arguments in order to defend themselves out of pride. But if an ignoramus is truly being serious, then they are seriously asked to convert from their ignoramity.

Atheists who have degenerated into ignoramuses are invited to leave their insanity and *at least* become sensible atheists again. There are many types of atheism, but this tendency to degenerate into ignoramuses appears to be more of a western phenomenon. Atheists from countries such as China and Russia rarely turn into ignoramuses because they are still able to acknowledge objective facts. Objectivism promoted by Ayn Rand, for example, is a form of atheism which distances itself from this ignoramitic type of atheism:



Wish you were here!

“Reality exists as an objective absolute – facts are facts, independent of man’s feelings, wishes, hopes or fears. Reason (the faculty which identifies and integrates the material provided by man’s senses) is man’s only means of perceiving reality, his only source of knowledge, his only guide to action, and his basic means of survival.”⁹

There is objective truth in this world which will persist even if you close your eyes and hide under the covers! When you finally come back to your senses and begin to face objective scientific facts, then perhaps you will be able to advance. Otherwise, you will probably always remain an ignoramus. Once you are able to acknowledge logic, reason, and evidence as a basis for determining truth, then you will finally be able to advance on the path to becoming a true rationalist, and as it will be shown, a follower of Jesus Christ.

¹ Attributed to Robert J. Hanlon by Joseph E. Bigler, <http://www.statusq.org/archives/2001/11/26>, accessed July 15, 2020; Arthur Bloch, *Murphy’s Law Book Two: More reasons why things go wrong!* p. 52, Price/Stern/Sloan Publishers, Los Angeles, CA, 1980.

² Frederick S. Perls, *Gestalt Therapy Verbatim*, p. 33, Real People Press: Lafayette, CA, 1969.

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- ⁴ William Shakespeare, *King Henry The Fourth*, part I, act 3, scene 1, c. 1597.
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- ⁶ Matthew the Apostle, *Gospel of Matthew*, 7:1, c. 60 AD.
- ⁷ Jonathan Swift, *Polite Conversation*, p. 59, London, 1783.
- ⁸ H. L. Mencken, *Minority Report: H.L. Mencken's Notebooks*, p. 3, John Hopkins University Press: Baltimore and London, 1956.
- ⁹ Ayn Rand, "Introducing Objectivism", *The Objectivist Newsletter*, vol. 1, no. 8, p. 35, August 1962.

“The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’”
– King David

Chapter 2:

From Atheist To Agnostic

An atheist is one who does not believe in the existence of the supernatural. An atheist does not claim that it is impossible for the supernatural to exist, but they don't see any evidence for it and simply don't believe it. Notice that a lower standard of “supernatural” is used here instead of “God”. The word “supernatural” comes from the Latin term “*super natura*” and literally means “beyond nature”. Anything “of or relating to an order of existence beyond the visible observable universe...departing from what is usual or normal especially so as to appear to transcend the laws of nature” would be classified as supernatural.¹ This includes any phenomena originating from other dimensions, various forms of spiritualism, and of course the existence of gods or God. An atheist attempts to explain away any supernatural claims purely through natural or material processes. If you consider yourself an atheist, but believe in the existence of the supernatural, then you are ready to advance to the next chapter. Once someone believes in the existence of supernatural phenomena, identifying the precise source of the phenomenon and whether or not it has intelligence becomes a secondary issue. Once an atheist concedes the possibility that supernatural phenomena exist, then that obviously includes the possibility that God exists.

Indeed, many if not most who claim to be atheists are actually *agnostics*. In the common vernacular, these terms are often used loosely and sometimes interchangeably. The main difference between these classifications is the level of certainty – an atheist does not believe that the supernatural exists, while an agnostic is uncertain as to whether the supernatural exists. Since most believe that you can neither prove nor disprove God, agnosticism is often considered to be the logically superior position. Once the distinction between atheism and agnosticism is made clear, many who have been calling themselves atheists almost immediately reclassify their position as an agnostic. If this is your case, then you also may advance to the next chapter as well.

2.1 The Burden of Proof

Since it is nearly impossible to prove a negative, some atheists maintain that their position is more logical than the agnostics' until someone can *prove* that God exists. To them, claiming that God exists is no better than claiming that

Invisible Pink Unicorns exist.^{§1.1} Granted, the idea that you should remain agnostic towards unicorns because you cannot disprove their existence would be unreasonable. You are not agnostic towards the existence of unicorns, you simply don't believe in unicorns and you live your life as if there are no unicorns. And if you are atheistic towards the existence of unicorns, then you should also be equally atheistic towards the existence of God. Stephen F. Roberts said: "I contend that we are both atheists. I just believe in one fewer god than you do. When you understand why you dismiss all the other possible gods, you will understand why I dismiss yours."² Likewise, notice that most Christians are not agnostic towards the existence of Zeus, for example. This analogy breaks down, however, because there is credible scientific evidence that God exists^{§3.4} while there is no credible evidence that unicorns exist. If there were indeed some claims of unicorn sightings and evidence of unicorn fossils, then there may be reason to be agnostic regarding the possibility of unicorns. Agnosticism becomes a valid choice even if the evidence is not entirely conclusive, as long as it is still within the realm of possibility. Thus, it is not necessary to "prove" that supernatural phenomena exist, but merely to demonstrate that it is *more likely than not*, which is discussed in the next chapter.

2.2 Sociological Perspective

Using conservative figures, it is estimated that roughly 92.4 percent of the world believes in God or a higher power.^{3,4} In sociological terms, this essentially shifts the burden of proof to the atheist who must convince people why they also



Door-to-door evangelism

shouldn't believe in God. Like it or not, it seems as if mankind is inherently religious in nature.⁵ So much so, that Voltaire once stated, "If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him."⁶ But believing in God cannot merely be disregarded as a fantasy of the "ignorant masses", for it is reported that "seventy-five percent of scientists around the world believe in God".⁷ Atheists often defer to "consensus science" to support their worldviews, but then look the other way when the consensus of scientists actually believes in God! The atheist must wonder why so many intelligent scientists have got it so wrong. Popular opinion of course does not prove that God exists, but it does make the

issue worthy of consideration. If 75 percent of the scientists testified that they believe in unicorns, you might not be quite so certain that there weren't any unicorns.

On the other hand, many atheists are firm believers in the existence of extraterrestrial life, even though only about 36 percent of the general population shares their belief.⁸ How ironic that these atheists adamantly reject the possibility that God exists, and yet they firmly believe in the existence of aliens on other planets.^{8,3,3} Atheistic evangelists have seduced people to donate millions of dollars to the SETI project, for example, *but not one shred of hard evidence has ever come from it*. Not only do atheists believe in aliens, but Stephen Hawking was afraid that they may eventually come to conquer the earth “in massive ships, having used up all the resources from their home planet.”⁹ Why aren’t these atheists requiring the same level of “proof” for this unsubstantiated belief of theirs? While this proves nothing, it does show that these atheists are *inconsistent* in their faith. They demand proof for the existence of God, and yet do not demand proof for the existence of extraterrestrial life. Evolutionist Hubert Yockey concludes: “In the absence of better knowledge of the origin of life the search now being made for little green men and their signals from planets near other stars is based on the evidence of faith and must therefore be regarded as an exercise of religious belief.”¹⁰ The atheists maintain this *faith* simply because it validates their atheistic worldview, not because they have any “proof”. This is not unusual, however, because as pointed out in the introduction, almost everything the atheist does on a daily basis is taken on faith without the slightest need for proof.^{1,2} This does not make these atheists wrong, but they are clearly being hypocritical and therefore not rationalists.

2.2.1 The *New* Ontological Argument

The ontological argument was originally proposed by Saint Anselm of Canterbury in which he argued that if you define God as “a being than which nothing greater can be conceived”¹¹ then it can be proven that God must exist. Before the proof is given would you agree that if God exists, God would therefore be the greatest being? Most people find this definition perfectly reasonable. Do you? If so, then it can be *proven* that God exists. The formal proof can be written in symbolic logic form:

1. B	Observation	(<i>Something is defined as the greatest being</i>)
2. $G \supset B$	Premise	(<i>If God exists, then let God be defined as the greatest being</i>)
3. $\sim G \supset \sim B$	Transposition	(<i>If God doesn't exist, then God cannot be defined as the greatest being</i>)
4. $G \vee \sim B$	Implication	(<i>God exists or God cannot be defined as the greatest being</i>)
5. $\therefore G$	4,1 Disjunctive Syllogism	(<i>Therefore God exists</i>)

Perhaps a quote from the French playwright Moliere is appropriate here, “That must be wonderful! I don’t understand it at all.” If you accepted the premise like most people, then the conclusion that God exists is inescapable! It is only after the

existence of God has been proven, that atheists suddenly want to go back and try to find a flaw in the logic, as if they have been tricked. There is no trick! Once the premise is accepted, then the argument is rock solid according to the rules of symbolic logic.

Some contend, however, that this same logic could be used to prove almost anything exists since it largely depends upon the definition of God. For example, you could replace the word “God” with “unicorn” and the logic would still be valid. Why yes, you could do that, but then that new proof would be rendered *unsound* because the premise would no longer be accepted. People may accept that “God is defined as the greatest being”, but they do not accept that “a unicorn is defined as the greatest being”. And a proof is only valid if its premises are accepted. Philosopher Rene Descartes put it this way: “While from the fact that I cannot conceive God without existence, it follows that existence is inseparable from Him, and hence that He really exists; not that my thought can bring this to pass, or impose any necessity of things, but, on the contrary, because the necessity which lies in the thing itself, i.e. the necessity of the existence of God determines me to think in this way.”¹²

If you are still skeptical, the ontological argument has been given a complete makeover by the help of modern philosophers^{13,14} resulting in this refined proof using modal symbolic logic:

1. $\sim\Box\sim G$	Premise	<i>(God's existence is not impossible or $\Diamond G$)</i>
2. $G \supset \Box G$	Premise	<i>(If God exists, then God necessarily exists)</i>
3. $\Box G \supset G$	Modal Axiom	<i>(If God necessarily exists, then God exists)</i>
4. $\Box G \vee \sim\Box G$	Law of Excluded Middle	<i>(God necessarily exists or God doesn't necessarily exist)</i>
5. $\sim\Box G \supset \Box\sim\Box G$	Becker's Postulate	<i>(If God doesn't necessarily exist, necessarily God doesn't necessarily exist)</i>
6. $\Box G \vee \Box\sim\Box G$	4,5 Substitution	<i>(God necessarily exists or necessarily God doesn't necessarily exist)</i>
7. $\Box\sim\Box G \supset \Box\sim G$	2 Modus Tollens	<i>(If necessarily God doesn't necessarily exist, necessarily God doesn't exist)</i>
8. $\Box G \vee \Box\sim G$	6,7 Substitution	<i>(God necessarily exists or necessarily God doesn't exist)</i>
9. $\Box G$	8,1 Disjunctive Syllogism	<i>(God necessarily exists)</i>
10. $\therefore G$	9,3 Modus Ponens	<i>(Therefore God exists)</i>

Again, if you accept the reasonable premises that “God’s existence is not impossible” and “if God exists then God necessarily exists”, then you have no excuse – repent and accept Jesus Christ as your personal savior! Relax. This proof does not specify who or what God is, what God requires, or much of anything else for that matter. Indeed, for some reason this type of argument is not particularly compelling at all. Atheists do not suddenly believe in God after being given this proof. Why is that? Because despite their claims, atheists really do not

want *proof* that God exists (*a priori*), but would rather have *evidence* that God exists (*a posteriori*). Such evidence will indeed be presented in the next several chapters, but this proof is sufficient to prove that God's existence can indeed be proven! Whether or not you accept the proof is another matter, but it cannot be claimed that it is impossible to prove that God exists.

2.3 Irrational Atheists

Atheism will probably always exist in some form since it is the philosophy that naturally results when one assumes a completely materialistic worldview. But just because someone chooses to accept a particular worldview, however, does not make it true. To simply *decide in advance* that supernatural phenomena do not exist is not a rational position. A rationalist does not automatically assume anything. Most atheists have already decided that supernatural phenomena can never exist, but this is not based on empirical evidence. Atheists like to believe that they rely on science, except when the science begins to demonstrate that supernatural phenomena exist. As documented in the next chapter, there are scores of controlled double-blind scientific studies published in peer-reviewed academic journals clearly demonstrating supernatural phenomena that is observable, testable, and repeatable.^{§3.4}

“Atheism is an incredible claim that something comes from nothing and intelligence comes from non-intelligence and life comes from non-life.”¹⁵
– *Brother Jed Smock*

As a defense mechanism, atheists have adopted their own form of *circular logic* that goes something like this: If any evidence shows that the supernatural exists, then that evidence must be wrong because we have already decided that all evidence that shows the supernatural exists is automatically wrong. This is not a rational argument, but a religious position. According to their religious worldview, all scientific studies are false except the ones that produce findings that agree with them. Geneticist Richard Lewontin explains the atheistic bias:

“...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...that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is an absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.”¹⁶

Such atheists are not rationalists because they automatically reject valid scientific evidence for no other reason except that it ruins their preconceived notions. That is like asking, “Who left the toilet seat up?” and demanding that one of the

answers can't be your husband. ☺ Likewise, many atheists automatically dismiss all religious claims without any consideration, even if they have never even heard of them before. Why? Because that would go against their preconceived religious views. How close minded is that! Whatever can be explained by natural processes should be. But the error in logic is *assuming* that everything can be explained by natural processes. That is not a rational deduction, it is an unproven religious assumption.

2.3.1 Religious Atheists

While the normal atheist position simply does not believe that the supernatural exists, a “strong atheist” is classified as one who is *certain* that the supernatural does not exist.¹⁷ Some strong atheists even go as far to say that it is impossible for the supernatural to exist. What bold claims of *faith* they have regarding something that is scientifically unknowable! Even though they cannot disprove God, they are entirely certain that God cannot exist. *Such a claim is neither a logical nor scientific conclusion.* Such an unsubstantiated position would essentially require omniscience in order to claim that something does not exist anywhere in the universe. That would be similar to claiming there can never be extra-terrestrial life. These atheists admit that “we cannot prove a negative”, *but then go on to accept the negative as fact.* Amazing! Consider this confession of Isaac Asimov:

“I am an atheist, out and out. It took me a long time to say it. I’ve been an atheist for years and years, but somehow I felt it was intellectually unrespectable to say one was an atheist, because it assumed knowledge that one didn’t have. Somehow it was better to say one was a humanist or an agnostic. I finally decided that I’m a creature of emotion as well as of reason. Emotionally I am an atheist. I don’t have the evidence to prove that God doesn’t exist, but I so strongly suspect he doesn’t that I don’t want to waste my time.”¹⁸

Well, at least he was honest. But this is no different than saying, “I am so convinced that my religion is right, that I don’t want to waste my time looking into anything else.” These are hardly the words of a seeker of the truth. The blind faith of strong atheists is not any different than other religions and Asimov freely admits, it is merely based on *emotion*. The famous skeptic James “The Amazing” Randi said, “Religion is based upon blind faith supported by no evidence”, which is exactly the position that a strong atheist has taken. Indeed, when you confront these religious atheists with logic, they often degenerate into ignoramuses.^{§1.1} “I have already chosen my belief system, so don’t bother me with the truth now.” Or as Carl Sagan said, “You can’t convince a believer of anything; for their belief is not based on evidence, it’s based on a deep seated need to believe.”¹⁹ Do some atheists have a “need” to believe that God does not exist?

There is a difference between those who simply do not believe in God, and those who do not *want* to believe in God. What would cause someone to become such an atheist? There are several different reasons why people are atheists:

- Some atheists do not believe in the existence of God for intellectual reasons claiming that there is insufficient evidence. They don't necessarily have an axe to grind, they just don't see a reason to believe in God's existence. This would include people from various cultures that have never been exposed to the concept of God. Some would even include young children in this category before they have been exposed to the concept of God.
- Some atheists have had a traumatic experience and do not believe any real God could have allowed it to happen. They are often stuck on the question of "Why?" Why is there pain and suffering in the world? Such questioning, however, has nothing to do with whether God exists or not. It could be that there is a God who enjoys pain and suffering, but that does not mean that God doesn't exist. No amount of logic or reason can compensate an atheist for being unloved or abused as a child, hurt by an authoritarian figure, or traumatized by the death of a loved one. What they really need is a hug! 😊 Deep down many of these atheists really do believe in God, *but they just don't like him.*
- Some atheists reject God because they don't want to believe that they have to give an account for their behavior. They don't want to acknowledge that there may be a God who can hold them accountable for their sins. Some of them still feel guilty at times, but have learned to overcome it by convincing themselves that all guilt has been caused by society. Although they won't admit it, deep down many of them believe there might be a God, but they just don't want anyone telling them what to do. "My God is not the God of me!" Thus, they put up a front and merely pretend that God doesn't exist while they suppress their own guilt feelings.^{§2.4} Some of them just want attention by maintaining a "bad boy" image to their religious friends. Could it be that these atheists can't find God for the same reason that a thief doesn't want to find a policeman?

This book is primarily designed to address the intellectual concerns of the atheists in the first category since the atheists in the latter two categories have developed an "emotional" rejection of God, not based on reason. Such religious atheists are often viewed as embarrassments by other atheists because their atheism is not the result of any logical approach. The disposition of these religious atheists causes them to automatically accept any argument that is against God, no matter how farfetched it is. They cannot consider the concept of God objectively because of their emotionally invested interests. They are the ones who tend to become atheistic evangelists full of hate and resentment against any form of religion. You can often see the bitterness, hurt, and arrogance radiating from their faces and their illogical rants are easily identifiable in their writings. They subscribe to the reverse of Voltaire's famous quotation, which would be, "If God does exist, it would be necessary for us to abolish him." They cannot afford to be wrong, since

then they would have to swallow their pride and repent of their sins. An environment of grace, love, and forgiveness can often free them to consider the possibility of God again, but logic and reason usually won't.

2.3.2 Alogical Philosophy

One of the more interesting aspects of atheism is that logic is not necessary. If you are an atheist, then you do not have to assume that logic is even reasonable. If there is no logical order or design to the universe then it is not necessary to be logical. If random cosmic processes destroy intelligent life on one planet while preserving ignorance on another planet, the universe simply moves on. The universe does not value logic, it simply does whatever it does. What difference does it make if some configurations of atoms are intelligent and others aren't? You could make the most logical investments with your money and lose it all in a recession, while the fool next door picks a random stock and hits it big. You can criticize the fool's lack of sound judgment all you want, but you are still the loser. As the old saying goes, perhaps it's "Better to be lucky than smart." Just ask Mr. Magoo! For in this universe, logic is not necessarily rewarded.

Atheism does not require its adherents to be illogical, but the problem is that *it allows it as an equally valid option*. Being illogical is totally compatible with the atheist's belief system which is perhaps why they tend to degenerate into ignoramuses more often than the adherents of other philosophies.^{§1.1} Being

logical, on the other hand, is derivable from theism which depicts an intelligent Creator who has established logical and orderly scientific laws to govern the universe. If there is no purpose in life, then there is no reason to be rational about anything. Atheist author Isaac Asimov admits, "I have an article of faith that says

the universe makes sense. Now there's no way you can prove that the universe makes sense, but there's just no fun in living in the universe if it doesn't make sense."²⁰

Atheists often try to defend their position with logic, but it is not logical that they do so! As stated in the introduction, you cannot use logic to prove that logic is logical. So if the atheist's philosophy is correct, then there is no reason that one has to prefer a system of logic. It is quite logical that if there is no God, then there is no reason that anyone has to be logical! Indeed, it may be more advantageous for you to be illogical. How else do you think politicians get elected? 😊 The atheist ironically demands logical "proof" that God exists, *while his very belief system does not even require the use of logic!*

Atheists demand that others use logic to prove that God exists, yet their belief system does not even provide a basis for using logic.

2.4 Atheist Pretenders

Some people claim to be atheists, but this may not really be their true ideological position at all. Perhaps you have heard the saying, “There are no atheists in fox-holes.”²¹ or as some prefer the extended version, “There are no atheists in fox-holes, and very few Christians in traffic jams.” Of course, there are many exceptions to this notion, but the point is that many who claim to be atheists often change their tune when facing death. Atheism’s viewpoint on death is aptly represented by this epitaph engraved on a tombstone in Thurmont, Maryland: “Here lies an atheist. All dressed up and no place to go.” Of particular note is the number of famous atheists who experienced remorse or even converted to Christianity upon their deathbeds. Here are a few of the many documented examples:

- Voltaire said, “I shall die and go to hell!” and then alternated between cursing God and crying out “Oh Christ! oh Jesus Christ!”²²
- Sir Thomas Scott said, “Until this moment, I believed there was neither God nor hell. Now I know and I feel that there are both, and I am doomed to perdition by the just judgment of the Almighty!”²³
- Friedrich Nietzsche went insane and died as a madman after praying, “Make me insane, I beg you, o divine power...Make me howl, moan and crawl like a beast, in exchange for faith in myself! Self doubt devours me.”^{24,25}
- Oscar Wilde in his last days joined the Catholic Church and was given the Last Sacraments.^{26,27}
- Francis Newport’s last words were, “O! the unsufferable pains of hell and damnation!”²⁸
- David Hume in mental agitation and depression “declared that he had been in search of light all his life, but was now in greater darkness than ever”.^{29,30}
- William Emerson would “crawl on his hands and knees, uttering at times broken sentences in prayer, intermingled with blasphemies and profound swearing.”³¹
- Thomas Paine in distress and agony pleaded, “Lord, help! Lord, help! Lord Jesus, help!”³²
- Joseph Stalin “suddenly lifted his left hand as though he were pointing to something up above and bring down a curse on us all.”³³
- Wallace Stevens “expressed a certain emptiness in his life” and then converted to Roman Catholicism.³⁴

Why are so many atheists suddenly evoking a deity on their deathbeds that they claimed didn’t exist? Why aren’t they crying out to Santa Claus or the Tooth Fairy? Why are they suddenly calling out to a God that they vehemently railed against for most of their lives? These atheists conveniently rejected the premise of Pascal’s Wager,³² that is, *until it was time to die!* As it has been said, “If you’re living like there is no God, you’d better be right.” Does God get the last word after all?

“God is dead.” – *Nietzsche*

“Nietzsche is dead.” – *God*

With so many other such death-bed testimonies, one begins to wonder if this phenomenon does not happen to most atheists. In contrast, where is the long list of famous Christians who converted to atheism on their deathbeds? These so-called “atheists” were not so certain of their unbelief after all. Instead of hiding their doubts and maintaining a false front as a die-hard atheist their whole lives, perhaps they should have swallowed their pride and reclassified themselves as agnostics.

2.5 Amoral Lifestyle

Some atheists are adamant that they have the right to live a moral lifestyle. There is even a movement called “positive atheism” which advocates morality and truthfulness among other things.³⁵ No one would deny that an atheist most certainly has a right to be moral, but it simply is not a derivable conclusion from their belief that there is no God. Atheists are entirely consistent with their belief system if they do nothing more than live by the mantra, “If it feels good do it.” If there is no God, then no particular code of morality or ethics is required, nor could one be demanded of others. Dostoyevsky’s character Smerdyakov justified his murder with the famous statement, “For if there’s no everlasting God, there’s no such thing as virtue, and there’s no need of it.”³⁶ Murdering another person should be no different than killing a fly to an atheist. There is no grand purpose to life or the universe. Richard Dawkins states it plainly:

“On the contrary, if the universe were just electrons and selfish genes...Such a universe would be neither evil nor good in intention. It would manifest no intentions of any kind. In a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won’t find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice.”³⁷

If you are an atheist, then you need to realize that you are nothing more than a chemical reaction. Or as Carl Sagan put it, you are merely “star stuff contemplating the stars”.³⁸

Atheists realize that others in society do have moral values and thus are often constrained to live by them to a certain degree so they don’t end up in prison. But an atheist may still lie, cheat, steal, or even murder whenever it is to his advantage, *as long as he doesn’t get caught or have to suffer the consequences*. As comedian A. Whitney Brown once said, “I’m against any law that I wouldn’t break if I could get away with it.”³⁹ If an atheist feels guilty, he believes it comes from societal conditioning and tries to rationalize it away, because there is no basis for such morality. No authoritarian figure has the right to tell him what to do based on someone else’s definition of morality. An atheist could choose to be

honest, caring, and giving, but only because he wants to, not because it is intrinsically necessary. If another atheist decides to gratuitously torture that other atheist, then that is no less superior of a position. The rearrangement of your atoms in the universe is of no moral consequence.

Atheist1: Why do you want to live morally?

Atheist2: Because it works better for society.

Atheist1: Who cares what works better for society?

Atheist2: I do, because I want what's best for everyone.

Atheist1: I don't, I want what's best for me.

And then Atheist1 kills Atheist2 and takes all of his money! Is there anything wrong with that? No, not if you are an atheist. If you don't like it, too bad, because you have no right to force your sense of morality upon others. If you are unhappy with this, then perhaps you should consider another belief system!

2.5.1 The Fruit of Atheism

How does atheism stack up against the test of livability?^{§1.3} An atheistic society does not produce a desirable lifestyle, even for most atheists! In an atheistic society, anyone could lie, cheat, steal, or stab you in the back as long as he doesn't get caught or have to suffer the consequences. It doesn't even matter if the atheists mutually consent to their own form of government – *by what authority is anyone bound to abide by it?* What right does any authoritarian system have to impose its morality upon others and tell them what to do? Historically, the only way an atheistic system has been sustained is by imposing it upon others by force through totalitarian regimes. The atheists' literature contains many quotes from their popular heroes, yet they seem to neglect the quotes from some of their most prominent leaders such as Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong, and Pol Pot. Why is the wisdom of these famous atheists being so carefully neglected?



“There are no morals in politics; there is only expedience. A scoundrel may be of use to us just because he is a scoundrel.”⁴⁰
– *Vladimir Lenin (1 million killed)*



“Everyone imposes his own system as far as his army can reach.”⁴¹ – *Joseph Stalin (3 million killed)*



“I do not agree with the view that to be moral, the motive of one’s action has to be benefiting others. Morality does not have to be defined in relation to others...Of course there are people and objects in the world, but they are all there only for me.”⁴² – *Mao Zedong (16.5 million killed)*



“We need only 2 million troops to crush the 50 million Vietnamese, and we would still have 6 million people left.”⁴³ – *Pol Pot (2.2 million killed)*

Which of these quotes is incompatible with atheism? None of them! No particular morality is prescribed by atheism. Atheists keep asserting that better types of atheist governments are possible, but the evidence speaks for itself. Why does the atheists’ amoral philosophy keep producing such poor results?

In response to the millions of innocent people who were murdered at the hands of these atheistic regimes, some atheists respond with the excuse, “Oh yeah, well what about all the people the Christians killed in the Crusades?” as if that would justify their own evil. But that argument is not really valid. If anyone who claims to follow Jesus murders, he would be a *hypocrite* for that is not compatible with Jesus’ teachings; but if an atheist murders, it is entirely compatible with the atheist belief system! Jesus imparted a duty for caring for others, which is why his followers have founded so many hospitals, soup kitchens, and other humanitarian charities. The atheists’ belief system does not. Where are the atheists’ hospitals, soup kitchens, and humanitarian aid to the poor? And if there were any, what would be the point? The atheists’ general answer to the poor, weak, and crippled is “tough luck” for they were simply dealt a bad hand in a universe that doesn’t care. An atheist may choose to live immorally and it is still consistent with his belief system; but someone who follows Jesus cannot live immorally and still be consistent with his belief system.

Again, atheism does not dictate that its adherents must be evil, but the problem is that *it allows it as an equally valid option*. Discrimination, racism, sexism, and every form of evil are equally consistent with atheism. One atheist’s “evil” may be another atheist’s “good”. “If God doesn’t like the way I live, let him tell me, not you.” Oops, there is no God, so everything is fair game, right? While an atheist could choose to live morally, many of them don’t. The atheist

who is immoral, uncaring, and self-centered is still living consistently within his belief system. And that is exactly what many of them are! Some atheists are ashamed of their evil brethren's behavior, but they need to realize those atheists have just as much right to their own system of morality as anyone else. There is no other divine purpose. Grow up! Accept the realities of your belief system, or find another belief system. Atheism sucks!⁴⁴

2.5.2 Judeo-Christian Atheists

G.K. Chesterton said, "If there were not God, there would be no atheists."⁴⁵ This is not really a logical conclusion, but based upon the atheists' literature, it does seem that if there were no Judeo-Christian God, then there would be no atheists, since they don't really even seem to care about other religions. Why are there myriads of atheist websites devoted to attacking the Judeo-Christian God, but very few devoted to debunking Shintoism, Islam, or Hinduism? Do atheists discriminate against God on the basis of religion? ☺ The great irony is that while atheists are vehement in attacking the Judeo-Christian God, most of them still seem to personally adhere to Judeo-Christian values. If an atheist is free to live without any moral code whatsoever, why do most of them still choose to live according to the Judeo-Christian morals? Whether they realize it or not, most atheists subscribe to the ideals of the Ten Commandments except that they ignore the first three where the Author is given all the credit.

Atheism largely continues to exist only because atheists are living off the religious underpinnings of their societies. Without the benefits of morality supplied by their societies, it has not been demonstrated that atheism could even be sustainable. It is not that society is trying to make atheists feel guilty; it is that most atheists generally *agree* with Judeo-Christian principles even though they do not always live up to them personally. There is even a group who call themselves "Christian Atheists" who do not believe in God, but still hold to the principles of Christian morality. They believe that "any satisfactory answer to these problems must be an answer that will make life tolerable in this world, here and now and which will direct attention to the social and other problems of this life"⁴⁶

Why don't atheists hold to a morality that says cheating is acceptable in certain circumstances, stealing from the rich is justified, or murder is okay if nobody really liked the person? Because nobody would want to live in that type of society, not even atheists! But instead, they continue to subscribe to a morality, while they continue to maintain that there is no basis for morality. That is because even they realize that a society could not function if everyone did what their atheistic belief system allows them to do. Such atheists are like people who set out cookies and milk on Christmas Eve, while they claim they don't believe in Santa Claus. Of course, you can do that, but why would you? You have a right to do whatever you want, so why do you want to live according to Judeo-Christian morality? If there is no God, then there is definitely no purpose to life other than whatever you want to do. Perhaps it is God's will for you to be an atheist. ☺

"But I choose to be moral and care about others", you say. We are glad you do, but morality is not a logical result of atheism, while it is a logical result of

many forms of theism. Many people call themselves atheists, but they do not necessarily live a lifestyle which is consistent with their belief system. Thank goodness! In any case, the atheist philosophy still fails the livability test and is therefore not a valid option for a rationalist.

2.6 Advancement to Agnostic

To become an agnostic, an atheist merely needs to be less certain about the nonexistence of the supernatural. You simply need to become less committed to the unprovable claim that God does not exist. You do not have to accept that the supernatural exists, you merely need to become ambivalent towards it. If you have some doubts, you need to be honest and acknowledge them and adopt a more agnostic position. Clarence Darrow said, “I do not consider it an insult, but rather a compliment to be called an agnostic. I do not pretend to know where many ignorant men are sure – that is all that agnosticism means.”⁴⁷ Do not put up a false front like many other atheist pretenders because of pride.^{§2.4} If you cannot be honest with yourself, then you are not really a seeker of truth and you will not really progress any further. Even “the world’s most famous atheist” Richard Dawkins later admitted that he was actually an agnostic and was not absolutely confident that God doesn’t exist.⁴⁸

Many of you want evidence that God exists, but that is not prudent until you understand why agnosticism is superior to atheism on the basis of logic alone. Until you are able to acknowledge that agnosticism is the more logical position, you are not ready to advance to the next chapter where scientific evidence for the existence of the supernatural will be presented. But this assumes that logic was really your problem to begin with. If you are a religious atheist,^{§2.3.1} then no amount of evidence will probably be able to help you. Such atheists are not especially logical anyway, but instead tend to get sidetracked with petty arguments and ad hominem attacks. Instead of forming hate groups to commiserate in bitterness toward religions, such atheists need to reexamine the validity of their logic and consider becoming agnostics.

If you are not willing to give up your atheistic position, then you are challenged to begin living a lifestyle that is consistent with your beliefs, seeing that most atheists usually don’t. Society will not thank you for your amoral and alogical stance, but hopefully by experiencing the real fruit of atheism, you will begin to see why it is philosophically repugnant. If you are ever willing to at least become agnostic toward the existence of the supernatural, you will finally be able to advance on the path to becoming a true rationalist, and as it will be shown, a follower of Jesus Christ.

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“A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.”
– James, half-brother of Jesus

Chapter 3:

From Agnostic To Supernaturalist

An agnostic is one who is uncertain about the existence of the supernatural. An agnostic doesn't know if there is a God or not, and most of them don't care. They claim that since you cannot prove God or disprove God, the issue is irrelevant. An agnostic may be open to the fact that there could indeed be a God, but he simply does not know that there is. (Perhaps a “diagnostic” is someone who doesn't know whether or not there are two Gods. 😊) Agnosticism is sometimes considered a weaker form of atheism – the atheist does not *believe* that God exists while the agnostic does not *know* whether God exists. To an agnostic, religious truth is neither true nor false, it is simply unknowable. An agnostic is usually not antagonistic against religion, but merely views it as irrelevant.

The agnostic worldview is areligious or secular in nature. Secular means “of or relating to the worldly or temporal”.¹ Since agnostics don't know that a God exists, most of them simply live their lives as if there isn't one. Thus, agnostics usually live a lifestyle which is no different than an atheist. They are agnostic in belief, but atheistic in lifestyle. Yet because they can't be certain, they usually don't tend to embrace the atheistic lifestyle to its full logical extent – in other words, they are not as likely to aspire to become maniacal murderous dictators as some atheists.^{2.5.1} Logically, since they don't know if there is a God or not, it would be just as rational to live their lives as if there were a God. Thus, some agnostics choose to live a quasi-Judeo-Christian lifestyle, perhaps to fit in better with their society or perhaps because of Pascal's Wager described below.^{3.2} Indeed, an agnostic is free to follow any particular code of morality they want, because it is their own personal choice. This means, however, that their lifestyles also tend to reflect all the same characteristics of being amoral as the atheists'.^{2.5} If they are to be judged for living in a particular manner, they could not possibly know for sure what that ought to be.

3.1 Religious Agnostics

While the typical agnostic simply does not know if the supernatural exists, a *strong agnostic* is classified as one who claims that no one can ever know that the supernatural exists. Agnostics may not personally know if God exists or not, but most of them would never go on to claim that it is absolutely unknowable. A

strong agnostic, however, asserts that he does not know whether or not that God exists and it is *impossible* for anyone else to know either. How absurd! *How do you know that no one can know?* And what is the proof for such an illogical claim? What if God personally appeared to you and performed any miracle specified to your satisfaction? Perhaps you don't know, but that doesn't mean it is absolutely unknowable. The irrationality of these religious fanatics may even surpass that of the ignoramuses.^{§1.1} It is not just that they do not know anything, but they are also sure that you can't know anything either! Thus, the term "religious agnostic" is used to refer to agnostics who hold to their own irrational religious beliefs that are not based on evidence (not that they are actually worshipping a deity). Such agnostics are not open to the possibility that God exists since they have already concluded that God can't be known. Thus, these religious agnostics are probably better classified as a form of atheism, rather than the normal definition of agnosticism.

3.2 Pascal's Wager

French mathematician Blaise Pascal argued that since you cannot determine the existence of God by reason alone, it is still better to live as if God exists. This became known as Pascal's Wager and is explained as follows:

"We are then incapable of knowing either what He is or if He is...'God is, or He is not.' But to which side shall we incline?...According to reason, you can defend neither of the propositions...The true course is not to wager at all. Yes; but you must wager. It is not optional...Which will you choose then?...Your reason is no more shocked in choosing one rather than the other, since you must of necessity choose. This is one point settled. But your happiness? Let us weigh the gain and the loss in wagering that God exists. Let us estimate these two chances. If you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager then, without hesitation that He exists."²

In other words, since you can't prove whether God exists or not, it is safer for the sake of your eternal destiny to choose to believe that God exists. For if God doesn't exist and you believe in him anyway, your eternal destiny is unaffected, but if God exists and you don't believe in him, you may suffer for eternity in Hell. Consider these four possible outcomes:

God Exists	Person Believes	Eternal Destiny
No	No	Nothingness
No	Yes	Nothingness
Yes	No	Hell
Yes	Yes	Heaven

If God doesn't exist, then your eternal destiny will be unaffected, whether you believe in God or not. But if God does exist, then what you believe most certainly matters. And since agnostics are unable to resolve the existence of God logically, *then believing one way or the other is equally valid*. Thus, it makes sense that you should believe in the direction which may prove to be the most advantageous to you eternally. As previously pointed out, you are not able to remain neutral, because your lifestyle already puts you in one camp or another.

In rebuttal, atheist Richard Dawkins proposed the anti-Pascal Wager in which he states, "Suppose we grant that there is indeed some small chance that God exists. Nevertheless, it could be said that you will lead a better, fuller life if you bet on his not existing, than if you bet on his existing and therefore squander your precious time on worshipping him, sacrificing to him, fighting and dying for him, etc."³ This is another classic example of an atheist who is not paying attention, since Pascal already addressed this argument by noting that an *infinity* of eternal happiness will outweigh approximately 70 years or so of momentary pleasure (assuming you live that long). Or to put it in mathematical terms:

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} \frac{70 \text{ years}}{x} = 0$$

If Heaven exists, then 70 years of misery (assuming Christians are miserable) followed by an eternity of bliss would be much better compared to 70 years of happiness (assuming non-Christians are happy) followed by an eternity of misery. Furthermore, scientific studies have shown that quite to the contrary, "the religious report higher life satisfaction....churchgoing and prayer are also associated with greater satisfaction."⁴ The religious "do better across numerous dimensions of wellbeing than those who are less religious or not at all religious."⁵ The religious also have a more optimistic outlook on life and are less likely to be depressed.⁶

Many agnostics, however, reject Pascal's Wager because it automatically assumes the existence of the Christian God. For example, what if the Supreme Being is evil or rewards evil? Or what if the deity rewards people who do not believe in him? Pascal's Wager does not prescribe which god you should believe in or what god requires. Each conflicting religion could make the same claim that if you don't believe in their particular god you will go to Hell. The fictional character Homer Simpson summarized it well: "And what if we picked the wrong religion? Every week we're just making God madder and madder."⁷

While this argument may seem satisfying to atheists, it is not sufficient to get agnostics off the hook. Since an agnostic admits the possibility that God exists, then the possibility exists that there will be eternal consequences to his lifestyle. You may not know which God exists, but whatever you think God might be, it is still the safest bet to live according to your concept of God. In other words, Pascal's Wager definitely still applies to any agnostic who accepts the possibility that God might exist. *It is not a matter of proof, but a matter of risk*. The wager is your life with the risk of a possible eternity in Hell. One may easily wager a small

amount when it doesn't matter, but the risk to an agnostic is much greater than that and the consequence affects his eternal destiny.

3.3 Characteristics of Miracles

The universe we live in contains many unexplained phenomena which are sometimes interpreted to be miracles. Indeed, roughly 84 percent of Americans believe that God performs miracles, and an astounding 48 percent report that they have personally experienced or witnessed one.⁸ The sheer volume of *millions* of miraculous claims alone at least makes them worthy of consideration. In addition to all of the religious claims, mystical phenomena such as Voodoo, witchcraft, Ouija boards, orgone, psychic healing, etc. all further the possible existence of a spiritual dimension. Is it possible that the reason that reports of miracles never go away is because some of them are true? For if even *one* miracle has ever occurred throughout history, it is sufficient to prove that the supernatural exists. Even when possible hoaxes are discounted, the odds are still likelier that at least one or more miracle has occurred than not.

But what exactly should be defined as a miracle? Agnostic Thomas Huxley states that "Argumentation about whether miracles are possible and, if possible, credible, is mere beating the air until the arguers have agreed what they mean by

A miracle is defined as a violation of the known physical laws of the universe which can be subsequently validated by scientific evidence.

the word 'miracle.'"⁹ Many things have been categorized as miracles, but a rationalist demands a much narrower definition. Philosopher David Hume defined a miracle as "a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposition of some invisible agent."¹⁰ That is fine, but how

would you verify that a miracle actually occurred? Many mysterious events can easily be dismissed because of unreliable testimony or distorted information. Thus, a miracle that would be accepted by a rationalist is more narrowly defined here as "a violation of the known physical laws of the universe which can be subsequently validated by scientific evidence." An analysis of various valid and invalid miracles will be discussed below.

3.3.1 Statistical Coincidences

Heidi Quade is credited with saying, "A coincidence is a small miracle where God chose to remain anonymous." There are many amazing coincidences in life that some interpret to be miracles. But other than perhaps some precise timing, there may have been nothing otherwise supernatural that occurred. Littlewood's Law of Miracles states that an individual can expect this type of so-called "miracle" to happen to them at a rate of roughly one per month.^{11,12} Given a large enough sample size, unusual coincidences are bound to occur and even become commonplace due to the law of large numbers. Skeptics point out that this has

nothing to do with God and everything to do with probability and statistics. Whether or not God actually had a hand in these coincidences is certainly debatable. Someone may thank God for the rain, but there is also a natural explanation for it involving high and low pressures. Occam's Razor would allow many events to be explained without necessarily bringing God into the equation. Secularists readily accept this statistical type of "miracle", especially regarding the chance of life evolving from a primordial soup.

Littlewood's Law may be sufficient to explain many rare, one-in-a-million *natural* events such as how pigeon droppings may form an image of the Virgin Mary, but it is still unable to explain other types of *supernatural* events. It is only the supernatural type of miracle where God does *not* choose to remain anonymous that is of interest here. For the rationalist, an event must be more than rare coincidence, it must exhibit supernatural characteristics that defy the laws of physics in order to truly qualify as a miracle. Such a miracle cannot have just a small probability of occurring, it must have a zero percent probability of occurring. A miracle is not something that is extremely improbable, it must be physically impossible.

3.3.2 God of the Gaps

Many religions are quick to interpret anything that appears supernatural as being attributable to their deity. American author Edward Abbey suggests, "Whatever we cannot easily understand we call God; this saves much wear and tear on the brain tissues."¹³ This argument is commonly known as the "God of the gaps", since religions give their God credit for anything that currently does not have a scientific explanation. The religious often invent unwarranted explanations for all sorts of things that they don't understand. Art historian Bernard Berenson observed that, "Miracles happen to those who believe in them. Otherwise why does not the Virgin Mary appear to Lamaists, Mohammedans, or Hindus who have never heard of her?" This statement is not exactly true since some people from other religions have converted to Christianity through dreams or visions, but it is true that miracles are often given particular religious interpretations. It is not necessary that an *interpretation* of a miracle be correct, however, in order for a miracle to have occurred. If someone were able to prove that pigs can fly, for example, that doesn't mean we must accept any particular explanation that attributes it to Zeus, Vishnu, or Allah. Thus, a rationalist must learn to overlook any initial religious explanations when examining the physical scientific evidence.

Secularists, on the other hand, do not consider any unexplained phenomena to be miracles, but believe there must be natural explanations which simply have not been fully understood yet. Clark's Third Law states that "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic."¹⁴ Consider that a radio would seem quite miraculous to a tribe of savages, for example, because an explanation involving electromagnetic radiation would simply be beyond their comprehension. Accordingly, many mysterious phenomena that once seemed to be supernatural have later been explained by natural processes. But have we

really explained them? Do we really understand exactly what electromagnetic radiation really is, or do we simply manipulate it so easily that it has now become commonplace and is no longer considered miraculous? Blind author Helen Keller has been attributed with the observation, “The miracles of nature do not seem miracles because they are so common. If no one had ever seen a flower, even a dandelion would be the most startling event in the world.” Has the supernatural nature of the universe become so familiar that we have simply become numb to it? We currently can’t explain what gravity is, but it still works just the same whether we understand it or not. And what makes up an atom? Then what makes up protons, neutrons, and electrons? Then what makes up quarks, etc? When we get to the bottom of these things, will we be left staring into the face of God?

Physicist John Polkinghorne suggests that miracles do not really violate the laws of nature but merely constitute a “new regime of physical experience”.¹⁵ Likewise, Saint Augustine is quoted as saying, “Miracles are not contrary to nature, but only contrary to what we know about nature.” The part we understand we call science and the part we don’t understand we call miraculous. With this reasoning, there is really no dividing line between the miraculous and the natural; it is merely a difference in our comfort level with the explanation. Albert Einstein points out two sides to this coin, “There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.”¹⁶ Secularists believe that everything is natural and that which is unexplained is falsely attributed to the supernatural, and the religious believe everything is supernatural and that which has been explained is merely attributed to the natural. In both situations, the gap in knowledge is being interpreted according to their *faith*. To assume that nothing can ever have a supernatural explanation is the same type of blind faith that assumes that everything always has a supernatural explanation. The rationalist, on the other hand, is not particularly interested in either assumption, but only that which can be demonstrated with valid evidence.

3.3.3 Unexplainable Phenomena

The problem with many secularists is that they confuse that which has not yet been explained with that which is *necessarily unexplainable*. Everything that is unexplained is not necessarily explainable. In some cases, it is possible to show that a phenomenon cannot be explained by any scientific process because it *contradicts* the known laws of the universe. Remember, miracles by definition are not scientific because they violate the known laws of the universe and are usually neither testable nor repeatable. For example, science cannot answer what created the singularity of the Big Bang or what caused it to suddenly expand. Such processes may sound “scientific”, but they still meet the definition of “miracles” and are neither testable nor repeatable. It is not a matter that “science hasn’t figured it out yet but later will” if science can already demonstrate that there is no *materialistic* answer. A secularist’s *faith* that everything can eventually be explained by science is unprovable. *We know what we know, but we do not know that we can know that which is unknown.*

It could be that a new scientific discovery may later explain some mysterious phenomenon, but a rationalist cannot know that. If you don't know, there is no reason to make up bizarre theories to try to save the secular religion – just admit that you don't know. In many cases, there has never been and will probably never be any more information. Anything that can be explained through natural processes should be, but the error is *assuming* that everything can be explained by natural processes. Biochemist Richard Dickerson explains:

“Let us see how far and to what extent we can explain the behavior of the physical and material universe in terms of purely physical and material causes, without invoking the supernatural. Operational science takes no position about the existence or non-existence of the supernatural; only that this factor is not to be invoked in scientific explanations.”¹⁷

Could we later discover another unknown invisible force that explains some of these miracles? Well yes, and perhaps this new force consists of a non-material sentient being that occasionally chooses to interfere with our universe! And if we understood more about this non-material entity, it may all seem quite natural to us later. Perhaps the secularists really believe in God after all, but just don't know it yet!

3.3.4 Reliability of Witnesses

Because miracles are by definition rare, many skeptics would rather believe that any so-called “miracle” is more likely explained by human error than by a supernatural phenomenon. This line of reasoning, however, becomes more and more difficult to support when a miracle is observed by more and more witnesses. For example, consider the well-documented Miracle of the Sun, which occurred near Fátima, Portugal on October 13, 1917.¹⁸ After a downfall of rain, as many as 100,000 people simultaneously observed the sun grow dim, change colors, dance in the sky, and then zigzag to earth releasing such great heat that the ground and the people's clothes immediately became dry. The reason the crowd had assembled near Fátima in the first place was because the Portuguese newspapers for several months had been ridiculing the claims of three shepherd children who had prophesied that a miracle would be performed there on that exact date to silence any unbelievers.



Witnesses to the Miracle of the Sun

The philosopher David Hume once stated “that no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavors to establish.”¹⁹ In

many situations, it would take more *faith* to reject the scientific evidence documenting a miracle than to simply accept the fact that a miracle occurred. In this case, the number of eyewitness testimonies, photographs, and newspaper articles documenting the Miracle of the Sun are staggering. In rebuttal, the skeptics' theories that it must have been a mass hallucination or that everyone's eyes must have suffered retinal damage are quite absurd and simply do not fit the facts. Indeed, it may be easy to dismiss a miracle claimed by only one person, but on what rational basis would you dismiss the claims of 100,000 people? And if you can do that, then is there any amount of evidence that will ever convince you that a miracle has occurred?

3.3.5 Scientific Validation

One variation of a G.K. Chesterton quote goes, "The most incredible thing about miracles is that they sometimes happen."²⁰ Because of the sporadic occurrence of miracles, they are usually not testable and repeatable using the scientific method. For example, you cannot go back in time and test the Miracle of the Sun in a laboratory. But this does not mean that scientific processes cannot be used to verify that a miracle occurred. British historian Robin Collingwood states: "History, then, is a science, but a science of a special kind. It is a science whose business is to study events not accessible to our observation, and to study these events inferentially, arguing to them from something else which is accessible to our observation, and which the historian calls 'evidence' for the events in which he is interested."²¹ In many cases, there is tangible evidence that can still be verified scientifically. Thus, a miracle's veracity does not always have to depend on eyewitness testimonies and historical reports alone.

In the case of miraculous healings, for example, there are often before and after x-rays, blood tests, biopsies, and other lab results which confirm both the diagnosis and the subsequent healing. The Roman Catholic Church in particular relies on the findings of the Lourdes Medical Bureau which operates independently of the church and includes skeptics on their International Medical Committee of Lourdes (CMIL). The CMIL maintains stringent requirements that must be met before validating a miracle's authenticity:²²

1. The disease should be serious, incurable or difficult to treat.
2. The eradicated disease should not be in its final stage or at a stage whereby it may involve spontaneous recovery.
3. No drug should have been administered or, in the event that it has been administered, the absence of any effects should have been ascertained.
4. The recovery has to take place suddenly and instantly.
5. The recovery has to be perfect, and not defective or partial.
6. It is necessary that any noteworthy excretion or crisis has taken place at the proper time, as a reasonable result of an ascertained cause, prior to the recovery; under these circumstances the recovery cannot be deemed prodigious, but totally or partially natural.
7. It is necessary for the eradicated disease not to reappear.

Applying these strict criteria, the Lourdes Medical Bureau has documented 70 confirmed miracles since 1858.^{23,24} There have been several other miraculous healings backed by medical evidence as well, such as Dr. Richard Casdorph's documentation of patients healed through Kathryn Kuhlman²⁵ and a *Time Magazine* article titled "Message of Miracles".²⁶

Taking it another step further, there have also been several cases of people miraculously being raised from the dead (that is, excluding cases involving any medical resuscitation procedure). Several such claims have been well attested throughout the centuries²⁷ and the Bible alone records ten such cases.²⁸ A more recent case involving Grigorievich Rodonaia has particularly confounded the skeptics.²⁹ Rodonaia was a neuropathologist in the former Soviet Union who was killed by the KGB in 1976 for being a political dissident. After he was officially pronounced dead, his body was placed in the morgue and frozen for *three days* in cold storage. When the pathologist on duty began cutting into his body to perform the autopsy, Rodonaia's eyes suddenly opened. Rodonaia later regained consciousness and spent nearly the next year in intensive care before making a full recovery. Rodonaia had been an avowed atheist, but because of his near death experience, he converted to Christianity and later became the pastor at St. Paul United Methodist Church in Baytown, Texas.

There have also been confirmed cases of Xenoglossy in which someone is miraculously able to speak in another language that they could not have possibly acquired by any natural means. This unusual phenomenon has been documented for thousands of years and a form of it is also mentioned in the Bible.³⁰ A more recent case concerning Swarnlata Mishra was scientifically investigated and rigorously documented by Professor Ian Stevenson of the University of Virginia^{31,32} and then independently confirmed by Professor P. Pal of Itachuna College. Swarnlata was born in 1948 and at the age of four she was able to speak Bengali without any previous exposure to the Bengali language. Although some have offered the explanation that Swarnlata was reincarnated and had learned the language in a previous life, this is irrelevant to the scientific documentation of a supernatural occurrence that otherwise has no physical explanation.

3.4 **Scientific Evidence of the Supernatural**

Atheist Delos McKown has noted, "The invisible and the non-existent look very much alike."³³ There are many invisible phenomena that cannot be directly experienced, yet their existence can be established by scientific evidence. Scientists will never be able to directly see an atom, for example, because it is smaller than the wavelength of visible light, yet they still believe atoms exist nonetheless. But what about other forms of spiritual phenomena? Consider this academic exchange:

Teacher: Can you see God?
Class: No.
Teacher: Can you touch God?
Class: No.
Teacher: Then there isn't a God!
Student: Sir, can you see your brain?
Teacher: No.
Student: Can you touch your brain?
Teacher: No.
Student: Oh, ok, so you have no brain?

Although you have never directly observed your brain, you may (or may not) be able to establish the fact that you have one based on evidence. ☺ And the same thing is true for the existence of the supernatural. Unlike the anecdotal nature of miracles, some supernatural phenomena can be scientifically demonstrated by processes that are observable, testable, and repeatable. While miracles can only be investigated after the fact, some supernatural phenomena can be scientifically confirmed by direct experimental observation. There is no reason to depend on eyewitness testimony or historical reports when *supernatural phenomena can be directly observed in the laboratory today!* In these cases, it is not necessary for science to understand how a phenomenon works in order to prove that it exists. Science can lead us to the door of a breakthrough, but sometimes it can say little more. Science can statistically document that people have feelings of love, for example, but then cannot define exactly what love is because it is a subjective emotion. This does not mean that love does not exist, but science may not be the best method to completely understand the phenomenon.

The experimental evidence for the supernatural is quite compelling and has led many atheists and agnostics to begin to believe in a spiritual dimension. The following subsections document just a few of the supernatural phenomena that seem to be reliably established through secular publications by fully credentialed scientists in peer-reviewed scientific journals. Remember that only one of these phenomena needs to be true to prove the existence of the supernatural.

3.4.1 Life after Death

From a materialist viewpoint, once you die, you cease to exist – there should be no eternal soul that lives on. And yet for some reason, most people believe that they will continue to exist in some form or another after they die. This belief is so pervasive in society that atheists usually have to mentally train themselves to accept the idea that once they die, that is the end. The belief in an afterlife has been confirmed by millions of personal testimonies and is a tenet of most religions. Reports of Near-Death Experiences (NDE) today “have become almost commonplace” with “perhaps as many as 15 million Americans” recalling “vivid images of an afterlife – including tunnels of light, peaceful meadows, and angelic figures clad in white.”³⁴

This magnitude of anecdotal evidence attesting to the existence of an afterlife cannot be ignored and has become the subject of many scientific studies. Perhaps the first significant qualitative study on NDE was documented in the book “Life after Life” by secular psychiatrist Raymond Moody.³⁵ Moody interviewed 150 people who had NDE and discovered a common set of elements such as:

- Feelings of peace and freedom from pain
- Travelling through a dark tunnel
- Out-of-body experiences (OBE)
- Meeting with friends or other spirits
- Encountering a being of light
- Reviewing a rapid succession of visual images of their past

These common elements of NDE have subsequently been confirmed by hundreds of other researchers who have since developed quantitative scales for measuring the phenomenon.^{36,37}

The skeptics’ initial response was to assume that NDE were merely hallucinations or dreams and that the recurrence of these common elements were the result of cultural influences, such as watching Oprah. ☺ In other words, they supposed that the dreams people experience when they die are merely what they were conditioned to believe should happen when they die. This theory has been thoroughly disproven, however, by studies which show that the common elements of NDE still occur regardless of the cultural expectations. One such study analyzing NDE across several cultural backgrounds concluded, “Despite temporal and geographical separation, lack of significant cultural contact, and contextual differences between the genres of texts in which afterlife descriptions appear, a consistent set of thematic elements has been found to be similar across the traditions.”³⁸ The skeptics’ theory also doesn’t explain why so many dead atheists have had conversations with a “being of light” that they previously did not believe existed. (Or do atheists deep down really believe in God after all?) Indeed, many atheists have been converted to theism after having their own NDE, including Howard Storm, Charles McKaig, Dr. Donald Whitaker, and Dr. Grigorievich Rodonaia.³⁹

As a result of these findings, many skeptics today no longer reject the validity of NDE as they once did, but are now merely trying to find biological causes for it. They have conducted experiments that have partially reproduced some elements similar to NDE through use of drugs and electrical stimulation of the brain. Dr. Bruce Greyson, however, points out the flaw in this logic: “We cannot assume from the fact that electrical stimulation of the brain can induce OBE-like illusions that all OBEs are therefore illusions”.⁴⁰ Accordingly, the research shows that “no *one* physiological or psychological model by itself explains all the common features of near-death experiences.”⁴¹ Indeed, all of the skeptics’ biological explanations have been disproven by the following scientific findings:

- There have been scores of documented cases where people who experienced NDE were able to accurately recount the details of their OBE in the operating

room that were independently verified by the medical staff. For example, one unconscious heart attack victim knew where the nurse had placed his dentures.⁴² No biological process can explain how people are able to observe the proceedings in the operating room when they can't see or hear...because they are *dead!*

- Accordingly, a study conducted with 31 legally *blind* people documented that 80 percent were visually able to *see* during their NDE. Congenitally born blind participant Vicki Umipeg, for example, had never had any visual experience whatsoever, but was able to see during her NDE and relates how it was “the only time I could ever relate to seeing and to what light was, because I experienced it.”⁴³
- The definitive blow to a biological explanation came with the observation that many cardiac arrest patients have NDE during the presence of flat-line electroencephalograms (EEG).^{42,44} There must be a functioning brain in order to have a hallucinating brain! In the well-documented case of singer-songwriter Pam Reynolds, she was put on a heart-lung machine, all the blood was drained from her head, her eyes were purposely taped shut, clicking devices placed in both ears, and she had *no brainwaves*, and yet she still experienced an NDE, including an OBE. All the details that she claimed to see and hear while she was clinically dead were later verified.⁴⁵



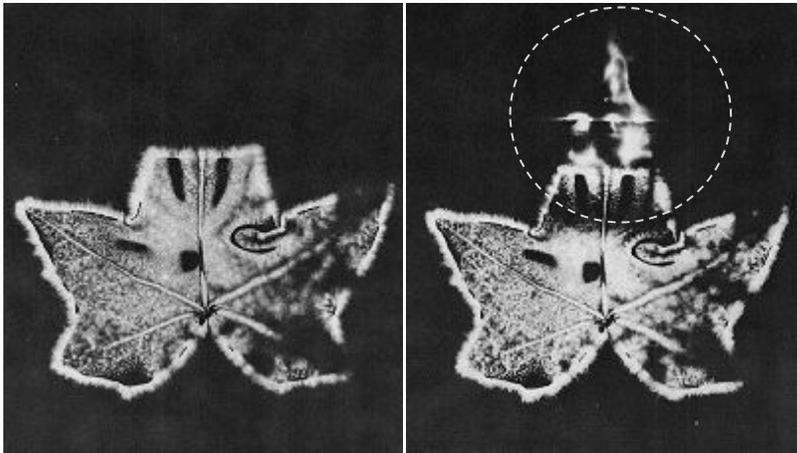
Singer-songwriter Pam Reynolds

Dr. Jeffrey Long summarizes the current situation well: “There have been over 20 alternative, skeptical ‘explanations’ for near-death experience. The reason is very clear: no one of several skeptical explanations make sense, even to the skeptics themselves.”⁴⁶ For anyone who has seriously examined the studies, an objective analysis of all the scientific evidence clearly establishes *the supernatural nature of human existence beyond the physical boundaries of the human body.*

3.4.2 Kirlian Photography

Kirlian photography is named after Russian scientist Semyon Davidovitch Kirlian, who in 1939 discovered that objects placed on an electrically charged plate display a small corona or halo when photographed. Kirlian had been inspired by the work of Nikola Tesla who had previously observed this effect using his Tesla coil. This non-material “aura” seems to exhibit several supernatural properties which otherwise have no materialistic explanation and has been used by scientists for decades to diagnose diseases, evaluate psychological health, and identify metal stress fractures. In Russia, the usage of Kirlian photography has been accepted for so long that in 1999 the Russian Academy of Sciences declared the effect to be a scientific fact.⁴⁷

Although any scientist can readily reproduce the phenomenon, there is still no scientific consensus as to what this non-material aura is. Some have claimed that the aura represents the “life force” of the object. For example, the aura of a leaf that is recently picked is very bright, but then slowly begins to fade as the leaf dies until it disappears completely several hours later. Of particular interest is the “phantom leaf” effect where a portion of a leaf can be torn off, and yet when it is photographed, the aura of the missing piece of the leaf still appears in the picture.



What is the materialistic explanation for that? This phantom leaf effect has been repeatedly observed by scores of scientists from many different nations including:

- **Dr. Viktor Adamenko, Ph.D.** – Russian biophysicist working with Semyon Kirlian who first discovered the phantom leaf effect.⁴⁹
- **Dr. Thelma Moss, Ph.D.** – Medical Psychologist at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Neuropsychiatry Institute.⁵⁰
- **Professor J.K. Choudhury** – Scientist working under a grant for the Department of Science and Technology Ministry of Education, Government of India.⁵¹
- **Dr. Harry Oldfield, D.Hon** – British biologist with Honorary Doctorate from the World Peace Centre, Professor Honoris Causa in the Department of Alternative Medicine, Zoroastrian College.⁵²
- **Dr. Konstantin Korotkov, Ph.D.** – Deputy Director of Saint-Petersburg Federal Research Institute of Physical Culture, President of the International Union for Medical and Applied Bioelectrography.⁵³

Although the phantom leaf effect has been observed hundreds of times, some labs have had difficulty in reproducing it due to variations in the types of equipment, energy frequency, temperature, humidity, and length of exposure. Some of the successful labs were only able to observe the effect in less than 5 percent of their attempts.⁵⁴ It took Robert Wagner from the University of California, for example,

539 tries before he was successful in reproducing the affect.⁵⁵ Although some labs have had trouble recreating the phenomenon, some scientists such as Professor Choudhury and Dr. Harry Oldfield were able to reproduce the effect about 50 percent of the time of their experiments.^{56,57}

Skeptics initially postulated that this phantom effect could have been caused by residue that might have been left on the film from a previous exposure. But this has subsequently been ruled out by most scientists including Robert Wagner who used an acrylic divider to insure that no moisture was left on the film.⁵⁸ It was also ruled out in Dr. Thelma Moss' experiments: "We did all sorts of tests to make sure that it was not something else like sweat. We studied the effects of moisture, temperature, the room, the atmosphere, the film. We eliminated all of these factors. What it came down to was energy."⁵⁹ Likewise, Dr. Harry Oldfield confirmed that the effect "shows a distinctive outline of the original leaf, and not a secondary discharge uniquely related to any water drops which may have been squeezed out on to the plates."⁵²

Simple Kirlian cameras are relatively inexpensive to buy and there are now thousands of Kirlian photographs on the Internet. Kirlian photography by no means proves that there is a God, but it does prove that there is a non-material essence to the universe. Regardless of what mystical explanations others have ascribed to it, *the non-material aura phenomenon is directly observable and remains scientifically testable and repeatable.*

3.4.3 Fasting Without Water

It is not unusual for religious adherents to observe fasting from food, but there have been several supernatural claims where people have fasted without water well beyond the physical limits of the human body. In the Bible, for example, Moses fasted for 40 days and 40 nights without food and *water*, not just once, but *twice* in consecutive back-to-back sessions.⁶⁰ How long can the human body survive without water? Most people hold to the standard rule of thumb that the human body can only survive about three days without water, although some doctors speculate that the upper bound could be slightly higher depending on the conditions.⁶¹ While past claims of



Prahlad Jani at Sterling Hospital

supernatural fasting cannot be scientifically verified, a more recent case where Prahlad Jani (also known as Chunriwala Mataji) went without food and water for ten days was subjected to extensive scientific scrutiny. Jani was first examined in 2003 by Sudhir Shah and other physicians at Sterling Hospital in Ahmedabad, India:

"He spent his 10 days in hospital in a specially prepared room, with a sealed-off toilet and constant video surveillance. To help the doctors

verify his claims, Mr Jani agreed to avoid bathing for his time in hospital. The only fluid he was allowed was a small amount of water, to use as mouthwash. One hundred millilitres of water were given to him, and then collected and measured in a beaker when he spat it out, to make sure none had been drunk. A statement from Ahmedabad's Association of Physicians says that despite no water entering his body, urine nonetheless appeared to form in his bladder – only to be re-absorbed by the bladder walls. At the end of his confinement, doctors noted no deterioration in his condition, other than a slight drop in his weight.”⁶²

But since you can never satisfy a skeptic,^{§3.5} Prahlad Jani was tested again in 2010, but this time he went *fifteen* days without food and water and was observed by 35 researchers from several different organizations, including the Indian Defense Institute of Physiology and Allied Sciences (DIPAS) and the Society for Research and Initiatives for Sustainable Technologies and Institutions (SRISTI). Once again, “a protocol of strict round-the-clock surveillance was followed with the help of CCTV cameras and human observers. Mataji's every movement – for example, when he was taken out for MRI, ultrasound and X-Ray procedures – was recorded on tape.”⁶³ The results were again verified that “Jani didn't eat, drink or go to the toilet”,⁶⁴ and this time there was no weight loss. In fact, “all reports of medical tests – cardiac, MRI of chest, abdomen and spine, EEG reports – were normal.”⁶⁵

The results of this second experiment were sufficient to “silence Jani's detractors who had doubted the veracity of the claims made by the medical team which had first conducted tests on Jani in 2003.”⁶³ Scientists today still have no rational explanation as to how this was possible. Whether or not Jani has actually gone 70 years without drinking water as he claims cannot be confirmed, *but the fact that he went fifteen days without water is sufficient to establish a supernatural phenomenon that has been scientifically verified.*

3.4.4 Prayer

The amount of anecdotal evidence for answered prayer numbers in the millions as many religions encourage its practice. More astonishing is the fact that 43 percent of people of no faith at all still pray to God.⁶⁶ To a secularist, prayer should be a useless exercise that has no more scientific value than repeating the mantra “atheists don't exist” over and over again. Timothy Jones is credit with the saying, “Give a man a fish, and you'll feed him for a day. Give him a religion, and he'll starve to death while praying for a fish.” Indeed, what one person utters in secret should theoretically have absolutely no effect on the world around them. But is there any scientific basis for establishing the effectiveness of prayer?

- The *Southern Medical Journal* published a randomized double-blind study that was conducted with 393 patients admitted to the coronary care unit at San Francisco General Hospital. One group received intercessory prayer by

“born again” Christians and the other group did not. “Analysis of events after entry into the study showed the prayer group had less congestive heart failure, required less diuretic and antibiotic therapy, had fewer episodes of pneumonia, had fewer cardiac arrests, and were less frequently intubated and ventilated.”⁶⁷

- The *Western Journal of Medicine* published a randomized double-blind study that was conducted with 40 AIDS patients to test the effects of prayer for a longer period of time. “Over the 6-month study period, the DH group experienced few outpatient doctor visits, fewer hospitalizations, fewer days of hospitalization, few new ADDs, and a significantly lower illness severity level....”⁶⁸
- The *Southern Medical Journal* published another study that was conducted with 40 patients who had class II or class III rheumatoid arthritis at the Arthritis/Pain Treatment Center in Clearwater, Florida. “Patients receiving in-person intercessory prayer showed significant overall improvement during 1-year follow-up...In-person intercessory prayer may be a useful adjunct to standard medical care for certain patients with rheumatoid arthritis.”⁶⁹
- The *Archives of Internal Medicine* published a follow-up randomized double-blind study that was conducted with 990 patients admitted to the Mid America Heart Institute (MAHI) to see if the results from San Francisco General Hospital could be confirmed. They again found “that supplementary, remote, blinded, intercessory prayer produced a measurable improvement in the medical outcomes of critically ill patients.”⁷⁰
- The *British Medical Journal* published a randomized double-blind study that was conducted on 3,393 patients previously admitted to the Rabin Medical Center. Retroactive prayers were given on behalf of one group, and none were given for the other. The study concluded, “Remote, retroactive intercessory prayer said for a group is associated with a shorter stay in hospital and shorter duration of fever in patients with a bloodstream infection and should be considered for use in clinical practice.”⁷¹

These are only a few of the controlled double-blind scientific studies published in prestigious peer-reviewed medical journals. Some skeptics point out that there was no control for people outside these studies who may also have been praying, but that is irrelevant since the effect of *known* prayer is still proven. Presumably any unknown prayers would be statistically insignificant and would only mean that the final condition of the non-prayer group would likely have been worse than reported. Also, the fact that these were double-blind studies means that no one knew who was receiving prayer and who wasn't, thus ruling out any possibility of a placebo effect. And if there were any doubt, other studies have been done with prayer for non-sentient entities such as seeds, plants, and bacteria, which again showed significant effects compared to the non-prayer groups.^{72,73}

In rebuttal, there have been a few studies which concluded that prayer made no significant difference in the medical outcomes. Do these few studies therefore negate all the other properly conducted studies which did show an effect? Absolutely not! Aside from that fact that some of those studies had a biased agenda and did not attempt to reproduce the conditions of the original studies,

there are other factors which must be considered. The study at San Francisco General Hospital, for example, was conducted with “born again” Christians, while other studies did not distinguish between the prayers’ religions. Do you suppose it would matter if you are praying to the right God or not? For example, if a study was done among the prophets of Baal, the results of their prayers would have shown no effect, while the prayers of Elijah were immediately answered in dramatic fashion.⁷⁴ Also, it is possible that God will not allow himself to be controlled or manipulated and may not choose to answer prayers on demand when his power is questioned by detractors. Perhaps God will only answer certain types of prayers by certain types of people.

In any case, *it is not necessary to prove that any prayer to any god on any occasion will always be successful*. From a materialistic viewpoint, a randomized double-blind controlled scientific study should *never* show a statistically significant effect of prayer. These scientific studies, however, all concluded that under controlled conditions, prayer did indeed make a significant difference, and that is a fact! And that is quite sufficient to scientifically demonstrate the existence of the supernatural phenomenon.

3.5 The Skeptics’ Response

It should be noted that many of the so-called “skeptics” do not represent the position of most agnostics since many of them are really religious atheists with ulterior motives.^{§2.3.1} They are not rationalists since they are not able to evaluate evidence objectively because of their preconceived notions. Such skeptics use circular logic that goes something like this: Because the supernatural cannot exist, any scientific experiment that demonstrates the existence of the supernatural is wrong, because the supernatural cannot exist. C.S. Lewis puts it this way:

“Unfortunately we know the experience against [miracles] to be uniform only if we know that all reports of them are false. And we can know all the reports to be false only if we know already that miracles have never occurred. In fact, we are arguing in a circle.”⁷⁵

No matter how meticulous the science is, the skeptic concludes that it must somehow be invalid simply because it disagrees with the skeptic’s materialistic assumptions. When they are exposed to the scientific evidence they immediately think, “There must be some trick behind it.” But what part of “scientifically controlled double-blind study published in peer-reviewed academic journals” don’t you understand? Some skeptics may even admit that they do not have any explanation for it, but they still *know* for certain that it cannot be supernatural because that is what their atheistic religion dictates. Such skeptics are not rationalists but merely have their own presuppositional religious agenda that they seek to protect at all costs.

Such skeptics have faith that scientists will eventually be able to explain away all mysterious phenomena through natural processes.^{§3.3.2} They do not have

any proof for this, but only have *hope* based on their materialistic religious assumptions. Skeptics often mock the faith of those who attribute unexplained things to God, and yet they themselves have nothing but *faith* that one day everything can be explained by natural processes. The concept of faith does not bother religious people, but it does bother the skeptics who hate to admit that they also have their own form of faith.^{§i.1.2} Not only do these skeptics have faith, but it is an *irrational faith* that believes that it is *impossible* for the supernatural to exist. Journalist Nancy Gibbs wrote, “For the truly faithful, no miracle is necessary. For those who doubt, no miracle is sufficient.”⁷⁶ Nothing will probably ever be able to convince a close-minded skeptic, but this book was not written for them, but for rationalists who are willing to seek the truth and evaluate these scientific claims objectively.

3.5.1 Cry Baby Excuses

Since the skeptic never wants to admit that the supernatural exists, they must come up with arguments against every supernatural claim in order to protect their atheistic paradigm. For if just *one* of these randomized double-blind controlled studies published by fully credentialed scientists in secular peer-reviewed academic journals is true, then the supernatural realm is real and the skeptics would have to swallow their pride and admit they are wrong. When confronted with the scientific facts, though, it is often amusing to watch them bend over backward to come up with so many imaginative and completely unfounded explanations. If you confront such a skeptic in a group environment their arguments often begin to embarrass others in their own group, as they try to come up with excuse after excuse to wiggle out of the obvious conclusion. Aldous Huxley points out that “several excuses are always less convincing than one”.⁷⁷ They repeatedly argue, “What about this?” without any regard for how nutty or preposterous their scenarios are. It seems as if the skeptics must grasp at straws to come up with any argument they can in order to protect their belief system which must never allow the possibility of a supernatural realm. Let us examine some of the common objections that skeptics often put forth:

- **“*Let our team of skeptics conduct the experiment.*”** You will note that many of the studies cited were the ones conducted by the skeptics! And then when those skeptics became believers, other skeptics claimed that their study must be flawed and then they want to conduct the experiment yet again with a new team of skeptics. Thus, no study will ever be good enough to satisfy a skeptic. In the case of Prahlad Jani, for example, a second study was conducted by 35 scientists and the skeptics’ only response was that he must have cheated somehow and drank water anyway, but they don’t know how. (But then they would be overlooking the even greater miracle that Jani also went fifteen days without urinating! 😊)
- **“*Our own experiment did not confirm the results.*”** Okay, but what about all of the other experiments that did? In some cases, the scientific results were not verified by subsequent experiments because they were intentionally

biased and the initial conditions were not properly reproduced. In particular, a supernatural process does not have to be 100 percent repeatable every time in order to be established, *as long as it is repeatable some of the time*. When dealing with the supernatural, it is possible that there are other unknown spiritual factors that are not well understood and the conditions are only sporadically being met. In other words, a supernatural phenomenon does not need to be as reliable as gravity in order to be real. In the case of prayer, for example, perhaps the wrong people are praying to the wrong god. The fact that these legitimate scientific experiments have been repeated on multiple occasions is more than sufficient to confirm the existence of the supernatural.

- ***“We have debunked similar claims before.”*** Whenever skeptics expose a fraud or find an alternative explanation, it renews their faith that *all* supernatural phenomena must be hoaxes. According to this flawed logic, if one claim has been exposed to be a fraud, then *all* other supernatural claims must be frauds as well. But notice that the same skeptics seem to fall strangely silent when presented with these scientific studies backed up by experimental evidence. And if the skeptics claim to find a flaw, it usually just means that they don’t like the interpretation of the experiment’s conclusion, not that the experimental data was wrong. In the case of Pam Reynolds, for example, skeptics have tried to nitpick at several small details, none of which, *even if true*, would undermine the occurrence of the supernatural phenomenon. Then they ignore all the other scientific studies which *independently* confirm the same results. If skeptics want to be objective, they should stop wasting so much time debunking the dubious claims of psychics like Uri Geller, and instead focus their attention on supernatural phenomena which have been scientifically substantiated by experimental results.
- ***“Okay, it happens but a natural process could possibly explain it.”*** Offering a *possible* explanation for a supernatural phenomenon is not the same as confirming it with evidence. For example, it is possible that all skeptics are mentally incompetent. 😊 Some skeptics are satisfied as long as they can come up with *any* possible explanation no matter how extreme – it does not matter to them if it is actually correct or not. Skeptics will offer one explanation, and then when that is later proven to be wrong, they will simply make up another explanation. In the case of NDE, skeptics went from believing that the phenomena didn’t exist at all, to accepting that they exist but are hallucinations caused by biological processes. But now that biological processes have been ruled out, what new excuse will they try to come up with next?

You are *invited* to investigate the skeptics’ literature on these topics to see for yourself how frivolous their excuses tend to be. When you investigate *all* the evidence objectively, you will notice that their literature uses “spin” tactics that leaves out important details, attacks only one study while ignoring the others, repeats outdated arguments that have already been discredited, or resorts to ad hominem attacks. Ralph Hartley’s observation is most applicable here, “The number of arguments is unimportant unless some of them are correct.” Some

skeptics just want to make arguments and don't even seem to care if they are true or not. An objective person, however, sees right through this when it is solely motivated by their religious worldview, not based on the facts. That is why many people are skeptical of skepticism.

Perhaps one of the tell-tale signs of the skeptics' disingenuousness is the fact that much of their literature still contains faulty arguments that have already been thoroughly disproven by their own admissions. In these cases, the skeptics have finally conceded a particular point, but then they still don't update their literature because their religion requires them to maintain at least some sort of argument against it. For example, most of their literature on the phantom leaf affect still postulates that it must have been caused by residue from a previous exposure, even though it was controlled for in most of the experiments.^{§3.4.2} Again, it doesn't seem to matter to them if their argument is correct or not, as long as they can make up an argument. They must think that if they repeat a falsehood often enough that will make it true. Or in the words of President Harry S. Truman, "If you can't convince them, confuse them."⁷⁸ Such skeptics don't actually care about the truth, but only the public's perception of their secular religion, and thus they are not rationalists.

3.5.2 Scientific Voodoo

Notice that many mainstream scientific theories are indistinguishable from supernatural explanations. Unproven scientific concepts such as singularities, string theory, multiple dimensions, parallel universes, etc. are not supported by any more evidence than Greek mythology which says Zeus is responsible for everything. The scientific establishment often resorts to *supernatural language* as it struggles to explain many of their theories. Consider how religious sounding these scientific theories are:

- Brian Whitworth of Massey University claims that the universe could be "an information simulation running on a multi-dimensional space-time screen."⁷⁹
- Steven W. Hawking said, "A singularity is a place where the classical concepts of space and time break down as do all the known laws of physics..."⁸⁰
- Claudio Furtado from the Universidade Federal da Paraíba stated, "Actually, both ghosts and phantoms are considered now as possible candidates to solve the problem of explanation of the cosmic acceleration."⁸¹
- Craig Hogan, Director of Fermilab's Center for Particle Astrophysics suggests that "we are all living in a giant cosmic hologram."⁸²

These claims are not much better than The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy's theory, which states, "There is a theory which states that if ever anyone discovers exactly what the Universe is for and why it is here, it will instantly disappear and be replaced by something even more bizarre and inexplicable. There is another theory which states that this has already happened."⁸³ Notice that many of these claims are not scientifically verifiable and thus satisfy the definition of

supernatural and are no better than other religious claims. Skeptics want you to accept their unsubstantiated theories because they sound “scientific”, but then reject scientifically verified studies because they sound “religious”. Such “out there” science may one day be proven correct, but it is *hypocritical* to accept these unsubstantiated theories while rejecting other supernatural phenomena which already have experimental validity.

3.6 Advancement to Supernaturalist

To become a supernaturalist, an agnostic merely needs to believe the existence of the supernatural is *more likely than not*. To convince someone to believe in the supernatural does not require absolute proof (although this has already been given),^{§2.2.1} but merely making a sufficient case for its likelihood. It is not necessary to go so far as to believe in the existence of God, but only conceding that supernatural phenomena exist, which cannot be explained by natural means alone. This includes mystical scientific speculations such as singularities, multiple dimensions, parallel universes, etc. All these scientific sounding phenomena still meet the definition of supernatural.

Someone once asked atheist Bertrand Russell what he would say when he dies and is brought face to face before God. Russell replied without hesitation, “I should say, ‘God! Why did you make the evidence for your existence so insufficient?’”⁸⁴ Or as others have put it, “Why did you make it so hard to find you?” Such a response is of course incredibly naive given the sheer volume of scientific evidence demonstrating supernatural phenomena. *The problem is not that the evidence has been insufficient, but that it has been ignored!* Is there some conspiracy that prevents agnostics from understanding randomized double-blind studies published by fully credentialed scientists in secular peer-reviewed academic journals? No one is questioning the agnostic’s intelligence, but many of them simply have not been paying attention! Some of you have not been honestly looking into these things at all, but have been living in a secular bubble, being fed the skeptics’ propaganda focused on debunking frivolous claims that never had any scientific validity to begin with. Or perhaps you have been too busy ridiculing other religions that you were not even aware of the scientific evidence for the supernatural.

The problem is not that the evidence has been insufficient, but that it has been ignored!

Indeed, the most effective way to convert an agnostic to a supernaturalist is simply to expose him to the evidence. This will probably not help irrational *religious* skeptics who would still not believe in God under any circumstance, because no amount of evidence will ever be able to convince someone who *refuses* to consider the possibility that God exists. But then again, such people are not rationalists. There will probably always be some people who persist in intentional ignorance and will not admit they are wrong because of pride.^{§1.4} Yet the evidence will help any rationalist who is willing to take a hard look at the

scientific evidence and objectively evaluate the experimental results. As one of Murphy's Laws says, "If it happens, it must be possible!" The evidence presented here has been carefully footnoted and you are invited to examine it carefully. If you are still not convinced, more scientific evidence for the existence of God will be presented in the next chapter, but there is already sufficient evidence to support the position of supernaturalism for anyone who is seeking the truth. Do you have the intellectual integrity to accept scientific facts, whether they agree with your position or not?

Instead of maintaining a blind faith that the supernatural realm cannot possibly exist, an agnostic is merely asked to look at the evidence objectively. To maintain that these supernatural phenomena are not real requires *more faith* than to simply acknowledge the scientific facts. Not that any of this proves that there is God, but clearly something beyond the known natural laws of the universe must be accounted for. Because of this scientific evidence, the odds of Pascal's Wager are no longer 50/50, but are now significantly greater that the existence of the supernatural is more likely than not. The supernaturalist position is thus the more logical position over agnosticism because science has repeatedly demonstrated that supernatural phenomena exist. Once you are able to acknowledge the possible existence of the supernatural, you will be finally able to advance on the path to becoming a true rationalist, and as it will be shown, a follower of Jesus Christ.

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“For God’s invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world through what has been made, so that people are without excuse.” – Paul of Tarsus

Chapter 4:

From Supernaturalist to Theist

A supernaturalist is one who believes that supernatural phenomena exist beyond the natural laws of this universe. They do not believe that the supernatural phenomena in the universe are necessarily caused by a God or gods for they could emanate from inanimate forces such as multiple dimensions, spiritual energy, prana, qi, karma, etc. And if there are supernatural beings such as ghosts, angels, or spirits, they would not necessarily possess omnipotence, omniscience, etc. Some supernaturalists don’t differentiate between any of these metaphysical phenomena, but tend to lump them all together. They seem to accept anything that could be supernatural without scrutiny, which is not very rational. A supernaturalist isn’t usually antagonistic to the concept of God, but doesn’t see why supernatural phenomena must necessarily be attributed to a Supreme Being. There are many religions which acknowledge the supernatural but do not necessarily believe in a sentient God. If you already believe in a God or gods then you are already qualified to advance to the next chapter.

4.1 The Cosmological Argument

Plato is often given credit as the first to propose the notion of a “first cause” to the universe. By observing the law of cause and effect, the premise is that every natural event must have a cause, and if this is so, then this process must have continued backwards for all eternity. This would be problematic, however, because it would create an infinite chain, which still does not explain how causation began. The solution then is to assume that there must have been an uncaused cause or a “first cause”. Some claim that this “first cause” could be quite natural, as they postulate that matter could have simply existed from all eternity. But the following logic proves that this cannot be the case:

1. M	Observation	(Matter exists)
2. $M \& I \supset E$	2nd Law of Thermodynamics	(If matter exists with infinite time, then maximum entropy will result)
3. $\sim E$	Observation	(There is not maximum entropy in the universe)
4. $\sim(M \& I)$	2,3 Modus Tollens	(There is not matter existing with infinite time)
5. $\sim M \vee \sim I$	DeMorgan	(Either there is not matter or there is not infinite time)
6. $\therefore \sim I$	5,1 Disjunctive Syllogism	(Therefore, there has not been infinite time)

This proves that matter could not have existed from eternity past in *this* universe, but must have had a definite beginning in time. If the universe had existed for all eternity, all the stars would have burned out millennia ago. Lest you now degenerate into an ignoramus, which of these scientific premises do you want to reject? No faith is required to accept this proof, it is just a matter of scientific fact. This doesn't mean you must believe in the Judeo-Christian God, but it does prove that matter must have in some sense been "created" in this universe. Stephen Hawking once conceded, "So long as the universe had a beginning, we could suppose it had a creator."¹

Taking this proof a step further, the Creator of this universe could not consist of matter but *must* be a non-material entity. Thus, the argument, "If God created everything, then who created God?" does not apply since non-material entities are not subject to the law of entropy. *Something obviously had to always exist, or we would not exist; but the thing that always existed could not consist of matter!* Stephen Hawking again points out, "In an unchanging universe a beginning in time is something that has to be imposed by some being outside the universe."² Thus, while matter necessarily must have a definite beginning, a non-corporeal Creator does not necessarily have to have a beginning.

4.1.1 The Big Bang Theory

The majority of scientists surprisingly agree with the cosmological argument, except that they address it differently using terminology of the Big Bang theory. The Big Bang theory proposes that the universe sprang into existence from nothing when a vacuum fluctuation caused a singularity, which rapidly began to expand through a process called inflation, bringing a very small, dense, and hot universe to the cool expanse we see today. Science has no answer for what created the singularity in the first place or what caused it to suddenly expand. Astronomer David Darling points out the problem:

"Don't let the cosmologists try to kid you on this one. They have not got a clue either...'In the beginning,' they will say, 'there was nothing – no time, space, matter or energy. Then there was a quantum fluctuation from which...' Whoa! Stop right there. You see what I mean? First there is

nothing, then there is something. And the cosmologists try to bridge the two with a quantum flutter, a tremor of uncertainty that sparks it all off. Then they are away and before you know it, they have pulled a hundred billion galaxies out of their quantum hats...But there is a very real problem in explaining how it got started in the first place. You cannot fudge this by appealing to quantum mechanics. Either there is nothing to begin with, in which case there is no quantum vacuum, no pre-geometric dust, no time in which anything can happen, no physical laws that can effect a change from nothingness into somethingness; or there is something, in which case that needs explaining.”³

The Big Bang theory is indeed very religious sounding with phrases such as “created out of nothing” and “the beginning of time itself”, which would fit very nicely in many religious books. Physicist Robert Oldershaw notes that trying to understand this cosmological singularity “involves an incredible amount of faith”.⁴ The Big Bang theory also claims that none of the known laws of physics applied during this special act of creation. How convenient! This would obviously include the 1st Law of Thermodynamics, which states that matter/energy can neither be created nor destroyed. So matter/energy cannot be created, but matter/energy must have been created? By definition then, the Big Bang is a *supernatural* theory of origins, as it cannot be explained by the natural laws of the universe. It also allows for the possibility that the non-corporeal Creator mentioned above may be *volitional*, because otherwise an eternal steady-state empty universe would have no reason to suddenly form a singularity which later decided to suddenly expand.

Note that the concept of an oscillating universe or cyclical model, where there is a Big Bang followed by a Big Crunch as the universe collapses back in upon itself, has already been rejected by science. The previous proof already confirms this, because after each expansion and contraction some energy would be lost, so that any subsequent expansion could not be as great, until eventually, given an eternal past, there could be no more expansion. And since we still haven’t yet arrived at that state of total energy loss, it once again proves that the universe must have had a beginning. This has been further confirmed by the scientific observation that the universe is spread out so thin that it cannot collapse back in upon itself⁵ and is actually accelerating in its expansion;⁶ thus *this* universe will ultimately end in a Big Freeze.

The Big Bang is merely one of several theories attempting to explain the origin of the universe and it is not without critics. Others theories have postulated that the matter of this universe could have been injected here from some kind of parallel universe, for example. The universe as we know it, however, is a closed system and anything beyond that would require pure *faith*. Such theories are supported by no more scientific evidence than claiming that everything was created by Zeus. Indeed, *none of these proposals are scientific theories because they are neither testable nor repeatable*. The universe could have originated in many different ways, but the point of this proof is that it must have had a definite

supernatural beginning, because it cannot be explained by the natural laws of science.

4.1.2 The Creation of Atoms

Where did the first atoms come from? There is no known natural process that can create a complete atom from scratch by using raw energy alone. Even if you accept the Big Bang theory, the idea that a massive expansion of energy from a “singularity” could automatically assemble itself into atomic structures is irreproducible scientific mythology. Scientists can readily manipulate and combine parts of atoms into other atomic structures, but that is only because they have atoms to begin with! And even if scientists were able to create a complete atom from scratch, it would merely demonstrate that intelligence is necessary to create an atom.^{84,3,4} Yet that would not be sufficient either, because they would be using equipment that is already made up of existing atoms! That is a far cry from demonstrating how a complete atom could ever be created from scratch by natural processes alone.

According to the Big Bang theory, all the matter of the universe has already been generated and is merely being reconstituted into various forms. But as the universe continues to wind down, the net amount of atomic material only continues to decrease as energy is released. *It is a one-way street* – energy is being released as atoms are being combined and destroyed, but as far as we know, energy is not creating any entirely new atoms from scratch anywhere in this universe. Einstein’s well-known equation $E = MC^2$ provides a quantitative

Some scientists have been very busy trying to create life, yet they cannot even create an atom which is necessary before life can be created!

relationship between matter and energy, but it does not imply that the mere existence of raw undirected energy would automatically create an atom. It is easy to release the energy from an atom, but not so easy to make an atom from energy. Sorry guys, but you should spend a little less time watching Star Trek, and pay

more attention to scientific realities. It is ironic that some scientists have been very busy trying to create life, yet they cannot even create an atom from scratch, which is necessary before life can be created!

4.2 The Law of Biogenesis

The Law of Biogenesis states that life only arises from pre-existing life. And since living things obviously exist today, this necessarily means that something must have been alive from eternity past. Let it be pointed out to the uninitiated skeptic that this is a *law* of science, not merely a theory. Despite centuries of countless experiments, *scientists have never been able to create life!* Scientists have been able to form the building blocks of life⁷ and recombine parts of existing life with other synthetic elements,^{8,9} but they have never created life from scratch,

and certainly nothing that could naturally self-assemble itself from a primordial soup. British biochemist Leslie Orgel admits, “Prebiotic soup is easy to obtain. We must next explain how a prebiotic soup of organic molecules, including amino acids and the organic constituents of nucleotides evolved into a self-replicating organism.”¹⁰ If you have ever seen headlines in the media that claim that scientists have *created* life, go back and read the articles carefully, because it is simply not true. Synthetic organic chemist Jim Tour simply states, “The proposals offered thus far to explain life’s origin make no scientific sense.”¹¹ Furthermore, this book will make the bold claim that scientists will *never* be able to create life from scratch. Actually, this claim is really not bold at all since it is merely based on the scientific *Law* of Biogenesis!

The Law of Biogenesis is quite falsifiable – simply demonstrate that life can be created from non-living things. Since it is not possible to prove a negative, atheists have the *burden of proof* to demonstrate that life can come from non-life. Still waiting... Notice that most of the so-called skeptics are not skeptical here at all. Instead, they have *blind faith* that life can be entirely created from non-living things because their atheistic religious worldview requires it. A rationalist, however, rejects such religious faith and instead relies on science, which has never demonstrated such things and even has a *law* against it. Who is the religious one now! Do you expect us to believe that random natural processes can create life, but intelligent scientists cannot? We rationalists are not interested in your endless “just so” fables about how life may have possibly begun – either put up or shut up!

If scientists in the future are ever able to create life from scratch, that would not exactly disprove the Law of Biogenesis either. That is because it would still require life to create the life. Although the life would not be directly extracted from pre-existing life, pre-existing life would still be necessary to create the process. And this case, it would further prove that it takes *intelligent* life to create life.^{§4.3.4} In order to dismiss the possibility of God, scientists must not only be able to create life, but also must be able to *demonstrate* how life can automatically occur through purely natural processes. Still waiting... Most secularists simply choose to ignore these facts for they have no way to deal with this – but then again, they are not rationalists since they are not really seeking the truth.

4.2.1 Spontaneous Generation

The *Law* of Biogenesis contradicts the materialistic origin of life espoused in the *theory* of evolution, which still clings to a repackaged belief in “spontaneous generation” that was originally disproven over a hundred years ago by Louis Pasteur.¹² Spontaneous generation is “the discredited belief that living organisms can somehow be produced by nonliving matter”.¹³ And yet, some now want to go back and revoke the Law of Biogenesis, not because of experimental evidence, but because it contradicts their atheistic theory of origins. Apparently, these religious people do not understand what a *law* of science is and would rather rely on blind faith in spontaneous generation without any empirical evidence. Even Charles Darwin wasn’t so foolish to think that life evolved from non-life, for in

the *Origins of Species* he postulated that life had been “originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one”.¹⁴ If the combined intelligence of the entire scientific community over several decades cannot create life, it would certainly take an amazing amount of *faith* to imagine a random process that would bring about such spontaneous generation. Nobel Prize winner biochemist George Wald discusses this faith: “One has only to contemplate the magnitude of this task to concede that the spontaneous generation of a living organism is impossible. Yet here we are – as a result, I believe, of spontaneous generation.”¹⁵

Many evolutionists are well aware that the probability that life could arise by chance is implausible. Atheist Sir Fred Hoyle placed the odds at 1 in $10^{40,000}$ and compared it to the chance that “a tornado sweeping through a junk-yard might assemble a Boeing 747”,¹⁶ and denied that possibility just as “monkeys thundering away at random on typewriters could not produce the works of Shakespeare”.¹⁷ Other secularists claim that Hoyle’s analysis is flawed because he did not take into account the latest abiogenesis theories. While more recent analyses may improve the odds, it still does not overcome the problem, *even given billions of years*:

“The random, undirected polymerization of these enzymes from a mixture of the twenty amino acids is calculated to occur with a rough probability of $10^{-1,000}$. Even with relatively fast rates of polymerization and a billion-year time scale, it is argued, the likelihood that even one copy of each of these enzymes would be spontaneously produced is infinitesimal...and, of course it becomes preposterously small for the thousand or so different enzymes in a typical bacterium.”¹⁸

A reasonable person may be inclined to think that if the odds are that improbable, then it probably didn’t happen. Professor Francis Crick, awarded the Nobel Prize for the discovery of DNA, concluded: “An honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense, the origin of life appears at the moment to be almost a miracle, so many are the conditions which would have had to have been satisfied to get it going.”¹⁹ Secularists, however, don’t really care what the actual probability is as long as they think there is still a chance, no matter how infinitesimal. If there is any chance at all, then given enough time, it must eventually happen. Peter Mora points out the absurdity of that argument: “When for practical purposes the condition of infinite time and matter has to be invoked, the concept of probability is annulled. By such logic we can prove anything...”²⁰ The secularists’ last resort then is to invoke the anthropic principle by claiming, “We are here, so that it must have happened.” But how is that any better than the religious justification that the rock god created everything?^{§1.3}

The fact of the matter is, *all such probability arguments from both sides are flawed*. No argument from probability is valid because it must first be *possible* before it can happen. This has never been shown. There is *no* valid scientific theory of abiogenesis or a standard model as to how life began, especially since none of them works! How do we know this? Because none of them work! Only after scientists can demonstrate a means for life to arise *from entirely natural*

processes can the odds of it occurring be correctly calculated; and only then we can decide if the probability for it occurring would be plausible. Because of this, many atheist scientists are now facing the fact that they must look off-world for an extra-terrestrial origin of life...

4.2.2 Panspermia/Transpermia

Several mainstream scientists have now concluded that spontaneous generation of life probably did not occur on this planet and thus life must have evolved on another planet and somehow migrated here as the result of cosmic processes. Atheist astronomer Sir Fred Hoyle explains:

“I don’t know how long it is going to be before astronomers generally recognize that the combinatorial arrangement of not even one among the many thousands of biopolymers on which life depends could have been arrived at by natural processes here on the earth...The notion that not only the biopolymers but the operating programme of a living cell could be arrived at by chance in a primordial organic soup here on the Earth is evidently nonsense of a high order. Life must plainly be a cosmic phenomenon.”²¹

The theory of panspermia postulates that microbes might be able to survive the cosmic radiation of space and settle on other planets throughout the universe, while the subcategory of transpermia more specifically postulates that the microbes can be transported by comets, meteorites, and asteroids and settle on other planets within a solar system. Neither theory has been verified scientifically and neither theory makes any attempt to explain the ultimate origin of life, because *both theories merely pass the problem on to somewhere else in the universe*. Okay, if life came here from another planet, how did life spontaneously generate on that other planet? The theories of panspermia/transpermia still provide no mechanism as to how life can be created from natural processes *anywhere*. They merely pass the buck in *faith* that maybe life could have happened on another planet since these scientists finally admit that it probably did not happen here.

4.2.3 Life is Supernatural

Perhaps the reason that scientists will never be able to create life is because they still don’t know what life is. Scientists still cannot agree on a definition of life and it has been reformulated many times over the years. The standard textbook on Zoology concludes, “Although many scientists have tried to define life, simple definitions are doomed to failure.”²² The best that scientists have been able to do instead is to provide a *description* of life’s characteristics. Life is somewhat similar to gravity in that scientists can try to describe its properties, but

they really cannot explain what it is. Most scientists today have revised the standard description of life to include the features of cellular organization, homeostasis, heredity, metabolism, growth, adaptation, responsiveness, reproduction, and movement. Such definitions, however, are quite presumptive. For example, who is to say that an entity must have a cellular structure to be classified as being alive? This may be how life exists on earth, but how arrogant it is to assume that that is the only kind of life?²³ There are many other such problems with these types of “definitions”:

- Sterile and hybrid animals are alive, but they cannot reproduce.
- Some types of plants are alive, but they don’t have any movement.
- Frozen bacteria, dormant spores, and dried protozoa are alive, but have no metabolism, growth, adaptation, responsiveness, reproduction, or movement.
- Parasites (and perhaps viruses) are alive, but without their host do not have homeostasis.
- Many endangered species are alive, even though they show no adaptation and become extinct.
- An individual animal is alive, but it cannot reproduce without others of its own species.

And on the other hand, some computer programs can be classified as being alive depending on the particular definition being used.

Although science still struggles to provide a precise definition of life, most people are intuitively able to identify life quite effortlessly. This is because life is spiritual, not materialistic in nature. Indeed, life satisfies the definition of *supernatural* since life cannot be created through natural means. Life is another example of a supernatural phenomenon that is both scientifically observable, testable, and repeatable, and yet scientists still cannot explain exactly what it is.^{§3.4} Even if we ignore the Law of Biogenesis, it is actually quite easy to see why

Perhaps the reason that scientists will never be able to create life is because they still don’t know what life is.

scientists will never be able to create life through materialistic means. Imagine, for example, that scientists were able to create a complete human being from scratch. What they would have then would merely be a dead corpse that would

immediately begin decomposing. It would not be alive. If you move to a smaller scale, imagine that scientists could meticulously create an entire cell from scratch including all its membranes and DNA structure and all you would have is a dead cell. Moreover, scientists today are even able to cheat since they already have the DNA blueprint to copy and yet they still cannot make a living cell. *That is because life has nothing to do with creating the right materialistic structure to house it in.* This is demonstrated every time that someone clinically dies on an operating table but is later revived and brought back to life. The fact that they were brought back to life *proves* that their body was still capable of supporting life. So why did they die in the first place? And then why did they come back to life? And more mysteriously, why are they sometimes able to recount what was happening to them while they were dead?^{§3.4.1}

4.3 The Teleological Argument

Plato is given credit for the concept of a “demiurge” of supreme intelligence who designed the universe. The teleological argument for the existence of God, or the argument from design, goes something like this:

1. D	Observation	<i>(Design is observed in some item of the universe)</i>
2. $D \supset I \vee N$	Observation	<i>(If there is design, there is either an intelligent designer or a natural process)</i>
3. $I \vee N$	2,1 Modus Ponens	<i>(There is either an intelligent designer or a natural process)</i>
4. $\sim N$	Premise	<i>(Something could not be caused by a natural process)</i>
5. $\therefore I$	3,4 Disjunctive Syllogism	<i>(Therefore, it must be caused by an intelligent designer)</i>

While the logic is sound, one must first accept the premise that a particular design could not be caused by natural processes. This is definitely a subjective point, but nevertheless has proven quite sufficient to convince many atheists to become theists. William Paley, for example, offered the classic analogy of a watch in which you would be hard pressed to come up with a natural means by which pieces of metal and plastic could have come together to form a functioning time piece, even given billions of years of random processes. Paley concludes:

The inference, we think, is inevitable; that the watch must have had a maker; that there must have existed, at some time, and at some place or other, an artificer or artificers, who formed it for the purpose which we find it actually to answer; who comprehended its construction, and designed its use.”²⁴

If a watch implies a watchmaker, then look just beyond the watch and ask yourself who designed the hand that is attached to the arm wearing the watch? The atheist would incredulously have you believe that millions of years of random processes created an amazingly agile, compact, waterproof, self-healing machine far surpassing the complexity of a watch. Indeed, *intelligent* scientists still have not created a mechanical hand that even comes close to the dexterity of the human hand. Are random natural processes smarter than our top scientists?^{§4.3.4}

In rebuttal, atheist Richard Dawkins wrote an entire book titled “The Blind Watchmaker” and although it has a witty title, nowhere in the book does he provide an alternative explanation for how a watch could have been assembled by blind natural processes.²⁵ Skeptics are forced to argue that none of the things in question were actually designed, but they only *appear* to be designed. How then can you tell the difference between things that look designed but aren’t and the

things that look designed and are? Are humans programmed by “nature” to believe there is a designer whenever they see evidence of design? Or do skeptics merely lack common sense?

4.3.1 Intelligent Design Theory

The theory of Intelligent Design (ID) is “an effort to empirically detect whether the ‘apparent design’ in nature acknowledged by virtually all biologists is genuine design (the product of an intelligent cause) or is simply the product of an undirected process such as natural selection acting on random variations.”²⁶ ID theory attempts to establish an objective criterion to reliably determine whether a system was intentionally designed or not by analyzing a system’s components and comparing them to informational properties already known to come from intelligence. For example, if aliens observed Mount Rushmore, is there a scientific method that could be used to determine whether it was purposely designed by intelligent beings or whether it was shaped by random forces of nature? The properties of an intelligent process are difficult to nail down, which is why it must be determined scientifically. For example, patterns and complexity alone are not sufficient criteria to necessitate a designer since ripples in the sand have patterns and the fusion of the sun is complex. Instead, ID theory requires “specified complexity” which is aptly explained by atheist Richard Dawkins: “The answer we have arrived at is that complicated things have some quality, specifiable in advance, that is highly unlikely to have been acquired by random chance alone.”²⁵

One controversial concept often associated with the ID movement is “irreducible complexity” originally defined by biochemist Michael Behe as “a single system composed of several well-matched, interacting parts that contribute to the basic function, wherein the removal of any one of the parts causes the system to effectively cease functioning”.²⁷ An irreducibly complex system is claimed to be an indicator of intelligent design if it cannot be explained by a process of gradual adaptation. This is commonly illustrated by a mousetrap, which must begin with a minimum number of working parts or the trap will not catch any mice and thus could not evolve to catch more mice. Charles Darwin stated, “If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed, which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down.”²⁸ This concept of irreducible complexity, however, is disputed by H. Allen Orr who explains:

“An irreducibly complex system can be built gradually by adding parts that, while initially just advantageous, become – because of later changes – essential. The logic is very simple. Some part (A) initially does some job (and not very well, perhaps). Another part (B) later gets added because it helps A. This new part isn’t essential, it merely improves things. But later on, A (or something else) may change in such a way that B now becomes indispensable. This process continues as further parts get

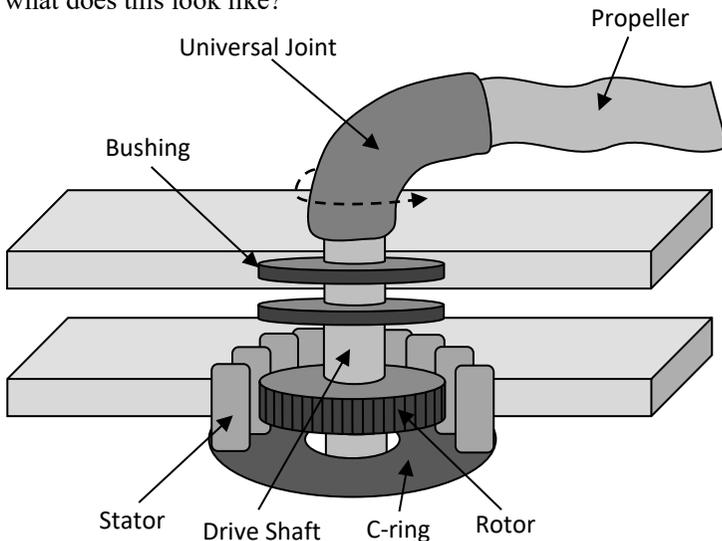
folded into the system. And at the end of the day, many parts may all be required.”²⁹

This explanation, however, is merely another example of a “just so” story which presumes there is already a living system that can adapt without explaining how life was created in the first place.^{84.2} In any case, ID theory does not depend on the concept of irreducible complexity and can stand alone without it. For example, the concept of irreducible complexity does not help at all in determining whether Mount Rushmore was intelligently designed or not.

While ID is meant to be generic theory of design, there is no doubt that many ID people are really Creationists. This does not mean that science of ID is invalid for there are other proposed types of designers of systems other than God. SETI researchers, for example, continually analyze signals collected from space for recognizable patterns of alien intelligence. If something can be determined to be intelligently designed, it does not specify who or what the designer is or what the designer’s purpose was, but only that it was intelligent. Ironically, atheists who oppose the science of ID have no scientific way to determine whether Mount Rushmore was designed or caused by natural processes other than *common sense*. But it is precisely this common sense that leads most people to look at the complexity of life and conclude that it must have been intelligently designed!

4.3.2 Examples of Design

There are several classic examples of intelligent design that cannot be explained by any natural processes. This is not a matter of proof, but in many cases it would clearly require far more *faith* to believe that there wasn’t a designer than not. Thus, the easiest way to convert people to become theists is relatively simple because people merely need to be exposed to the evidence. Could it be that some things look designed, *precisely because they have been designed*? For example, what does this look like?



Most people will identify that this is a mechanical component of a motor which has bearings and a propeller that rotates. But they are shocked to learn that this propeller is actually part of a living microscopic bacterial flagellum which enables it to swim. At less than 20 nanometers wide, it currently exceeds any human construction capabilities with nanotechnology. The skeptics' faith becomes apparent when the best they can offer are fairy tale explanations that "natural forces work 'like magic'".³⁰ To claim that hundreds of different complex microscopic machines like this could self-assembled themselves to form the first living cell, and then go on to replicate, is entirely absurd! Such an unsubstantiated position is not based on objective science, but rather is guided by the secularist's own *religion*.

Similar examples of complex intelligent design can be found in the intricacies of the human eye, caterpillar/butterfly metamorphosis, and the DNA code itself. Biochemist Michael Behe points out several complex structures in his book,²⁷ and other than engaging in name calling and ad hominem attacks, opponents have still provided few satisfactory explanations for them. Making up "just so" explanations *without supporting scientific data* is no more convincing than any other *myth*. It seems as if these intelligent scientists are in way over their heads as they have trouble even guessing at how these blind random natural processes could have done it. ☺ Charles Darwin admitted, "To suppose that the eye, with all its inimitable contrivances...could have been formed by natural selection, seems, I freely confess, absurd in the highest possible degree" and yet he continued to have *faith* that it must have happened somehow.³¹ Indeed, without specific evidence demonstrating how it could be caused by natural processes, atheists have nothing to rely on but *faith*. A rationalist, however, has no choice but to depend upon a *science* along the lines of ID, and without any other plausible alternatives, the best evidence clearly points to an intelligent designer.

4.3.3 Directed Panspermia

Many scientists have already conceded that natural processes will never be able to create life and that it must have been designed by intelligent beings. Agnostic biologist Francis Crick, co-discoverer of the structure of the DNA molecule, concluded that DNA was too complex to have happened by chance and thus proposed the theory of "directed panspermia" in which intelligent *aliens* must have been responsible for seeding life here.³² Other atheist heroes such as Stephen Hawking, Carl Sagan, and Richard Dawkins have all advocated that intelligent aliens may have been responsible for bringing life to earth. For example, after thoroughly ruling out the possibility that any God could exist, Richard Dawkins postulates:

"It could be that at some earlier time somewhere in the universe, a civilization evolved, probably by some kind of Darwinian means to a very very high level of technology and designed a form of life that they seeded onto perhaps this planet. Now that is a possibility, and an intriguing possibility. And I suppose it's possible that you might find

evidence for that if you look at the details of biochemistry, molecular biology, you might find a signature of some sort of designer. And that designer could well be a higher intelligence from elsewhere in the universe.”³³

By having an *alien* intelligent designer, atheists think this allows them to maintain a natural origin for the existence of life without needing to bring God into the equation. But just like the theories of panspermia/transpermia, it merely passes the problem on to elsewhere because it still doesn't explain how life began on another planet. Quoting again from Dawkins:

“To explain the origin of the DNA/protein machine by invoking [an alien] Designer is to explain precisely nothing, for it leaves unexplained the origin of the Designer. You have to say something like ‘[Aliens were] always there’, and if you allow yourself that kind of lazy way out, you might as well just say ‘DNA was always there’, or ‘Life was always there’, and be done with it.”²⁵

Well, not exactly. If you substitute “a supernatural” for the first brackets and “God was” for the second brackets, that is what the quote actually said. What hypocrisy! Indeed, it has already been proven that life must have always existed^{§4.2} and that it could *not* have been corporeal,^{§4.1} thus ruling out the possibility of alien designers.

Why do so many atheists seem to have an irrational obsession with aliens without any conclusive scientific evidence that they even exist? What incredible *faith* they have! Would they be willing to accept God, if God were an alien? ☺ They are apparently willing to accept any type of intelligent designer as long as it isn't called God. Thus, to their chagrin, these atheists are really proponents of the ID movement, they have just replaced God with an unknown alien! The ID movement does not specify that God was the creator, but merely points out the scientific evidence that life was intelligently designed by something.

4.3.4 Superior Intelligence

The ultimate conclusion of the teleological argument is not just that there is an intelligent designer, but one that is *more intelligent* and *technologically advanced* than humans. The proof is simple – the most intelligent humans cannot duplicate our own biomechanical systems, nor do we even begin to understand how many of them work. More astounding, our best experts still cannot create them even though they can cheat by studying the DNA blueprint that already exists! The greatest scientific minds are not able to design anything as complex as the human eye or the human hand. They do not understand how the brain works, and certainly cannot build one. They are just now learning the microscopic intricacies of the cell, but are not even close to engineering even the simplest of parts with nanotechnology. One day they may be able to accomplish some of

these feats, but only if humans *increase* even more in intelligence to approach the intelligence of our Designer. And if scientists do ever create life, it will only prove that intelligence was indeed required to accomplish these feats and that indeed more intelligence was needed than we possess today.

Some atheists have tried to argue that some organisms seem to be poorly designed by their standards and thus not indicative of an intelligent creator. They point out “vestigial” limbs and organs that they do not fully understand and conclude that they would not have been intentionally designed that way. But that is kind of like a child who criticizes the aesthetics of a television set, when they do not even understand how the television works. Scientists don’t comprehend the complexities of how a single cell works, but they will criticize how it is designed? But alas, let us humor them. Well, it could be that the intelligent creator was having a bad day or was merely experimenting. Or perhaps the original design was once superior to what it is now and the organism has since devolved. Or perhaps there was more than one creative being and some of them were not quite as intelligent as the others. It is not necessary to prove that *everything* was superiorly designed, for only *one* example is sufficient to establish the validity of the teleological argument.

4.4 The Moral Argument

The moral argument for the existence of God goes all the way back to Plato, who proposed that “the Good” was a self-existing concept derived from God’s nature. The moral argument for the existence of God has been offered in many different ways over the years, but will be specified here in the following form:

1. M	Observation	<i>(Moral values exist)</i>
2. $M \supset N \vee S$	Observation	<i>(If there are moral values, they are either a natural or supernatural phenomenon)</i>
3. $N \vee S$	2,1 Modus Ponens	<i>(Either a natural or supernatural phenomenon exists)</i>
4. $\sim N$	Premise	<i>(Something cannot be explained by a natural phenomenon)</i>
5. $\therefore S$	3,4 Disjunctive Syllogism	<i>(Therefore, it must be a supernatural phenomenon)</i>

While this logic is sound, one must first accept the premise that moral values are not natural. Though this is certainly debatable, it is simply argued that the supernatural interpretation is *more reasonable* than the various alternatives and thus the best explanation for a rationalist. This is because moral laws do not describe human behavior like natural laws, but instead project ideals which humans feel obligated to obey.^{§7.2.2} This obligation goes *against* human nature as moral laws are often inconvenient and difficult to keep. C.S. Lewis reasons:

“If we ask: ‘Why ought I to be unselfish?’ and you reply ‘Because it is good for society,’ we may then ask, ‘Why should I care what’s good for society except when it happens to pay me personally?’ and then you will have to say, ‘Because you ought to be unselfish’ – which simply brings us back to where we started.”³⁴

There is really no good evolutionary explanation for why people ought to go against their own selfish interests. Society once approved of slavery in keeping with evolution’s “survival of the fittest” and yet most people today reject it because they consider slavery to be morally wrong. Instead of a materialistic “kill or be killed” response, for some reason people still care for the sick at risk of their own infection, make sacrifices so others can succeed, and love others when it provides no benefit to themselves. Remember, if there is no God, evolution must explain *everything*, including why believing in God is an advantageous trait since the majority of people believe in God.³⁵ This moral argument does not necessarily prove that morality comes from God, but only that it is likely supernatural in essence, involving rational thought.

4.5 The Scientific God

God will be defined here as “a being or object believed to have more than natural attributes and powers...”³⁶ Extending beyond the mere existence of supernatural phenomena, God is considered a volitional being that embodies certain supernatural powers. Based on the scientific evidence presented so far, the following characteristics may now be attributed to a God or gods:

- **Eternal** – it is scientifically demonstrated that an eternal entity must have always existed.^{§4.1}
- **Non-corporeal** – the laws of science prove that the eternal entity could not be made of matter.^{§4.1}
- **Living** – the Law of Biogenesis proves that something must have always been alive from eternity.^{§4.2}
- **Intelligent** – whatever created life is necessarily more intelligent than humans today.^{§4.3.4}
- **Technological** – complex biological machines exceed human capabilities in nanotechnology.^{§4.3.4}
- **Moral** – morality exists which transcends the ability of natural evolutionary processes.^{§4.4}

Notice that no religious gobbledygook was required to arrive at any of these positions; it is simply derivable from the evidence. An alternative approach is simply to let whatever possesses these characteristics to be defined as the *Scientific God*. Whatever caused a singularity to suddenly expand, whatever was eternally alive, whatever created complex life, wherever morality came from, let

us attribute that to the Scientific God. It could also be that there were several gods that existed from the beginning which held various combinations of these traits.

4.6 Advancement to Theist

To become a theist, the supernaturalist must merely accept the volitional aspect of at least one of these supernatural phenomena. Rather than remaining ignorant of the supernatural world, the supernaturalist is merely asked to look at the scientific evidence objectively. Albert Einstein said, "...everyone who is seriously interested in the pursuit of science becomes convinced that a spirit is manifest in the laws of the universe – a spirit vastly superior to man, and one in the face of which our modest powers must feel humble."³⁷ Surprisingly, even Stephen Hawking once stated, "I thought I had left the question of the existence of a Supreme Being completely open...It would be perfectly consistent with all we know to say that there was a Being who was responsible for all the laws of physics."³⁸

The evidence for the existence of God was so compelling that Antony Flew, who was once the defacto spokesman for the atheist movement, later had to admit he was wrong and become a theist. He subsequently wrote a book titled, "There is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind" which documents his discovery:

"It has had no connection with any of the revealed religions. Nor do I claim to have had any personal experience of God or any experience that may be called supernatural or miraculous. In short, my discovery of the Divine has been pilgrimage of reason and not of faith."³⁹

Flew's defection, of course, made the other atheists furious. (But hey, what are you atheists doing here anyway! Get back to the atheist chapter until you are at least willing to become agnostics.) Flew did not get any further in determining the identity of God before his death and thus did not subscribe to any particular religion. Some have become theists through a simple prayer such as: "God, if you are real, then please reveal yourself to me in a way that I can understand." Obviously, if there is no God, they reason, then it shouldn't hurt anything.

Up to this point, nothing has been established about God's origin, purposes, philosophy, etc., but only that there is probably at least one volitional God with supernatural properties. And that is all that is necessary to form the basis for becoming a theist. (The next chapter will provide further evidence revealing the specific identity of God.) Once you are able to acknowledge the probability of God's existence, you will finally be able to advance on the path to becoming a true rationalist, and as it will be shown, a follower of Jesus Christ.

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“...I even found an altar with this inscription: To an unknown god. Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.” – Paul of Tarsus

Chapter 5:

From Theist To Abrahamist

A theist is one who believes in a God or gods. Theists are differentiated from supernaturalists in that a volitional aspect of supernatural phenomena is attributed to at least one God or gods. This encompasses a wide variety of different religions and philosophies. It should be noted, however, that many theists are not rationalists at all. For some reason, many people lose all sense of reason as soon as God is mentioned and begin spouting the most illogical nonsense imaginable. They may otherwise lead rational lives, but they have compartmentalized their beliefs about God and think it allows them to get away with irrational nonsense when it comes to spiritual things. Fideism, for example, advocates “reliance on faith rather than reason in pursuit of religious truth.”¹ A fideist simply believes whatever he wants without any evidence whatsoever and really is just another type of ignoramus.^{§1.1} Some religions may be pleased with the scientific evidence presented so far, but most of them are not rationalists and they did not arrive at their religion through any logical process. There is a huge amount of confusion, misinformation, and contention surrounding the nature of God, which must be examined in a rational manner. From here on God will be referred to with the generic pronoun “he” without necessarily reference to gender. Not that God is necessarily male in physiology, but that is the traditional way that God has been referenced in English.

5.1 Theological Significance

There are many forms of theism and most of them can be categorized based on three characteristics regarding their concept of God: number (one or many), essence (separate or inseparable from creation), and involvement (active or inactive). The major forms of theism can thus be depicted using the following three-variable Karnaugh Map:

One	Separate		Inseparable	
	Monotheism	Deism	Pantheism	Panentheism
Many	Polytheism	Polydeism		
	Inactive			

There are, of course, many subcategories of these basic forms. For example, with monotheism there may be hierarchical systems where there is one God over other lesser gods, or one God who must be worshipped in particular among other gods. And in some religions, there is one God who presides over other spiritual entities such as angels and demons who also possess limited supernatural powers.

In order to determine which form of theism may be correct, it would first be necessary to determine the correct values for these variables. All of the characteristics of the Scientific God determined in the previous chapter (eternal, non-corporeal, living, intelligent, technological, and moral) could apply to most of these forms of theism. But obviously all of these forms of theism cannot simultaneously be correct.^{§1.1.2} God cannot simultaneously be both active and inactive, for example, because they are mutually exclusive traits. The scientific evidence previously established for miracles^{§3.3.5} and prayer^{§3.4.4} indicates that God is still active and thus this effectively rules out deism, polydeism, and pantheism. This leaves us only with monotheism, polytheism, and pantheism as the remaining possibilities. Such activity alone, however, provides little useful information about the nature and purposes of God. God may indeed be active, but not necessarily knowable. Does it really matter?

5.1.1 Is God Knowable?

Unless God has chosen to *reveal* additional information about himself, little more can be known. Using the scientific approach alone can only get you so far. If God does not wish to be found, surely no one will be able to find him. Some religions accordingly teach that God is not knowable. But how do they know that God is not knowable? Perhaps two different religions are worshipping the same unknowable God? Who knows? Unless additional information was known about God, a rationalist would remain a generic theist, or more specifically a monotheist. Because in absence of further evidence that multiple gods exist with unique identities, the simplest explanation would be to attribute all supernatural phenomena to a single God because of Occam's Razor. Thus, a generic concept of God will be used from this point forward with the understanding that it could also in actuality represent multiple gods.

One primary question then is, has God ever communicated? It may be that God cannot communicate or that he chooses not to communicate. It could be that God is very active, but simply doesn't want to take credit for his work. Perhaps we are not worthy of God's attention, or maybe God is tired of answering all the critics' silly questions. In any case, if God has never communicated, all that is left is unsubstantiated speculations. Nobody could know any more about the nature of God, whether we will be held accountable for our actions, or whether there are any requirements to obtain a pleasant afterlife. All the religious claims about God would then be unsupportable implying that men have merely made up their own words and ascribed them to God. Like the fideists, you could simply believe almost anything you want about God and not be any more wrong than anyone else. This still does not mean all the conflicting views of pluralism would be correct, it is just that no one could ever know for sure which one is correct.

And if God has indeed communicated, how would you know if God is truthful? Perhaps God did establish the concepts of morality but doesn't follow them himself. It could also be that God lies or at least lies every once in a while. You could even ask God, "Are you truthful?" and if he is a liar he will still answer yes. There are these four possibilities:

	God is truthful	God is a liar
God claims to be truthful	Truthful	Liar
God claims to be a liar	Liar	Liar

If God is a liar, then perhaps nothing he said could be trusted and we would be no better off than the fideists. If God intentionally wants to mislead us about himself, there is not much that can be done about it. There would be no benefit in trying to obey God's commands if he randomly distributes rewards and punishments contrary to what he says. In any case, there are no religions, at least none that are popular, where God is characterized as a liar. Instead, all of them believe God is telling them the truth. But again, all religions cannot simultaneously be true if they contradict each other.^{§5.2.3} Thus, the only way that a rationalist could ever learn any more about God, is if God has *both* communicated and is truthful. And if God is not knowable, then perhaps we should all become *agnostheists*. 😊

5.1.2 Is God Credible?

It could be that God is knowable, but that would still be meaningless unless it can be supported by *credible evidence*. Religions may make up whatever they want and claim it is from God, but without objective evidence to support their claims, they are simply not believable to a rationalist. Someone may claim that God has spoken to them many times, but unless it can be independently verified, there is no objective way for others to substantiate their claims. How would you know if a religion's claims were actually from God or merely made up by men and attributed to God? Thus, unless God intentionally wants us to doubt him, God must communicate in a manner that a rational person would find credible. Indeed, most religions have a severe credibility problem in that they have no way to substantiate their claims about God beyond their presuppositional approach of demanding blind faith.^{§1.1.1} Atheists and agnostics often observe this lack of credibility among the religions so they usually just lump all of these gods together and conclude that all religions are probably wrong.

The least credible claims about God are those represented by *single-source religions*, which are founded and controlled by a single leader who also usually wrote the religion's holy books. Given the claim that God has only ever spoken to one person throughout all history, how would we know that the person wasn't just making it up? There are many examples of religions which simply seem to be

inventing their own gods. Voltaire said, “If God has created us in his image, we have certainly returned him the favor.”² Perhaps the most primitive types of these religions involve various forms of idolatry. Swami Sivananda asserts, “Image worship is very necessary for beginners.”³ But how do you know if they carved god out of the correct tree? Maybe god was in the other tree? Why would one idol be better than another idol when none of them do anything? Other primitive forms of theism involve worshipping celestial bodies, weather phenomena, animals, and forces of nature. Presumably, none of those inanimate objects can speak and thus any directives coming from the sun god, rain god, monkey god, or fire god were more likely made up by the priest, shaman, witch doctor, etc. In all these cases, men are merely ascribing words to a god that never speaks. That is why many religions only retain one chief spokesperson, otherwise their god might start contradicting itself if everyone is allowed to make it up as they go along.

But are these religions really any more primitive than those who make up their own religions today? Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw observed, “The savage bows down to idols of wood and stone: the civilized man to idols of flesh and blood.”⁴ Notice that most of the popular religions are less than a few hundred years old and many were invented by charismatic leaders seeking to gain power and wealth for themselves. Some religions were specifically crafted to fashion a god to be more acceptable to the people’s sensibilities. These try to gain converts by making their religion more popular with society, convincing them that their religion has better benefits, or offering an improved philosophy of life. It does not matter that their god really doesn’t exist, it is all a matter of trying to market their organization.^{§5.2.1}

And then many people claim to follow their own personal god. Most of them don’t really have their own religion, they just use it as an excuse to get other religions to leave them alone. They say, “I have my own views about God” or “I have my own personal set of beliefs” but they have no more basis for establishing the existence of their god than anyone else. To them, it is not a matter of truth, it is a matter of being able to do whatever they want and then claim that it fits in with their imaginary religion. This is how you end up with religious pluralism.^{§1.1.2} None of these gods actually exist, so you should give equal respect to all of their made-up ideas. 😊 Why should someone else’s way of life be better than your own personal philosophy? This is one of the reasons why the skeptics are not very interested in investigating every goofy claim about God.

Without the existence of credible evidence, there would be no way for a rationalist to know anything more about God. An illogical person with blind faith may have randomly selected the correct God, but without credible evidence a rationalist simply cannot know. The premise of this book is to follow the most rational alternative and a rationalist can do no better than investigate whether God can be known by rational means based on the available evidence. Perhaps God has no intentions of letting rationalists follow him, but a rationalist would have no way of knowing that either. Without the existence of an externally verifiable objective criteria,^{§5.2.4} none of a religion’s claims would be credible. If God is not credible, then a rationalist would simply have no way of knowing God.

5.1.3 Is God Relevant?

It could be that God is knowable and credible, but just doesn't really have anything interesting to say. Perhaps God doesn't care what you do or what you believe. Other than some mental intrigue, perhaps God chooses to be completely irrelevant to how you live your life. Various religions such as Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism, for example, teach that God doesn't exist or is at least irrelevant. Instead, they primarily offer a philosophical way to live or a path to follow to obtain peace, happiness, etc. But there are many other ways to accomplish that which have nothing to do with religion. Thus, if you are already sufficiently happy, you may not necessarily be interested in a religion, especially if it requires you to significantly alter your lifestyle. In other words, if there is no significant *upside* gained by accepting a religion, then perhaps it is not worth it.

The only thing you might have to worry about with some religions is the consequences of the afterlife. If a religion espouses no afterlife, that there is no consciousness, or everyone goes to the same place of existence regardless of how they live, then it doesn't really matter what you do. With some religions, if you fail to follow the correct path, all is not necessarily lost, but it will simply take you longer to reach your final destiny. In the case of reincarnation, for example, you might have to come back several times before you can reach a final state of bliss. ("I disbelieved in reincarnation in my last life, too!" 😊) But based on the scientific evidence of near death experiences, reincarnation appears to be invalid as none of the subjects in those studies ever assumed the body of another person or animal.^{§3.4.1} (Besides this, not everybody can be Cleopatra or Napoleon in a previous life. 😊) The point here is that if there is no significant *downside* to rejecting a religion, then perhaps it doesn't matter.

Some religions, however, claim that God holds men accountable to moral laws and there are consequences for their actions – rewards for being obedient, punishments for disobedience, conditions for obtaining an afterlife, etc. These religions teach that not only will the quality of your life be affected here, but your eternal destiny is also at stake. This does not mean that these claims are true, but only that if they are true, God would certainly be relevant. God's relevance is mainly determined by the significance of the claims being made. If God exists but makes no significant claims, then perhaps he can simply be ignored.

Whether or not there are relevant claims made about God, of course, has no relationship in establishing whether he actually exists, but only determines God's relevance if indeed he does exist. The God who makes the most relevant claims is not necessarily therefore the correct God. For example, telling your child that they will go to Hell if they don't believe in Invisible Pink Unicorns won't make it true. If God is merely a benevolent oracle who offers wisdom to mankind or personal guidance to help you through difficult times of life, then that is all he is. There is no need to worry about the scariest imaginary God for fear of Pascal's Wager,^{§3.2} but only whatever God may happen to be correct.

5.2 Comparative Religion

There is certainly no shortage of religions making all sorts of claims about God. In order to evaluate whether God is knowable, credible, or relevant, a rationalist must objectively investigate the claims being made about God to determine their validity. *All of these claims must be evaluated based on objective truth!* Even if God established the truth but does not adhere to it, this still does not prevent a rationalist from using the truth to evaluate God. But with so many different religions, how would you know which God is the true one? Most of the world's religions are generally classified into four major categories: Abrahamic, Dharmic, Taotic, and Other. Here is a table containing most of the major world religions containing at least one million members:

	Religion	Origin	Founder	Holy Books	Theism	Deities
Abrahamic	Judaism	1400 BC	Moses	Tanakh	Mono	Yahweh
	Christianity	33 AD	Jesus Christ	Bible	Mono	Yahweh
	Gnosticism	60 AD	Simon Magus	Pseudepigrapha	Poly	Monad
	Islam	622 AD	Mohammed	Qur'an	Mono	Allah
	Mormonism	1820 AD	Joseph Smith	Book of Mormon	Poly	Yahweh
	Baha'i	1863 AD	Mirza Husayn Ali	Baha'u'llah writings	Mono	Allah
	Christian Science	1879 AD	Mary Baker Eddy	Science and Health	Mono	God
	Jehovah's Witnesses	1879 AD	Charles T. Russell	New World Translation	Mono	Jehovah
	Rastafarianism	1930 AD	Marcus Garvey	Holy Piby	Mono	Jah
	Unificationism	1954 AD	Sun Myung Moon	Divine Principle	Mono	God
Dharmic	Hinduism	1500 BC	Unknown	Shruti, Smritis	Pan	Brahman
	Buddhism	540 BC	Siddharta Gautama	Tripitaka	Non	None
	Jainism	550 BC	Mahavira	Agamas	Pan	Tirthankar
	Sikhism	1499 AD	Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji	Guru Granth Sahib	Mono	Waheguru
	Hare Krishna	1510 AD	Chaitanya Mahaprabhu	Bhagavad Gita	Mono	Krishna
	Falun Gong	1922 AD	Li Hongzhi	Falun Gong	Non	Spirits

	Religion	Origin	Founder	Holy Books	Theism	Deities
Taoic	Confucianism	500 BC	Confucius	Analects	Non	None
	Taoism	550 BC	Lao-Tzu	Tao-Te Ching	Non	Any
	Shintoism	712 AD	Unknown	Kojiki, Nihon-gi	Poly	Kami
	Caodanism	1926 AD	Ngo Van Chieu	Thanh Ngon Hiep Tuyen	Poly	Cao Dai
Other	Neopaganism	1792 AD	Iolo Morganwg	None	Poly	Gaia
	Spiritualism	1845 AD	Andrew Davis	The Principles of Nature	Mono	Any
	New Age	1875 AD	Helena Blavatsky	A Course in Miracles	Pan	Any
	Scientology	1953 AD	L. Ron Hubbard	Dianetics	Non	Any
	Unitarian Universalist	1961 AD	None	Any	Poly	Any
	Satanism	1966 AD	Anton LaVey	Satanic Bible	Mono	Satan

Some of these religions may claim that their historical origins are even older, but these are the dates when the identity of religion more or less coalesced. Most of the Abrahamic religions, for example, consider their origins to predate Judaism considerably, beginning with the Biblical history from about 4000 BC. Of course, there are many more subgroups and sects in these categories representing approximately 4,200 different religions.⁵ Many of these splinter groups may claim to worship the same God even though they are divided into different religious organizations. But which one if any is the right one?

5.2.1 Subjective Marketing Techniques

Most religions usually appeal to subjective and experiential arguments which are not based on truth at all. As comedian Richard Jeni put it, these religions are merely “fighting over who has the best imaginary friend.”⁶ These religions claim to have *the* truth, but then do not use truth to evaluate the claims of their religion! Instead, most religions merely use whatever arguments they can to try to persuade others to join their organizations. Such invalid evaluation criteria include:

- *Popularity* – We are the largest religion, fastest growing religion, or the main cultural religion.
- *Threats* – Our God will send you to Hell and punish you for sin if you do not join our religion.
- *Convenience* – Our God won’t send you to Hell and will let you do whatever you want.
- *Rituals* – Our religion has ornate decorations and nice holiday celebrations.

- *Personalities* – We have many celebrities in our religion and our charismatic leader is a great speaker.
- *Experiences* – We have spiritual encounters with God and people have converted from other religions to ours.

This makes it seem as if selecting a religion is no different than shopping for a new car. The religious evangelists sound like door-to-door salesmen touting the latest features of their product. Yeah, and there is some swampland for sale in Florida too. ☺ And if you don't like any of those religions, you could even start your own religion specifically tailored to suit your own needs! People are often attracted to religions because they feel welcomed or loved, but this does not mean they are true. As it has been said, "Jesus loves you...but then again, so does Barney." ☺ All of these subjective criteria are not necessarily without influence, but they cannot serve as the primary means to evaluate a religion objectively. None of them are truth-based and thus none of them are acceptable to a rationalist.

An isolated claim of a personal encounter with God is not necessarily sufficient either, for someone may simply be deceived. Assuming that they weren't hallucinating, someone could have actually encountered a spirit, ghost, demon, or lesser god, but not necessarily the one true God. The fact that an experience is supernatural alone does not provide authentication that it was from God. *Instead, the entity's claims must still be objectively evaluated based on truth.* For example, if a New Ager has a direct encounter with a spirit guide thereby proving its supernatural existence, he would be sorely disappointed if the Abrahamic God turns out to be real and the spirit guide was only a demon that had deceived him. Personal revelation may lead one person to convert from religion A to religion B, but then someone else's personal revelation may lead them to convert from religion B to religion A. Experiences are subjective, not objective evaluation criteria.

Some are under the delusion that all the religions are the same and so they don't even try to evaluate them objectively. If a religion does not have to be true, then you might as well worship the rock god.^{§1.1} God's existence is not determined by whether you like him or not, or whether you accept his conditions for the afterlife. It does not matter what religion you were taught or if it is the dominant religion of your culture. If you can easily change religions because of marriage or because you move to a new culture, then you are not conducting your life based on the truth. If God does exist, it is only a matter of accepting the truth about him – a rationalist is not allowed to pick and choose his religion to suit his needs, but must follow the truth wherever it leads. Religious adherents commonly pose the question, "What if it is true?" to make potential converts fear that they might be missing out on something, but in reply the rationalist asks, "Why is it true?" A lot of things could be true, but without sufficient evidence a rationalist simply cannot know.^{§1.2} But is there any rational way to evaluate these religions' claims about God?

5.2.2 Establishing Religious Claims

Instead of these subjective arguments, a rationalist must objectively evaluate a religion based on the truth of its claims. It is important to realize that what God actually said and what a religion says God said may be two entirely different things. Some religions may have correctly identified the right God, but perhaps they got some of the details wrong. One could accept that some of a religion's claims about God are true without necessarily becoming a member of that religion. Perhaps only some of the religion's claims were originally from God and then men have later added their own unnecessary rituals on top of that. What a religion currently endorses today may actually be different from what is recorded in its own holy books. Thus, it is important to evaluate the religion's holy books as primary sources rather than their current practices. Any religion that is not correctly following the dictates of their own holy books would be hypocrites and therefore not rationalists. Granted, not every revelation from God may have necessarily been recorded in a book, but a religion's holy books provide tangible data that can be objectively evaluated.

A religion must primarily be evaluated based on its official scriptures, not by the unofficial actions of its members.

The alternative of relying on oral tradition is notoriously unreliable. Claims that have been passed down through oral tradition could still be evaluated, but there is usually no way to prove that the original claims were not altered. And depending on the length of time, it becomes more and more likely that the oral teachings were altered. There is also the possibility that the leaders of the religion have been making things up as they go along and without a written record; they may change their minds on any given issue and then deny it later.

Thus, the more reliable course of action is to examine whatever written texts are available. When investigating a religion's holy book, it must be treated no differently than any other historical book. Remember, there are no special rules for religions when it comes to evaluating truth.^{§1.2} Historian Chauncey Sanders describes the standard secular approach to historiography: "The evidence upon which we must rely in attempting to solve problems of authenticity and attribution may be classified as external, internal, and bibliographical."⁷ This provides the scientific basis for a *historical method*, which can also be used in evaluating the reliability of religious texts as discussed below.^{§5.2.4}

5.2.3 Contradictory Claims

When all the claims documented across all the different religions' holy books are examined, their irreconcilable differences become quite apparent since they profoundly contradict each other. Their mutually exclusive teachings cannot all be simultaneously true, which necessarily means that *there are thousands of false religions*. That is why only an ignoramus would aspire to be a religious

pluralist.^{§1.1.2} This does not mean that every religion may not contain some areas of truth, but all of them cannot simultaneously be completely true. Consider just these three areas of contradictions:

Contradictions about God:

- There is no God – Buddhism, Confucianism, Falun Gong
- There is one God – Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism
- There are many gods – Hinduism, Neopaganism, Shinto
- People can become gods – Jainism, Mormonism
- Nature is God – Neopaganism, Taoism

Contradictions about the afterlife:

- Cessation of existence – Taoism
- Place of the dead – Judaism, Shinto
- Spiritual entities – Gnosticism, Spiritualism, Unificationism
- Reincarnation – Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Scientology, Sikhism
- Population of new planet – Mormonism
- Heaven and Hell – Islam, Baha’i, Christianity

Contradictions about God’s expectations:

- Spiritual exercises – Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism
- Ancestral worship – Shinto, Cao Dai
- Obeying principles and laws – Judaism, Islam, Confucianism, Mormonism
- Personal relationship – Christianity

So whose claims about God should you believe? Mahatma Gandhi’s statement, “I consider myself a Hindu, Christian, Moslem, Jew, Buddhist, and Confucian”,⁸ may seem like a nice sentiment, but it is entirely untenable as these religions’ beliefs and practices are profoundly incompatible. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, for example, all claim to worship the same Abrahamic God and yet each one claims that God has radically different requirements. Chief Red Jacket summed up the situation well: “You say there is but one way to worship and serve the Great Spirit. If there is but one religion, why do you white people differ so much about it?”⁹

5.2.4 Objective Evaluation Criteria

With so many competing claims to investigate, where should a rational person begin? Must a rationalist investigate every bizarre claim made by every possible religion? While a rationalist is free to investigate any religion he wants, the Objective Evaluation Criteria (OEC) presented here provides a more reasonable starting point. There are five objective tests which can significantly reduce the number of religions that are worthy of consideration. There may be other logical criteria which could be added to these, but as you will see the following criteria are sufficient for eliminating most religions as rational choices.

1. ***Ancient Origins.*** It would be reasonable to assume that if God exists, he has not just now suddenly decided to speak after all eternity, but would have been active from the beginning of recorded history. Why would God fail to reveal himself until only recently? Was he sleeping all of that time? Would everyone who lived before then be doomed to Hell? This is not a matter of proof, but it is much more likely that any new religion which claims that God has now finally decided to speak for the first time after all eternity was probably made up by men. Unless God purposely wanted his existence to be doubted, it is much more likely that God would have communicated multiple times to multiple sources over a period of time. Newer religions may try to “piggy back” off of an ancient God by claiming that their new revelation is from the same God, but it is not credible unless they can demonstrate an *ongoing historical religious tradition*. If a religion begins to depart from its original historical teachings, it can no longer claim ancient origins but must be classified as a new religion.
2. ***Source Reliability.*** To establish bibliographical reliability, the religion’s writings must contain original source material rather than derivatives or summaries of other authors’ works. If a religion merely edits material from other authors, then it obviously was not divine revelation received directly from God. In addition, the meaning of the text cannot be altered or revised in subsequent editions. If the text has been altered from its original meaning, then the reliability of its message from God can no longer be trusted. This will not prove whether God actually said something or not, but it will tell us if the text was reliably transmitted.
3. ***Internal Consistency.*** The religion’s writings cannot contain any contradictory statements from God. If the religion claims to have more than one holy book that was inspired by God, then none of them should contradict each other. A religion’s new teachings may be complementary and additive over the years, but they cannot be contradictory to the previous teachings. It is relatively easy for a single author to be self-consistent within a single text, but far more credible if multiple authors’ claims about God remain consistent across several texts. If a religion’s holy books contain contradictory statements from God, then either God is not reliable or God did not make all of those statements. In either case, it would not be a plausible option for a rationalist.
4. ***External Consistency.*** The religions’ writings cannot contain any false statements from God that contradict science, history, archeology, etc. If a religion claims to have advanced scientific knowledge, the information must have been historically understood *before* the scientific community acknowledged it. A religion cannot go back through their writings after the fact and then claim that a vague reference was a scientific statement. Also, if the religion’s writings contain false prophecies then the source cannot be trusted. If any claims attributed to God are found to be false, then you can necessarily rule out that religion for either a truthful God did not make them, God was incorrect, or God did not make them at all. In any of these cases, it would not be a plausible option for a rationalist.

5. **Supernatural Knowledge.** The religion's writings *must* contain divine revelation that could not have otherwise been humanly possible. Someone could easily write a book that passes the four previous criteria and all that would mean is that a human made up a good religion. Since the nature of the Scientific God has already been established,^{§4.5} it follows that a valid religion would naturally have an association with the supernatural realm.^{§3.4} If a religion merely offers good sociological teachings, it is more probable that men have simply made up their own human philosophies and ascribed them to God. Without divine revelation, how could a religious guru possibly know whether his philosophy will actually achieve eternal bliss? Anyone can easily make up a religion that is true, but in order to be credible it must exhibit supernatural knowledge which exceeds human capabilities. If there is no supernatural knowledge, then there is little reason not to suspect that it was simply made up by men. In order to be credible, a religion should exhibit some form of supernatural knowledge that can be *independently verified* such as prophecies that come true, phenomena evaluated by scientifically controlled studies, miracles supported by archaeological evidence, etc. In the case of predictive prophecy, atheist Douglas Krueger provides a good set of criteria for evaluating its credibility:¹⁰

- The prophecy must be clear, and it must contain sufficient detail to make its fulfillment by a wide variety of possible events unlikely.
- The event that can fulfill the prophecy must be unusual or unique.
- The prophecy must be known to have been made before the event that is supposed to be its fulfillment.
- The event foretold must not be of the sort that could be the result of an educated guess.
- The event that fulfills the prophecy cannot be staged, or the relevant circumstances manipulated, by those aware of the prophecy in such a way as to intentionally cause the prophecy to be fulfilled.

This OEC presented here is sufficient to satisfy some of the most ardent skeptics. Do you agree to abide by these criteria? Any religion that fails to pass these five objective tests should be eliminated by a rationalist. The supernatural knowledge test in particular provides *positive evidence* for establishing the basis for a religion. Various religions can complain all they want, but unless they can provide a logical basis for their beliefs, it all appears to be phony smoke and mirrors to a rationalist.

5.2.5 Analysis Summary

In spite of the fact that there are thousands of religions, there are surprisingly few rational choices when held up to scrutiny. A religion must pass all five tests of the OEC identified above or it is simply not a credible choice for a rationalist. Of these tests, the ancient origin test alone is all that is needed to significantly reduce the number of valid possibilities. There are really only two ancient

religious traditions to consider: the Abrahamic God of the Judeo-Christian religions and the polytheistic gods of Hinduism. It is important to recognize the difference between when a religion's identity coalesces and its actual origins. For example, Christianity did not coalesce until the 1st century AD, yet it claims to have the same origins as Judaism because it accepts their scriptural tradition without alteration. Islam, on the other hand, cannot be considered to be an historical extension of Judaism, because the Qur'an specifically attempts to rewrite portions of their ancient scripture. Likewise, Buddhism cannot claim to be an extension of Hinduism, because it rejects their historical polytheistic tradition. But Hare Krishna could have been considered to be an extension of Hinduism except that they have officially claimed that they are not. After the ancient historical traditions of the Judeo-Christian and Hindu religions, the next closest religions were not formed until almost 1,000 years later, *and most of these religions were not invented until after the 1700's*. Newer religions will probably continue to be made up in the future, but they can never be credible choices because they can't have ancient origins anymore. The train has already left the station and they were not on it!

If we look past the ancient origins test, most religions fail all the other tests as well. Non-theistic religions such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Falun Gong, Taoism, and Scientology fail the supernatural knowledge test and are better categorized as human philosophies because they do not acknowledge any particular God. Most of the Dharmic and Taoic religions including Hinduism, Jainism, Taoism, and Shinto fail the external consistency test because they admittedly contain *mythology* that does not hold up to scientific scrutiny. The polytheistic religions such as Jainism, Shinto, New Age, and Gnosticism also fail the external consistency test because their god does not conform to previously established scientific characteristics.^{§4.5} Newer religions such as Spiritualism, New Age, and Neopaganism, Satanism, and Unitarian Universalism, fail the internal consistency test because their beliefs are so varied that their adherents can believe almost anything they want since they have no authoritative scripture. A more detailed analysis documenting how these various religions fail the OEC is presented in Appendix A.

	Religion	Ancient Origins	Source Reliability	Internal Consistency	External Consistency	Supernatural Knowledge
Abrahamic	Judaism	✓	✓	X	X	✓
	Christianity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Gnosticism	✓	X	X	✓	X
	Islam	X	X	X	X	X
	Mormonism	X	X	X	X	X
	Baha'i	X	✓	X	X	X
	Christian Science	X	X	X	X	X
	Jehovah's Witnesses	X	X	X	X	X
	Rastafarianism	X	X	X	✓	X
	Unificationism	X	✓	X	X	X
Dharmic	Hinduism	✓	✓	X	X	X
	Buddhism	X	X	X	X	X
	Jainism	X	X	✓	X	X
	Sikhism	X	X	X	X	X
	Hare Krishna	X	✓	✓	X	X
	Falun Gong	X	✓	✓	✓	X
Taoic	Confucianism	X	X	✓	✓	X
	Taoism	X	✓	X	✓	X
	Shintoism	X	X	✓	X	X
	Caodaism	X	✓	X	X	X
Other	Neopaganism	X	X	X	X	X
	Spiritualism	X	X	X	✓	X
	New Age	X	X	X	X	X
	Scientology	X	✓	X	X	X
	Unitarian Universalist	X	X	X	✓	X
	Satanism	X	✓	X	✓	X

After all of the criteria have been analyzed, the only remaining possibility is the Abrahamic God in keeping with the Judeo-Christian tradition. Notice that none of the other religions' scriptures contain any verifiable supernatural knowledge, and thus offer no positive reason to even consider them in the first place. It is really no surprise that most of the skeptics' literature is only directed at attacking the Abrahamic God since they apparently do not consider any of these other religions to be rational threats to their atheism. There are thousands of atheists' websites and books dedicated to attacking the Abrahamic God and Christianity in particular, but almost none devoted to attacking the Dharmic or

Taoic religions. Do atheists only fail to believe in the Abrahamic God? It is also worth noting that the Abrahamic God seems to be the only God that might send them to Hell, and thus the only one they seem to worry about regarding Pascal's Wager.^{§3.2} Referring back to the Stephen F. Roberts quote,^{§2.1} there is a *rational basis* to “dismiss all the other possible gods” except the Abrahamic God. This doesn't mean that all other religions do not contain some truth or are not helpful, but simply that they are not credible choices for a rationalist. Please don't be offended. You can go on believing that your religion is true, but realize that it is simply not acceptable to a rationalist.

5.3 The Abrahamic God

The Abrahamic God claims the largest number of religious adherents in the world, accounting for about half of all those who believe in a Supreme Being. Again, this does not prove that the Abrahamic God is correct, but it certainly makes him worthy of consideration. The Abrahamic God is embraced by the three major religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as well as hundreds of other splinter groups and sects. The most accepted written tradition of the Abrahamic God is represented by the Bible. The Bible is by far the best-selling book of all time, with the number printed by 1992 exceeding “6,000,000,000 in more than 2,000 languages and dialects”^{¶11} and it continues to be “the best-selling book of the year, every year”^{¶12}

The “livability” of the religions founded on the Bible also makes a compelling argument.^{§1.3} The Bible has a proven track record as it is responsible for “the entire development of Western civilization” which is considered “a historical fact that cannot be denied.”^{¶13} The Bible's influence has directly led to the formation of democratic governments, constitutional law, judicial review, property rights, free markets, and equality for women and minorities, among other things. Compare that with the horrendous fruit of the atheistic regimes under Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedung, and Pol Pot.^{§2.5.1} These things do not prove that the Bible is correct, but if you have never read the Bible, they certainly provide a compelling reason to do so.

The validity of the Abrahamic God must stand or fall based on the legitimacy of the Bible. There are some religions that only accept some of the books of the Bible and other religions that accept more books than the Bible, but these will be discussed later in the next chapter.^{§6.1} Up until this point, the Bible has not been quoted authoritatively for proof of anything, but beginning now, references will be made to its content in chapter and verse format. Let us examine in detail how the Bible stands up to the rationalist's five OEC tests.^{§5.2.4}

5.3.1 Ancient Origins

The Abrahamic God was first introduced by the Bible in the book of Genesis.^{¶14} Although a few religions may claim that their origins predate the

formation of Judaism around 1400 BC, none of them come close to the historical and archaeological validation found in the Bible, which claims to trace human history all the way back to around 4000 BC.^{5.3.4} The Bible describes how God called a man named Abram (later known as Abraham) to move to the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:1) and made a covenant with him promising that he would become the father of many nations (Gen. 17:5). Years later, this God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob declared that his name was “Yahweh” (Hebrew “יהוה”), derived from the Hebrew verb of being translated “I am” (Exod. 3:1-15).

The Abrahamic God continued to communicate with numerous individuals throughout history who wrote down their experiences in different books. The Bible is a collection of 66 independently written books consisting of the Old Testament (39 books) and the New Testament (27 books). The Bible was written over a 1,600 year span by more than 40 authors of diverse backgrounds whose occupations include: fisherman, political leader, shepherd, king, military general, doctor, prime minister, tax collector, Jewish Rabbi, etc. The Bible was written on three different continents (Asia, Africa, and Europe) and written in three different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek). The author of each individual book had no idea that his writings would later be added to a collection called the Bible, and each book must be considered separately on its own merits. In most cases, the authors merely relayed the information they observed as direct eye witnesses to historical events that occurred. Here are a few of the many examples:

- “In the thirtieth year in the fourth month on the fifth day, while I was among the exiles by the Chebar river, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.” (Ezek. 1:1)
- “The words of Amos, who was among the herdsmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel...” (Amos 1:1)
- “Since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good for me also to write an orderly account.” (Luke 1:3)
- “For we did not follow cleverly invented fables...but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.” (2Pet. 1:16)
- “What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you...” (1Jn. 1:3)

In contrast to most religions where their holy book is only accepted because their leader said so, the Bible was assembled over hundreds of years in *an open process that was not controlled by any single person*. A book was not considered to be true because it was included in the Bible, a book was included in the Bible because it was considered to be true. There were many other books that were written about the Abrahamic God that were not included in the Bible because their contents were dubious.^{6.2} For example, the Book of Enoch is an ancient Jewish writing, but it was not included in the Bible because it contains inaccurate depictions in the field of astronomy. Unlike the holy books of other religions containing myths and folklore, the Bible is a collection of historical literature that *welcomes* academic scrutiny.

5.3.2 Source Reliability

Many people have heard the well-known urban legend that the Bible is full of errors, and yet when pressed for specifics they cannot list a single one. Can you? People have been led to believe that the Bible has been passed down by copies of copies like the game of telephone where each person relays a message to the next and by the time it reaches the last person, the original message is almost unrecognizable. But this is simply not true! In the case of the Old Testament, “Jews preserved it as no other manuscript has ever been preserved....they kept tabs on every letter, syllable, word and paragraph. They had special classes of men within their culture whose sole duty was to preserve and transmit these documents with practically perfect fidelity – scribes, lawyers, masorettes. Who ever counted the letters and syllables and words of Plato or Aristotle?”¹⁵ The reliability of the Old Testament is preserved in four separate textual traditions: the Masoretic text, Greek Septuagint, Samaritan Pentateuch, and the Dead Sea scrolls. Between these different transmission traditions, “only one out of every 1,580 words vary with another manuscript.”¹⁶ For example, when comparing Isaiah 53 in the Masoretic text (916 AD) with the Dead Sea Scrolls written 1,000 years earlier (125 BC), “there is only one word (three letters) in question after a thousand years of transmission – and this word does not significantly change the meaning of the passage.”¹⁷ Any such discrepancies in the text have already been cross-checked among all the other sources through the science of textual criticism.

In the case of the New Testament, the wealth of attestation of thousands of Greek manuscripts passed down by independent textual traditions in various geographical locations is so overwhelming that any deviation by any individual scribe is immediately identifiable. There are now at least 5,856 known Greek manuscripts along with more than 18,130 early versions, resulting in a total of 23,986 manuscript witnesses of the New Testament.¹⁸ Indeed, the New Testament is so well attested that it could almost entirely be reconstructed simply by the early quotations of it. Scottish historian Sir David Dalrymple declared, “Supposing all the New Testaments in the world had been destroyed at the end of the third century, could their contents have been recovered from the writings of the three first centuries?...I have actually discovered the whole New Testament from those writings, except seven or eleven verses...which satisfies me that I could discover them also.”¹⁹ Again, any discrepancies in the text have already been cross-checked among all the other sources through the science of textual criticism. As a result, “With perhaps a dozen or twenty exceptions, the text of every verse in the New Testament may be said to be so far settled by general consent of scholars, that any dispute as to its readings must relate rather to the interpretation of the words than to any doubts respecting the words themselves.”²⁰

Perhaps you may not agree with the Bible, but there is little doubt that the message it contains has been reliably transmitted from the originals. Consider how the transmission of the Bible compares to some other ancient works of literature:²¹

Author	Date Written	Earliest Copy	Time Span	Copies
Homer (Illiad)	800 BC	415 BC	400 years	1,900
Aristotle (Poetics)	335 BC	700 AD	1,000 years	5
Caesar (Gallic Wars)	58-50 BC	950 AD	1,000 years	251
Old Testament	1440-400 BC	200 BC	200 years	42,000
New Testament	40-100 AD	125 AD	25 years	24,000
Pliny the Elder (History)	23-79 AD	400 AD	350 years	200
Tacitus (Annals)	100 AD	850 AD	750 years	36

If you accept these works of antiquity to be valid, then you must accept the reliability of the Bible if you are going to be intellectually consistent. “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.”²² Indeed, it is claimed that the Bible is even more reliable than the works of Shakespeare in which there are about “a hundred readings still in dispute” and they were written almost 1,600 years after the Bible!²³

Inevitably, then the next question that is often asked is, “Which Bible is the correct Bible?” The differences in various Bibles mainly arise from the *translation* of the original text into other languages, but not discrepancies in the text itself. Some translations are targeted at different reading levels, some use different methodologies, some use older language, and some use different formatting. Language translation is an art and no two people translating the same text will always translate it exactly the same way. For example, one Bible could say “he came to his home” and another could say “he arrived at his house” and the general meaning is still conveyed without any theological crisis. Such differences have little impact on how the reader actually understands a passage. If ever there were a serious question about the correct reading of the Bible, then the original languages should be consulted directly.

5.3.3 Internal Consistency

For having been written over a 1,600 year span by more than 40 authors of diverse backgrounds, the Bible demonstrates an amazing amount of consistency about a topic as controversial as God. In spite of this diversity of authorship, there are no internal contradictions found in the Bible. This in itself is quite remarkable given that the text contains over 780,000 words. Compared to the discrepancies that can be found in the coverage of the same story across newspapers on any given day, this by itself probably constitutes proof that the Bible was divinely inspired. 😊 Consider the following challenge:

“Lest anyone think this isn’t something marvelous, we’d like to give you this challenge. Find ten people from your local area who have similar educational backgrounds, all speak the same language, and all are from basically the same culture, then separate them and ask them to write their opinion on only one controversial subject, such as the meaning of life. When they have finished, compare the conclusions of these ten writers. Do they agree with each other? Of course not. But the Bible did not consist of merely ten authors, but forty. It was not written in one generation, but over a period of 1,500 years; not by authors with the same education, culture, or language, but with vastly different education, many different cultures, from three continents and three different languages, and finally not just one subject but hundreds.”²⁴

It should be considered a miracle that after two thousand years of scrutiny, the critics could only come up with a few places in the Bible that could even possibly be considered a “contradiction”. Appendix C, however, documents how none of the skeptics’ so-called Bible “contradictions” are actually contradictions at all! If there really were a single contradiction in the Bible, someone could perhaps make themselves a little richer: “Back in 1930, a man named Paul Rader offered \$1,000 to anybody who could come up with one single proof that the Bible contradicts itself....Nobody ever claimed the \$1,000.”²⁵

5.3.4 External Consistency

Some people think that the Bible has no more credibility than, “The Bible is true this I know, For the Bible tells me so.”²⁶ While this may be true of most other religions’ holy books which offer no external confirmation, this is not the case at all with the Bible. Some are under the false impression that the Bible contradicts science, yet there is not a single disagreement between the Bible and any fact of science, archeology, or history. The few objections that are commonly raised to attack the Bible’s accuracy are dispelled in detail in Appendix D. The books of the Bible never aspired to be “religious” books, but were intended to be factual books of government, history, literature, poetry, etc. Notice that the Bible quotes many other historical sources outside of the Bible in the same manner that academicians today quote other scholars:

- Acts of Uzziah (2Chr. 26:22)
- Annals of King David (1Chr. 27:24, 2Chr. 35:4)
- Annals of King Solomon (1Ki. 11:41, 2Chr. 35:4)
- Annals of King Xerxes (Esth. 2:23, 6:1)
- Annals of the Kings of Israel (1Ki. 14:19, 2Ki. 1:18, 1Chr. 9:1, 2Chr. 20:34, 33:18)
- Annals of the Kings of Judah (1Ki. 14:29, 2Chr. 27:7, 35:27, 36:8)
- Annals of the Kings of Media and Persia (Esth. 10:2)
- Book of Enoch (Jude 1:14)
- Book of Gad the Seer (1Chr. 29:29)

- Book of Jannes and Jambres (2Tim. 3:8)
- Book of Jasher (Josh. 10:13)
- Book of Jehu (2Chr. 20:34)
- Book of Nathan (1Chr. 29:29)
- Book of Remembrance (Mal. 3:16)
- Book of Samuel the Seer (1Chr. 29:29)
- Book of Shemaiah the Prophet (2Chr. 12:15)
- Book of Wars (Num. 21:14)
- Epimenides' Cretica (Acts 17:28, Tit. 1:12)
- Story of the Prophet Iddo (2Chr. 13:22)

In contrast to the mythological writings of most other religions, the Bible claims to be historically accurate and demands to be scrutinized as such. Consider the historical precision of these examples:

- “The word of Yahweh came to him in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah, son of Amon, king of Judah, and through the reign of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah, down to the fifth month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the exile of Jerusalem.” (Jer. 1:2-3)
- “The word of Yahweh which came to Zephaniah son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah, during the reign of Josiah son of Amon, king of Judah.” (Zeph. 1:1)
- “In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, a Mede by descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans...” (Dan. 9:1)
- “In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Phillip was tetrarch of the region of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene...” (Luke 3:1)

Instead of fables beginning with “once upon a time”, the Bible contains detailed historical information which has been independently corroborated. In fact, there are countless examples where the *critics initially doubted the Bible's accuracy*, but eventually had to admit they were wrong when factual data later confirmed the Biblical account. Archaeologist Joseph Free wrote, “Archaeology has confirmed countless passages which had been rejected by critics as unhistorical or contrary to known facts.”²⁷ There are now countless examples where the Bible's narratives have been independently confirmed by archaeological evidence such as:

- ***Garden of Eden*** (Gen. 2:8). Many Biblical stories are partially mimicked in ancient Sumerian texts such as the Epic of Emmerkar which depicts Dilmun as a pure place where sickness was unknown and the lion and lamb coexisted peacefully.²⁸ The Elba tablets discovered by Dr. Paolo Matthiae and dated to around 2250 BC also contain a creation story of a monotheistic God similar to Genesis account.²⁹

- **Noah's Flood** (Gen. 6-10). The historical record of a global flood is well-attested, preserved in over 500 accounts from cultures on every continent.^{30,31} The earliest Babylonian account written shortly after the flood, for example, is in complete agreement with the Biblical account.³² Various countries such as Britain, Denmark, Norway, and China maintain genealogical records that specifically trace their ancestral lineage all the way back to the person of Noah.³³ There is also significant scientific evidence establishing the existence of a global flood.^{3D8}
- **Tower of Babel** (Gen. 11:1-9). Cuneiform inscriptions discovered in the ruins of Babylon mention that King Nebuchadnezzar began rebuilding the “Barzippa” which means “Tower of Tongues”. The inscription translated by Professor Oppert reads, “A former king built it...but he did not complete its head. Since a remote time, people had abandoned it, without order expressing their words.”³⁴ Correspondingly, one of the greatest language scholars, philologist Max Mueller, declared that it is possible to trace all human languages back to a single common language of origin.³⁵
- **Hittites** (Gen. 15:20). Critics used to insist that the Hittites did not exist because there was no physical record of their civilization. But in 1906, the Hittite capital of Hattusa was excavated by archaeologist Hugo Winckler, demonstrating that it was once a prominent empire.³⁶
- **Abraham** (Gen. 17:5). The Elba tablets mention both the name “Abraham” as well as the “Ur of Chaldees” which was Abraham’s birthplace.³⁷ Other Biblical names mentioned on the tablets include Adam, Bilhah, Esau, Israel, Ishmael, and Jabal.
- **Sodom and Gomorrah** (Gen. 10:19). Many cities such as Sodom and Gomorrah were previously unknown outside of their Biblical reference until they were found in the Elba tablets.³⁸ The Ebla tablets also confirm the existence of several other Biblical cities such as Dor, Gezer, Hazor, Jerusalem, Joppa, Lachish, and Megiddo.
- **Joseph and the Egyptian Famine** (Gen. 41:41-57). A Yemenite inscription on a stone tablet discovered in the tomb of a woman who died during the Egyptian famine stated, “In your name O God, the God of Hamyar, I Tajah, the daughter of Dzu Shefar, sent my steward to Joseph, and he delaying to return to me, I sent my hand maid with a measure of silver, to bring me back a measure of flour...”³⁹ Another inscription found on a marble table in the ruins of a fortress on coast of Hadramaut stated, “We dwelt in this castle seven years of good life...Then came years barren and burnt up: when one evil year had passed away, then came another to succeed it.”⁴⁰
- **Plagues in Egypt** (Exod. 7-11). The Ipuwer Papyrus dated to the 13th century BC corroborates the Biblical plagues that occurred before the Exodus: “Plague stalks through the land and blood is everywhere...Nay, but the river is blood. Does a man drink from it?...Nay but men are few. He that lays his brother in the ground is everywhere...Nay but the son of the high-born man is no longer to be recognized...The stranger people from outside are come into Egypt...Nay, but corn has perished everywhere. People are stripped of

clothing, perfume and oil. Everyone says ‘there is no more’. The storehouse is bare...It has come to this. The king has been taken away by poor men.”⁴¹

- **Moses and the Exodus** (Exod. 12-14). When Egyptian chronology is properly aligned with the Biblical account, there is a wealth of archeological evidence of the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt, who were referred to as the Hyksos.⁴² For example, inscriptions from the Wadi Mukattab in the Sinai Peninsula dated to the time of the Exodus confirm many of the events, including the dividing of the Red Sea: “The Hebrews flee through the sea; the sea is turned into dry land...The leader divideth asunder the sea, its waves roaring. The people enter, and pass through the midst of the waters. Moses causeth the people to haste like a fleet-winged she-ostrich crying aloud; the cloud shining bright, a mighty army propelled into the Red sea is gathered into one...Their enemies weep for the dead, the virgins are wailing. The sea flowing down overwhelmed them. The waters were let loose to flow again. The people depart fugitive.”⁴³ The inscriptions go on to describe the provision of quail, murmuring of the Jews, water from the rock, Miriam’s rebellion, and the plague of serpents.



*Inscriptions at Wadi Mukattab
in the Sinai Peninsula⁴⁷*

- **Baal** (Num. 22:41), **Asherah** (Deut. 16:21), **and Dagan** (Judg. 16:23). These pagan gods were previously unknown outside of the Biblical text until inscriptions of them were found on the Ebla tablets.⁴⁴
- **David and Goliath** (1Sam. 17). Once considered a myth written to bolster David’s reputation, archaeologists have now discovered pottery inscribed with the word “Goliath” at ancient site of Gath where the Bible said Goliath lived and dated to the 10th century BC, which was when the Bible said the battle occurred.⁴⁵
- **King David** (2Sam. 5:3). The existence of David’s kingdom was confirmed in 1992 when Dr. Avraham Biran discovered an inscription containing “the first known reference outside the Bible to the House of David”⁴⁶

As the historical record progresses from here, the number of archaeological findings supporting the Bible becomes too numerous to list, confirming thousands of locations, rulers, nations, and events. Not only does the Bible contain historical accounts of actual events, but it is still used as a *primary source for college courses on ancient world history!* The Bible’s track record is indeed impressive. Archeologist Dr. Nelson Gluck stated, “It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference. Scores of archeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or in exact detail historical statements in the Bible.”⁴⁸ Since you cannot prove a negative, it is incumbent that the critics produce a valid contradiction between the Bible and any historical or archaeological fact. The argument from silence is not valid.

The validity of the Bible is further confirmed by the advanced scientific knowledge it contains. The Bible had made several scientific statements so far in advance that it took the scientific community hundreds of years to catch up with it! The Bible actually went out on a limb when it made these statements in *contradiction* to the commonly held views of its time. Granted, the Bible is not a science textbook and does not address these subjects in technical jargon, yet it contains several advanced scientific concepts that are undeniable. In many cases, there is no other way the ancient people could have known this information unless it had been supernaturally revealed to them. Here are just a few of the many examples that could be cited:

- The Bible said that the universe was created *ex nihilo* (Gen. 1:1, Heb. 11:3) and then stretched out (Job 9:8, Psa. 104:2, Isa. 40:22, 44:24, 51:13, Zech. 12:1) thousands of years before the Big Bang theory and an expanding universe were ever conceived.
- Up until about the 16th century people believed that the Earth was flat and suspended on columns, yet the Bible taught that the Earth is round and suspended in space (Isa. 40:22, Job 26:7).
- Scientists today believe that all the continents once formed a single landmass called Pangaea before they broke apart. But thousands of years earlier, the Bible indicated that the earth was created with a single land mass (Gen 1:9) and that it was later broken into continents (Gen. 10:25).
- Ancient astronomers could only see a limited number of stars that were set into fixed constellations, yet the Bible taught that the stars are so numerous that they could not be counted (Gen. 15:5, Jer. 33:22, Heb. 11:12). We still have not found an end to the number of stars being discovered.
- The laws of entropy were not formalized until the 19th century, but the Bible described the entropy of the universe long before the concepts of thermodynamics were understood (Psa. 102:25-26).
- Scientists did not know anything about the existence of ocean currents until 1860 when Matthew Fontaine Maury read about them in the Bible (Psa. 8:8). With this information, Maury began drawing accurate maps of the ocean currents and became known as “the father of navigation”.
- Ancient people once thought that the rivers spilled over the ends of the flat earth, yet the Bible explained the complete hydrological cycle (Eccl. 1:7, Job 36:27-28).
- The Bible teaches that all humans descended from Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:27, 3:20) and DNA analysis has now confirmed that all males have descended from a single man referred to as “Y-Chromosome Adam”⁴⁹ and all females have descended from a single woman referred to as “Mitochondrial Eve”.⁵⁰
- Numerous scientific studies extol the dietary benefits of eating fruits and vegetables and this is exactly what the Bible had stated from the beginning (Gen. 1:29, Dan. 1:12-15). One scientific study concluded that the meat of animals which are the least toxic correspond *exactly* to the “clean” animals listed in the Bible (Lev. 11, Deut. 14:3-21),⁵¹
- The Bible was the first to introduce the concept of quarantine to prevent the spread of infectious diseases (Lev. 13, 14, 22, Num. 19:20). As a result, Israel was the

only country to practice quarantines up until about the 19th century. Millions of lives could have been saved from the plague and other diseases had the health experts merely followed the Bible's advice.

- The concept that germs spread disease was not discovered until the late 19th century by Louis Pasteur, yet the Bible was the first to introduce the sanitation concepts of cleansing wounds under running water (Lev. 15:13), disinfecting contaminated clothes and eating utensils (Lev. 11:31-40, 15:4-12), burning infected materials (Lev. 13:47-58), avoiding contact with dead animals (Num. 19:11-22), and burying human waste outside the camp (Deut. 23:12-13).

These are all verifiable details that were mentioned thousands of years before modern science ever conceived of them. It is not just that the Bible has been confirmed by science, because in the case of Matthew Maury, *the Bible itself directly led to the scientific discovery*. The Bible stands alone in its accurate scientific knowledge, for no other religion's holy book has a track record that comes anywhere close.

5.3.5 Supernatural Knowledge

Although it is commonly misattributed to Thomas Edison, it was actually John Burroughs who wrote, "All bibles are man-made."⁵² While no one would disagree that the Bible was written down by men, the Bible claims that its words were "inspired by God" (2Tim. 3:16). In fact, the authors of the Bible claim 3,808 times that they were writing the words of God.⁵³ Here are just a few examples:

- "So Moses went back and called the elders of the people and set before them all the words that Yahweh had commanded him." (Exod. 19:7)
- "Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, 'Write all the words I have spoken to you in a book.'" (Jer. 30:2)
- "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that the things I write to you are the Lord's commandment." (1Cor. 14:37)
- "When you received the word of God you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but what it really is, the word of God." (1Th. 2:13)
- "Remember the words previously spoken by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord spoken through your apostles." (2Pet. 3:2)

If the Bible was truly inspired by God, then it logically follows that the Bible should be without error. The Bible itself claims that all the words of God are "true" (Psa. 33:4, 119:160) and "pure" (Psa. 12:6, Prov. 30:5), and that they are binding (Matt. 5:18, John 10:35). These claims, however, only apply to the text in its *original autographs* for the Bible makes no claims that any particular transmission, translation, or interpretation is free of mistakes – these are all still subject to human error.

The Bible specifically claims that its authority came from God and was *not* derived from the approval of men. The Bible's authenticity can stand on its own, for it is not generated by men's endorsements. The apostle Peter wrote: "For

prophecy was not originated by the will of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” (2Pet. 1:21) Indeed, the authors of the Bible recognized that their works were inspired by God long before any canons of the Old Testament or New Testament were recognized by any religious committees:

- The book of Kings quoted the Law of Moses and the prophets (1Ki. 2:3, 2Ki. 14:6, 17:12-13).
- Ezekiel referred to the writings of other prophets (Ezek. 14:14, 28:3).
- Asaph recounted the history of Israel from Jacob to David (Psa. 78).
- Daniel knew when the captivity would end by reading the book of Jeremiah (Dan. 9:2).
- Paul reasoned with Jews based on the authority of the scriptures (Acts 17:2, 18:28).
- The Bereans analyzed Paul’s teaching with the scriptures (Acts 17:11).
- Paul quoted Luke’s writing as scripture (Luke 10:7, 1Tim. 5:18).
- Peter referred to Paul’s writings as scripture (2Pet. 3:15-16).

There are many more examples that could be cited besides these. Theologian John MacArthur Jr. points out, “There are at least 320 direct quotes in the New Testament that come from the Old Testament. And there are at least 1,000 times that they refer to the Old Testament.”⁵⁴

If the Bible is truly inspired by God, then it should be expected that the Bible would contain supernatural knowledge well beyond human understanding. The verification of the Bible’s supernatural information is by itself further proof of God’s existence. Apologist Josh McDowell states, “The mere fact that the Bible claims to be the word of God does not prove that it is such, for there are other books that make similar claims. The difference is that the Scriptures contain indisputable evidence as being the Word of God.”⁵⁵ The Bible is unique from all other holy books in that it contains roughly 2,500 prophecies (about 2,000 of them have already been fulfilled exactly to the letter and the other 500 pertain to the future events of the end times). In fact, the God of the Bible taunts the supposed gods of other religions with these words:

“‘Present your case’, says Yahweh. ‘Bring forward your proof’, says the King of Jacob. ‘Let them come forward and tell us what is going to happen...or declare to us the things to come. Tell us what is going to happen next so that we may know that you are gods. Do something either good or bad so that we may be dismayed and fearful. But you are nothing and your works amount to nothing.’” (Isa. 41:21-24)

The Bible sets the bar higher than Krueger’s criteria^{§5.2.4} by requiring that any true prophet of God must be *100 percent* accurate in all his predictions (Deut. 18:20-22). Many have given predictions about the future, but the ability to predict the future with 100 percent accuracy is rare. Modern day psychics such as Jean Dixon, Edgar Cayce, and Nostradamus have all made many verifiably false prophecies and the predictions of the top professional psychics have been proven to be *wrong*

over 95 percent of the time.⁵⁶ But this is not so with the Bible whose specific and detailed prophecies all have proven to be 100 percent historically accurate.

In fact, the Bible's prophecies are so accurate that many critics now claim that some of its prophecies must have been written *after* the events occurred. Since the oldest surviving manuscripts of the Old Testament are only dated to about the 2nd century BC, they claim that any prophecy up until that time, such as the Babylonian captivity, could have been written after the fact and simply made to look like a prophecy. This naive view can be disproven by several methods including the historical techniques used to date the books themselves. But in order to pacify the critics, the following prophecies listed below were all fulfilled *after* the 2nd century BC, thus eliminating any possibility that they were made up after the fact:

- Ezekiel prophesied that Egypt would recover from the Babylonian captivity, but would never rule over other nations again (Ezek. 29:13-15). Egypt had always been a world power dominating many other nations, but since that time has not ruled over other nations.
- After the Babylonian captivity, the Bible prophesied that Israel would take vengeance on Edom (Ezek. 25:14, 35:15, Mal. 1:3-4). Israel did not even have their own country when these prophecies were made, yet they were fulfilled when Jewish leader John Hyrcanus defeated the Edomites in the late 2nd century BC.
- After the Babylonians had finished destroying Jerusalem and the temple in 586 BC, Daniel prophesied that Jerusalem and the Temple would not only be rebuilt, but that they would be destroyed again (Dan. 9:24-26). This was fulfilled as Jerusalem (Neh. 11:1-2) and the temple (Ezra 6:14-15) were both rebuilt, only to be destroyed again when the Romans ransacked the city in 70 AD.
- The Bible promises that while Israel would be scattered among their enemies, they would never be destroyed as a people (Lev. 26:44, Isa. 49:15). Despite being scattered by the Babylonian, Mede and Persian, Macedonian, and Roman empires, and facing the genocides of Purim and the Holocaust, the Jewish people have never lost their identity as a distinct people.
- The Bible states that after their subjugation to other nations, Israel would later be gathered together again to form a prosperous nation (Deut. 30:3-5, Ezek. 34:13, 37:21-22, Jer. 16:14-15, 37:8-10, Isa. 11:11-12, 43:5-6). Israel had not existed as an independent nation since 606 BC, but the prophecy was spectacularly fulfilled over 2,500 years later when Israel became a sovereign nation again on May 14, 1948. Israel had existed as two separate kingdoms, but Ezekiel prophesied that Israel would be restored as one nation (Ezek. 37:21-24). And Hosea prophesied that the restored nation would not have a king (Hos. 3:4-5) and they never have had a king since it is now a democracy.
- The Bible prophesied that while the Jews were without their homeland, Israel would become a desolate wasteland (Deut. 29:23-24, Jer. 25:11) and then after they became a nation again the land of Israel would blossom and become fruitful (Isa. 27:6, 35:1-2, 41:18-20, Ezek. 36:34-36). There is no way to document the productivity of the land in ancient times, but indeed Israel's irrigation technology and

increased rainfall have undeniably made the land fruitful again since they became a nation in 1948.

- Amos prophesied that after Israel was restored as a sovereign nation in the latter days, it would never be uprooted again (Amos 9:14-15). The very day Israel was recognized as a nation in 1948, it was systematically attacked by the armies of Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq, but prevailed victoriously and has never been uprooted again.
- Jesus prophesied that Jerusalem would fall under the control of the Gentiles until the latter days (Luke 21:24). Zechariah prophesied that Israel would later gain control of the city of Jerusalem again (Zech. 8:3-8, 12:2-7). This prophecy was fulfilled in 1967 when Israel gained control of Jerusalem after the Six Day War. Zechariah goes on to prophecy that Jerusalem would become a source of tension and eventually be attacked by the surrounding nations (Zech. 12:2-3, 14:2-3).
- Ezekiel prophesied that in the end times the Eastern Gate of Jerusalem would be closed and no one would be able to enter through it (Ezek. 44:1-3). It is not clear whether this prophecy applies to this time period, but the Eastern Gate does in fact remain closed to this day.

In addition to these, there are over 300 Old Testament prophecies that were specifically fulfilled by Jesus Christ in the 1st century AD which are discussed in the next chapter.^{§6.3.2}

The clear fulfillment of Bible prophecy is perhaps the atheists' worst nightmare. Not one of the Bible's prophecies has ever been proven false. So here is the atheists' continuing opportunity to prove the Bible wrong. Since some of the Bible's prophecies mentioned above are absolute statements that still remain in effect, all that the atheists have to do to prove the Bible wrong is to destroy Israel (Lev. 26:44, Amos 9:14-15), divide Israel into two nations (Ezek. 37:21-22), or get Egypt to conquer another nation (Ezek. 29:13-15). Let us know if you ever make any progress! 😊

There are also several prophecies that are currently on the verge of fulfillment which would have been unimaginable thousands of years ago. As the critics begin to see these prophecies being fulfilled, perhaps they will begin to take notice:

- The Bible prophesied that there will be one world government that rules over the entire earth (Dan. 7:23, Rev. 13:7-8). This government will track all purchases through some sort of global identification number (Rev. 13:16-17). Obviously, such technology was not even conceived of thousands of years ago.
- The temple in Israel currently does not exist, but the Bible prophesies that it will be reconstructed again in the last days (Mic. 4:1, Rev. 11:1). Orthodox Jews are currently making preparations toward this end, but restoring the temple would surely cause serious turmoil since the Muslims' Dome of the Rock currently resides on the temple mount. Furthermore, after the temple is rebuilt it will later be desecrated (Dan. 9:27, Matt. 24:15).

- Zechariah describes what could possibly be the effect of a nuclear weapon for those who attack Israel (Zech. 14:12). Israel does indeed possess nuclear weapons today. Some also interpret John’s prophecies to possibly be the effects of a global nuclear war (Rev. 6:12-14, 8:7-12).
- John foresaw the existence of global communications in a time when the entire world will simultaneously observe certain future events unfold (Rev. 11:9-10, 17:8).
- Jesus prophesied that the gospel would be preached to all nations before the end would come (Matt. 24:14, Mark 13:10) and this task has nearly been completed.

The wealth of accurate prophecy in the Bible is unmatched by any other religious tradition. If you have found yourself doubting some of the previous arguments, your skepticism should be weighed against the amazing testimony of the Bible’s supernatural knowledge. These provide compelling *positive* evidence for the validity of the Abrahamic God, even if you think a particular sect may have got some of the details wrong.

5.4 Advancement to Abrahamist

To become an Abrahamist, the theist must simply accept that the Abrahamic God is the most rational choice based on all the available evidence. Indeed, the Abrahamic God is the *only possible* candidate that can satisfy all five OEC tests. There is really no other comparison, no other religion is even a close second. If the Abrahamic God does not hold up to scrutiny, there really would be no other credible alternative and thus a rationalist would have to remain a generic monotheist. You are not asked to believe in the Abrahamic God for any religious reasons, but only because that is where the objective evidence leads. Lest you think this analysis is somehow biased toward the God of the Bible, please take the time to evaluate any other holy books you desire, as you will see that they do not pass all five OEC tests, and certainly do not come anywhere near the credibility of the Bible (see Appendix A). Any hesitations you may have from philosophical questions such as “Why does God allow pain and suffering?” or “How could a loving God promote evil things?” really have no bearing on whether the Abrahamic God exists, but are nevertheless answered in Appendix B.

Because of the logical contradictions between religions,^{5.2.3} millions of people have *necessarily* been following false gods. It is not a matter of tolerance, it is simply a logical fact! Millions of people have necessarily joined religious organizations created by men to worship gods that do not exist. They may wonder why they have never personally experienced God or directly observed any miraculous events because their gods are simply imaginary. If you have believed in a different god, you must examine your religion objectively and honestly for what it is. If you are truly a rationalist, you cannot merely adopt a religion because you find it convenient, but must learn to treat religion with the same objective fact-based approach as you would with any other academic discipline. Are you willing to give up the religion of your parents or your culture on the basis of the truth alone? This does not mean other religions may not contain some truth,

but a rationalist must follow the most logical course based on the evidence. If you decide to follow the God of Abraham, there would be many different religions to consider which will be discussed in the next chapter. Once you are able to evaluate the identity of God objectively, you will finally be able to advance on the path to becoming a true rationalist, and as it will be shown, a follower of Jesus Christ.

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“And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father’, for I say to you that God is able to raise up children for Abraham out of these stones.” – John the Baptist

Chapter 6: From Abrahamist To “Christian”

An Abrahamist is one who believes in the God of Abraham. The Abrahamic God is embraced by the three major religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, as well as offshoots such as Baha’i, Gnosticism, Mormonism, Christian Science, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Rastafarianism, and Unificationism and hundreds of other splinter groups and sects. Although these religions all agree on who the correct God is, there is little agreement on just about everything else. Their beliefs and practices are quite contradictory and they have even fought wars against each other. This is because many Abrahamists are not rationalists and did not adopt their religion by any rational means. Some Abrahamists are no different than the fideists and adhere to many irrational beliefs, including their selections of scriptures.

In the previous chapter, the reliability of the Bible was used to establish the credibility of the Abrahamic God, but some Abrahamic religions accept fewer books than the Bible and others accept more books than the Bible. While they all believe in the same Abrahamic God, they do not all recognize the same scriptures, thus resulting in vastly different religious practices. Whichever books a religion accepts as scripture will obviously dictate to a large extent what a religion believes. So what exactly then should be defined as the Scripture for the Abrahamic God? Once the correct scriptures have been identified, then it should simply be a matter of applying their content, wherever it may lead.

6.1 Valid Scripture

Scripture is defined as “a body of writings considered sacred or authoritative”.¹ Most single-source religions blindly follow whatever books were written by their founder and automatically assume that they must be from God. These religions usually do not allow their members to scrutinize their holy books in an open process, for they are simply expected to obey their scriptures because their founder said so. Their definition of scripture is “the sacred books of our holy religion, as distinguished from the false and profane writings on which all other faiths are based.”² ☺ But this approach is not valid for a rationalist. In order for a book to be a candidate for the Scripture, it must first pass all five OEC tests defined in the previous chapter by exhibiting ancient origins, source reliability,

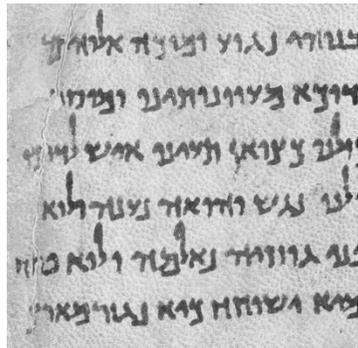
internal consistency, external consistency, and supernatural knowledge.^{55.24} A rationalist does not accept a book just because it is associated with a particular religion, *a rationalist accepts a book only if it can be objectively demonstrated to be true*. The Scripture for a rationalist would be the collection of Independently Verifiable Books About God (IVBAG). There are many false books that make claims about God and many true books that make no claims about God. The only religious books that should be considered by a rationalist, however, are those that are demonstrated to be true by passing the OEC.

Since the Bible has already passed all five OEC tests,^{55.3} it deserves to be included in the IVBAG and has earned the right to be quoted authoritatively. Perhaps other books could be considered too,^{56.1.3} but at a minimum, the Bible must be included in the Scripture since it has already been proven to be reliable. If evidence was ever brought forward proving that the Bible contained an internal or external contradiction, then there would only be grounds for removing whatever particular book of the Bible which supposedly contained the error. But such an error has never been demonstrated, and given almost 2,000 years of scrutiny, it is unlikely that one will ever be found (see Appendices C and D).

6.1.1 Formation of the Old Testament

The first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) are called the Torah or Pentateuch which contain the books of the Law written by Moses. The first book of these books, Genesis, contains the original source material that first introduced the Abrahamic God to the world. The Torah had once been lost for several years through disuse, but was rediscovered during the reign of king Josiah (2Ki. 22:8-13, 23:1-3). The Torah fell out of prominence again during Israel's Babylonian captivity, but was restored to the people during their resettlement (Neh. 8). The Sadducee and Samaritan religions accept only the Torah written by Moses and ignore the rest of the books of the Bible.

Over the centuries, many other revelations of God continued to be recorded by various prophets of Israel which were subsequently accepted by the Jews. These books include the major prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel) as well as the twelve minor prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi). In addition, there were also the Kethubhim or Hagiographa which contained other writings (Chronicles, Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Esther, Ecclesiastes, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah). According to Jewish tradition, these books were gradually compiled into the *Tanakh* or the Old Testament around the 2nd century BC



Fragment of Isaiah dated 150 BC

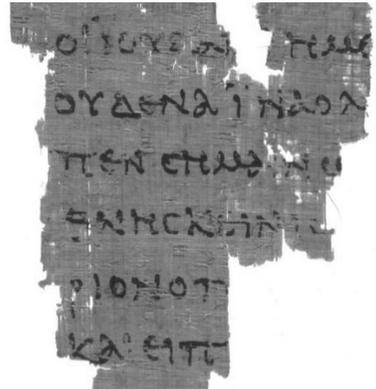
by the Men of the Great Assembly consisting of various scribes, sages, and prophets. These Scriptures were later endorsed by Jesus of Nazareth in 30 AD,

who frequently referred to the Scripture consisting of “the Law and the prophets” (Matt. 5:17, 7:12, 11:13, 22:40, Luke 16:16, 24:27,44) and he quoted from most of the books of the Old Testament. The ultimate proof that these Old Testament books should be included as Scripture is that they pass all five OEC tests. Some Jewish groups later added the Talmud to their Scripture, but this is irrelevant to the rationalist since it is merely commentary on the Scripture and not original source material.^{§5.2.4}

6.1.2 Formation of the New Testament

The Jewish Scriptures clearly explain that there would later be a New Covenant (or New Testament) which would supersede their Old Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34, 32:37-41, 50:4-5, Ezek. 16:60-63, 20:33-38, 34:25-30, 37:24-28, Hos. 2:16-23, Zech. 9:9-17, Mal. 3:1-4). Thus, there is no doubt that a New Testament would later have to be included with the other Jewish Scriptures – because the Old Testament demands it! Jesus of Nazareth claimed that his blood would bring about this New Covenant (Luke 22:19-20) and it can be conclusively proven from the Jewish Tanakh alone that Jesus is their Messiah.^{§6.3.2} Thus, Christianity is technically not a new religion, but is the necessary continuation of Judaism as indicated by its own Scriptures. Most of the teachings of the New Testament are firmly rooted in the Old Testament, including the teaching often attributed to Jesus, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev. 19:18). Notice that Jesus and the apostles were all Jews, as were most of the first Christians. Consequently, the Romans considered those who accepted Jesus as their Messiah to be merely a Jewish sect (Acts 24:5, 28:22).

The books of the New Testament were gradually assembled over several centuries through an open process of examination. The Christians simply collected books that were considered authentic until a consensus eventually emerged. New Testament scholar Lee McDonald writes, “Although a number of Christians have thought that church councils determined what books were to be included in the biblical canons, a more accurate reflection of the matter is that the councils recognized or acknowledged those books that had already obtained prominence from usage among the various early Christian communities.”³ Over the years, various Christian leaders had begun to compile lists of these authentic New Testament books:



Fragment of John dated 100-125 AD

- **Polycarp** (c. 110 AD) – included all except John, Romans, Colossians, Titus, Philemon, James, 2nd Peter, 2nd John, Jude, and Revelation.⁴

- **Marcion** (c. 140 AD) – included all except Matthew, Mark, John, Acts, 1st Timothy, 2nd Timothy, Titus, Hebrews, James, 1st Peter, 2nd Peter, 1st John, 2nd John, 3rd John, Jude, and Revelation.⁵
- **The Muratorian fragment** (c. 170 AD) – included all except Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1st Peter, 2nd Peter, and 3rd John; added Wisdom of Solomon and Apocalypse of Peter.⁶
- **Irenaeus** (c. 180 AD) – included all except Philemon, 2nd Peter, 3rd John, and Jude; added Shepherd of Hermes.⁷
- **Tertullian** (c. 210 AD) – included all except 2nd Peter, James, 2nd John, and 3rd John.⁸
- **Eusebius** (c. 300 AD) – included all except Philemon, Hebrews, James, 2nd Peter, 2nd John, 3rd John, and Jude.⁹

Eventually, Athanasius (367 AD) provided the first complete list of New Testament books which was later officially recognized by the third Council of Carthage in 397 AD:

“Again it is not tedious to speak of the [books] of the New Testament. These are, the four Gospels, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Afterwards, the Acts of the Apostles and Epistles (called Catholic), seven, viz. of James, one; of Peter, two; of John, three; after these, one of Jude. In addition, there are fourteen Epistles of Paul, written in this order. The first, to the Romans; then two to the Corinthians; after these, to the Galatians; next, to the Ephesians; then to the Philippians; then to the Colossians; after these, two to the Thessalonians, and that to the Hebrews; and again, two to Timothy; one to Titus; and lastly, that to Philemon. And besides, the Revelation of John.”¹⁰

Again, the ultimate proof that these New Testament books should be included as Scripture is that they pass all five OEC tests. The Jews do not accept the New Testament, *not* because it is unreliable, but because they do not like its conclusion that Jesus is the Messiah.^{§6.3.2} But this is not a valid position for a rationalist. A rationalist does not accept books just because a particular religion accepts them, a rationalist accepts them because they pass the OEC.

6.1.3 Additional Books

Although some Abrahamic religions can demonstrate a clear historical tradition of revelation from God, most of them no longer accept any additional books of scripture and thus they have a *closed canon*. A canon is “an authoritative list of books accepted as Holy Scripture”.¹¹ For the most part, Samaritans accept only the Torah, Jews accept only the Tanakh, Christians accept only the Bible, Muslims accept only the Qur’an, etc. In these cases, they believe that God had spoken for a period of time, but they claim that God no longer speaks today. Some Christian denominations hold to a form of *Christian Deism*, claiming that

God interacted with mankind up until the first century, but has not spoken anymore after the Bible was written and the apostles died. Such claims of God's lack of ability to communicate anymore, however, do not appear to have any more credibility than the single-source religions which claim that God stopped speaking as soon as their founder died. Thus, any religion which claims that God is suddenly no longer actively involved in the affairs of men would not seem very reasonable to a rationalist. What happened? Did God retire? This is no different than how Elijah taunted the prophets of Baal: "Perhaps God is preoccupied, or relieving himself, or is on a journey, or maybe he is sleeping and needs to be awakened" (1Ki. 18:27).

If God is still able to communicate today, then the canon of Scripture must still be open, at least *in theory*, which means that other books still could be written that pass all five OEC tests. The concept of a closed canon is not a Biblical concept and the Bible itself does not specify any process for creating a canon. There is nothing in the Bible which would indicate that God can no longer communicate today. The warnings against adding or subtracting words to the book of Deuteronomy and Revelation apply only to the content within those books (Deut. 4:2, 12:32, Rev. 22:18-19), not to the entire collection of books of the Bible which did not even exist as one volume at the time. It is easily provable *from the Bible* that there is more revelation from God than is contained in the Bible:

- Saul prophesied but it was not recorded (1Sam. 10:9-12).
- Daniel sealed up words on a scroll to be opened during the end times (Dan. 12:4).
- There are not enough books to record all the things that Jesus did (John 21:25).
- Phillips daughters prophesied but it was not recorded (Acts 21:8-9).
- The seven thunders were sealed up by John but were not recorded (Rev. 10:3-4).

It is also provable from the Bible that there will continue to be revelation from God in addition to the Bible:

- There will still be dreams and visions in the end times (Joel 2:28-29).
- The Holy Spirit will guide believers and tell them what is yet to come (John 16:13).
- Apostolic ministries continued beyond the original twelve disciples (Acts 14:4,14, Rom. 16:7, 1Cor. 9:5, Gal. 1:19, Phil. 2:25).
- There will still be apostles and prophets in the end times (Rev. 18:20).

Accordingly, history records that spiritual gifts such as prophecy continued for hundreds of years beyond the writing of the Bible and the death of the apostles:

- **Justin Martyr** (c. 160 AD) – "For the prophetic gifts remain with us, even to the present time. And hence you ought to understand that [the gifts] formerly among your nation have been transferred to us."¹²
- **Irenaeus** (c. 180 AD) – "We do also hear many brethren in the Church, who possess prophetic gifts, and who through the Spirit speak all kinds of

languages, and bring to light for the general benefit the hidden things of men, and declare the mysteries of God...”¹³

- **Tertullian** (c. 207 AD) – “Now all these signs [including tongues and prophecy] are forthcoming from my side without any difficulty, and they agree, too, with the rules, and the dispensations, and the instructions of the Creator...”¹⁴
- **Hilary of Poitiers** (c. 350 AD) – “We are able to prophesy and to speak with wisdom. We become steadfast in hope, and receive the gifts of healing. Demons are made subject to our authority.”¹⁵

The question then is, which other books should be added to the canon of the Bible? Obviously, not every revelation from God has necessarily been written in a book, and not every book has necessarily been included in the Bible. Christian bookstores are filled with thousands of books, for example, yet none of them aspire to be added to the Bible. That is because the message of the Bible is already sufficient to lead people to salvation and beyond that, no additional books are needed because God can directly lead them through his Holy Spirit (John 14:26, Rom. 8:14, Acts 16:6-7, 1Jn. 2:27). Notice that the Jewish Scriptures state that under the New Covenant, “Each man will no longer teach his neighbor or brother saying, ‘Know the Lord’, for they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.” (Jer. 31:34) If God is willing to communicate directly through the Holy Spirit under the New Covenant, is there really a need for any additional books beyond the Bible?

Because of division, conflicts, and politics, it is unlikely that any book would ever be added to the Bible because it would not be universally recognized. If one denomination decided to add another book to the Bible, none of the other denominations would probably accept it. Thus, while many Christians believe that God still speaks today, they acknowledge that the canon of Scripture is effectively closed, at least *in practice*. Realize that any new revelation that could truly be added to the Bible would never contradict the revelation already contained in the Bible. A rationalist is open to considering the validity of other books, but they must still pass all five OEC tests. Unfortunately, it seems that the only religions trying to add books to the Bible these days seem to be the cults, and their additional scriptures do *not* pass the OEC...

6.2 Invalid Scripture

There are countless examples of books masquerading as Scripture today which do not pass all of the OEC tests.^{§5.2.4} The proliferation of so many false writings seems to be a phenomenon that is unique to the Abrahamic religions. That is because most of the holy books of the other false world religions are not usually taken as objective truth anyway, so nobody is trying to pass off extra books as their scriptures. Where are all of the books trying to be added to the Agamas, Kojiki, Tao-Te Ching, or Tripitaka? Yet, since the Bible’s credibility has already been widely accepted, it seems that there is no end to the number of religions trying to piggy back off its success by adding their own illegitimate

books to it. Anyone can start a “me too” religion by claiming to receive later scriptures from the God of Abraham; but such scriptures could not be added to the Bible if they contradict the rest of the Bible, because then they would fail the internal consistency test. And if the new scriptures claim to *correct* the Bible, then such a deviation from the historical tradition must be classified as a new religion, and thus it would fail the ancient origins test. You can’t have it both ways!

Notice that most cults are not comfortable in letting others scrutinize their holy books because they fail to meet the OEC (see Appendix A). In contrast to the open scrutiny of the Bible, these cults demand that the writings of their self-proclaimed gurus and prophets be accepted without question, and no dissention is tolerated. They attempt to pass off their scripture as legitimate by replacing books of the Bible, editing parts of the Bible, or adding their own books to the Bible, *but the end result is that their writings usually contradict the Bible*. If these additional books do not hold up to scrutiny, then they cannot be accepted by a rationalist. Most of the invalid scriptures that aspire to be added to the Bible can be classified into one of three categories: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, and Contradictera. A policeman filing an accident report is interested in obtaining the actual testimony of known eyewitness who were there, not questionable testimony from people who were not there (Apocrypha), not testimony from people hundreds of years later pretending to be there (Pseudepigrapha), not testimony from people hundreds of years later who deny that there was even an accident (Contradictera)!

6.2.1 Apocrypha

The Apocrypha consists of books that were written contemporaneously with other books of the Bible, but are not considered to belong with the Scriptures. The general problem with apocryphal books is that they usually fail the internal and/or external consistency tests. The word “apocrypha” itself means “writings or statements of dubious authenticity”¹⁶, so religions that accept these books usually refer to them as the *deuterocanonical* or *intertestamental* books instead.

Old Testament Apocrypha	New Testament Apocrypha
1 Esdras, 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Addition to Esther, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, Prayer of Azariah, Story of Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, Prayer of Manasseh, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees	Apocalypse of Peter, Acts of Paul and Thecla, 1 Clement, 2 Clement, Didache, Epistle of Barnabas, Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians, Gospel According to the Hebrews, Shepherd of Hermas

The *Old Testament Apocrypha* is a collection of writings dated from about the 3th century BC to the 1st century AD. Although it consists only of Jewish writings, the Jews do *not* consider them to be a part of their canon and they were

never accepted as Scripture by the Jewish community. They were also explicitly excluded from the list of Scriptures by Jewish historian Josephus. They were not accepted by the early Christians either, for they were considered to have *lesser value* than the Scripture. Christian leaders such as Amphilochus, Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory Nazianzus, Jerome, Melito of Sardis, and Origen explicitly rejected them as Scripture. While some of the Septuagint, Dead Sea Scrolls, and a few Greek manuscripts contained some individual apocryphal books, there was never any consensus regarding them. The Apocrypha was later canonized by the Roman Catholic church on April 8, 1546 at the Council of Trent, yet the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Coptic churches still do not agree on which apocryphal books to include. Most Protestants do not accept the Apocrypha at all since they point out that “Jesus and the New Testament writers never once quoted the Apocrypha although there are hundreds of quotes and references to almost all of the canonical books of the Old Testament.”¹⁷ It is possible, however, that the New Testament does make some allusions to some apocryphal books:

Topic	Apocrypha	Bible
The Armor of God	Wisdom 5:17-20	Ephesians 6:13-17
Knowledge of the Creator	Wisdom 13:1-10	Romans 1:18-25
Two kinds of vessels	Wisdom 15:7	Romans 9:21
Quick to listen, slow to speak	Sirach 5:11	James 1:19
Eating flesh and drinking blood	Sirach 24:21	John 6:53-58
Celebration of Hanukkah	1Maccabees 4:59	John 10:22

But again, just because the Bible makes references to other books, does not mean that those other books are necessarily inspired by God. Remember, the Bible quotes from at least nineteen other non-canonical books.^{55,3,4} Many books of the Apocrypha contain errors and thus they fail the internal and external consistency tests:

- Burning a fish’s heart and liver to drive away evil spirits (Tob. 6:5-8) was a form of sorcery prohibited in the Bible (Deut. 18:10-11).
- Nebuchadnezzar did not rule over the Assyrians (Jdth. 1:1), he ruled over the Babylonians (Dan. 1:1).
- Haman was not a Macedonian (AEst. 16:10), he was an Agagite (Esth. 3:1)
- Giving alms will not atone for your sins (Sir. 3:30, Tob. 12:9), a sacrifice is required to atone for sins (Lev. 9:7, Rom. 3:25).
- Israel was not in captivity for 7 generations (Bar. 6:2), but for 70 years (Jer. 25:11, Dan. 9:2).
- Habakkuk was not a contemporary of Daniel (Bel. 1:33-39), but lived centuries before him (Hab. 1:6).
- Was Antiochus Epiphanes cut into pieces in the temple (2Macc. 1:13-16) or did he die from a sickness in the mountains (2Macc. 9:19-29)?

Note that none of the authors of the Apocrypha ever claimed to be inspired by God, and their literary style is perhaps better categorized as legend or fantasy. For example, do the words of the author of Maccabees sound like someone who was inspired by God: “If I have done well and told a fitting story, that is what I desired, but if it is poorly done and mediocre, that is the best I could do.” (2Macc. 15:38)

As the canon of New Testament books was being developed, there also emerged a *New Testament Apocrypha* that likewise consisted of books of lesser value, but were nevertheless read in some of the churches. Although books such as the Shepherd of Hermes and Apocalypse of Peter were once considered as possible candidates for being added to the scriptures, they were ultimately rejected by the majority of Christians and thus were not included in the Bible. Again, it does not matter to the rationalist what books a religion accepts or rejects, a rationalist only considers them if they pass the OEC.

6.2.2 Pseudepigrapha

While the Apocrypha is considered to have lesser value than the Scripture, the Pseudepigrapha is considered to have *no* value. The pseudepigraphal books mainly differ from the apocryphal books in that their authorship is completely unfounded, often with a “ghost writer” attributing his book to a prominent figure of the past. These pseudepigraphal books were never accepted as Scripture and never could have been accepted as Scripture since they were written hundreds of years later by authors writing under assumed names. The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha was never quoted by the Jewish leaders of the time because it did not exist, and the New Testament Pseudepigrapha was never quoted by the early Christians because it did not exist!

Old Testament Pseudepigrapha	New Testament Pseudepigrapha
Apocalypse of Abraham, Apocalypse of Adam, Assumption of Moses, 2Baruch, 3Baruch, Book of Giants, 1Enoch, 2Enoch, 3Esdras, 4Esdras, Jubilees, Letter of Aristeas, Life of Adam and Eve, Lives of the Prophets, 3Maccabees, 4Maccabees, Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah, Psalms of Solomon, Sibylline Oracles, Testament of Solomon, Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs	Apocalypse of Paul, Apocryphon of John, Book of Thomas the Contender, Epistle of the Apostles, Gospel of the Ebionites, Gospel of the Egyptians, Gospel of the Hebrews, Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus Christ, Gospel of Judas, Gospel of Mary, Gospel of the Nazaraeans, Gospel of Peter, Gospel of Phillip, Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Truth, Protevangelium of James

New Testament pseudepigraphal books are a particular favorite of the cults as they attempt to reinvent Jesus to suit their own imaginations. Myths claiming that Jesus was married, existed only as a spirit (Gnosticism), or made visits to India, China, or England have no historical validity whatsoever, but were often derived from these pseudepigraphal books. Perhaps the most prominent pseudepigraphal book is the Epistle to the Laodiceans, derived from Paul’s exhortation to the Colossians: “When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you likewise read my letter from Laodicea.” (Col. 4:16) Although this book was not included on any of the canonical lists of Scripture, it later appeared in John Wycliffe’s Bible and some German translations of the Bible before Martin Luther. The authorship of the letter, however, remains dubious since it does not appear in any Greek copies of the Bible and was not accepted by the early Christians. These fictional pseudepigraphal books have no value to a rationalist, because they fail the source reliability test and usually fail the internal and external consistency tests as well.

6.2.3 **Contradictera**

The Contradictera consists of books written even later which aspire to follow the same Abrahamic God of the Bible, yet they contradict the original source documents of the Bible. Like the Pseudepigrapha, the Contradictera consists of fictional accounts written hundreds of years after the fact, but in these cases their authorship is usually known. Many newer religions attempt to “piggy back” off of the ancient origins of the Abrahamic God by claiming that their holy books are yet another revelation in the ongoing tradition. Here are a few examples:

Contradictera	Author	Date	Religion
Qur’an	Mohammed	610	Islam
Book of Mormon	Joseph Smith	1830	Mormonism
Baha’u’llah writings	Mirza Husayn Ali Nuri	1852	Baha’i
Science and Health	Mary Baker Eddy	1875	Christian Science
The Watchtower	Charles Taze Russell	1879	Jehovah’s Witnesses
Holy Piby	Robert Athlyi Rogers	1924	Rastafarianism
Divine Principle	Sun Myung Moon	1966	Unificationism

If the canon of Scripture is still open, then why couldn’t any of these books be added as Scripture? Simple, because they do not pass the OEC! All these books claim to be later revelations of the Abrahamic God, but contradict the historical record and thus they fail the internal consistency test. Notice that the historical eyewitness accounts of the Bible were not disputed by anyone when they were written, and they were accepted for hundreds of years until they were contradicted by these newer religions. For example, the Bible teaches that Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:1,4-8, Luke 2:4-7, 15, John 7:42), but the Book of Mormon teaches that Jesus was born in Jerusalem.¹⁸ The Bible teaches that Jesus died on the cross (Matt.

27:35-38, Mark 15:24-27, Luke 23:33, John 19:18), but the Qur'an teaches that Jesus did not really die on the cross.¹⁹ Which should you believe – the original historical eyewitness accounts in the Bible or contradictory accounts written hundreds of years later by religious gurus who were not there? These later religions are free to believe whatever they want, but they contradict the historical record in favor of their new “revelation” and thus they *must* be classified as new religions. Specific examples of why each of these later religions fails the OEC are provided in Appendix A.

To a rationalist, this form of “history revisionism” made hundreds of years after the fact cannot be taken seriously. These latter “prophets” simply were not there, and their so-called “revelations” cannot take precedence over historical eyewitness accounts. This is yet another example of the type of irrational logic that religions think they can get away with. Wait a minute...a new revelation just came in from the God of Abraham who said that everything written about him is wrong and that you must send the author of this book \$1,000 dollars or you will go to Hell. ☺ And yet the Baha'is, Christian Scientists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Muslims, Rastafarians, Unificationists would have you accept their contradictory accounts made up hundreds of years later, instead of the original historical account of the Bible. And they do not even agree with each other! Their contradictory writings which attempt to *correct* the Bible would not have existed in the first place if they had not learned about the God of Abraham through the Bible. Why would God allow the “false” account of the Bible to persist unopposed for thousands of years, only to be corrected by these latter “prophets”? Why didn't Jesus correct them himself when he walked the earth? Was everyone who lived before these latter prophets made their corrections to the Bible damned to Hell? A God that cannot speak is not a rational option, and neither is one that can't get his story right until thousands of years later!

6.3 Who is Jesus?

Almost every religion in the world thinks highly of Jesus Christ, even the non-Abrahamic religions. But who exactly was Jesus? Moral teacher, prophet, Messiah, religious guru, charlatan, God? It seems that everybody wants to reinvent Jesus to suit their own desires. But a rationalist must evaluate Jesus based on the claims revealed in the original source documents. Just because Jesus is promoted as a popular religious figure doesn't mean the rules of logic and reason can therefore be thrown out the window. Jesus must be evaluated with the same academic scrutiny that would be applied to any other historical figure.

6.3.1 Jesus Existed Historically

Every once in a while, a very naive person will challenge whether Jesus ever actually existed. “How do you know that his disciples didn't just make it all up?” they ask. They are unaware that the New Testament manuscripts themselves

provide sufficient evidence to establish the historical existence of Jesus Christ, even for secular historians. But in order to silence the critics, the historicity of Jesus can also be established from *non-Christian* sources outside of the New Testament. In order to reduce the volume of material presented, the following selections have been limited to a *terminus ad quem* within a century of Jesus' death (c. 30-130 AD). Only one of these citations is needed to confirm Jesus' historical authenticity.

- **Roman prefect Pontius Pilate** (30-36 AD) provided his own account of Jesus' death: "And the expression, They pierced my hands and my feet, was used in reference to the nails of the cross which were fixed in His hands and feet. And after He was crucified they cast lots upon His vesture, and they that crucified Him parted it among them. And that these things did happen, you can ascertain from the Acts of Pontius Pilate." ²⁰ Pilate's account was described by both Justin Martyr and Tertullian, but this should not be confused with the apocryphal "Acts of Pontius Pilate" which was a 4th century forgery.
- **Samaritan historian Thallus** (52 AD) theorized that the period of darkness during Jesus' crucifixion could have been caused by a solar eclipse: "As to His works severally, and His cures effected upon body and soul, and the mysteries of His doctrine, and the resurrection from the dead, these have been most authoritatively set forth by His disciples and apostles before us. On the whole world there pressed a most fearful darkness; and the rocks were rent by an earthquake, and many places in Judea and other districts were thrown down. This darkness Thallus, in the third book of his History, calls, as appears to me without reason, an eclipse of the sun."²¹
- **The Jewish Talmud** (70-200 AD) contains several references to Jesus, such as: "On the eve of the Passover Yeshu [the Nasarean] 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 apostacy. Any one who can say anything in his favour, let him come forward and plead on his behalf.' But since nothing was brought forward in his favour he was hanged on the eve of the Passover!"²² In other places, the Talmud refers to Jesus as "Ben Pandera" or "Ben Stada".²³ Lest the Jews accuse Christians of reading things into their text, this was the interpretation of the *pagan* philosopher Celsus in the 2nd century AD who referred to Jesus as the son of "Panthera".²⁴
- **Stoic philosopher Mara Bar-Serapion** (73-165 AD) wrote: "What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their wise King?...Nor did the wise King die for good; he lived on in the teaching which he had given."²⁵
- **Jewish historian Josephus** (90-95 AD) wrote: "...so [Ananus] assembled the sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned."²⁶ There is another famous citation which some historians believe was embellished, but have reconstructed the text to read: "About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man...For he was one who performed

paradoxical deeds and was the teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews. He was [called] the Christ. When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing among us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who had in the first place come to love him did not give up their affection for him.”²⁷

- **Roman historian Tacitus** (109 AD) wrote: “...Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular.”²⁸
- **Roman magistrate Pliny the Younger** (112 AD) wrote to Emperor Trajan concerning the proper way to punish Christians: “An information was presented to me without any name subscribed, containing a charge against several persons, who upon examination denied they were Christians, or had ever been so. They repeated after me an invocation to the gods...and even reviled the name of Christ: whereas there is no forcing, it is said, those who are really Christians into a compliance...They all worshipped your statue and the images of the gods, throwing out imprecations at the same time against the name of Christ. They affirmed the whole of their guilt, or their error, was, that they met on a certain stated day before it was light, and addressed themselves a form of prayer to Christ, as to some God...”²⁹
- **Roman historian Suetonius** (121 AD) commenting on the reign of Claudius: “Since the Jews were continually making disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome.”³⁰ The misspelling of “Christus” appears to be unique to Suetonius who also refers to Nero’s punishment of the “Christiani”.³¹
- **Roman satirist Lucian of Samosata** (128-180 AD) wrote: “The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day – the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account...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.”³²
- **Phlegon of Tralles** (130-137 AD.) wrote in his chronicles of the Olympiads: “Jesus, while alive, was of no assistance to himself, but that he arose after death, and exhibited the marks of his punishment, and showed how his hands had been pierced by nails.”³³ He also claimed that great earthquakes and an eclipse occurred when Jesus was crucified³⁴ and that Jesus had made predictions about the future which had come true.³⁵

That is an impressive amount of evidence for that time period, and Jesus was mentioned by all of the relevant sources that one would expect during that time. In addition to these ten secular sources, there are also Gnostic texts such as

Basilides (117-138 AD), Apocryphon of John (c. 120-130 AD), 2nd Apocalypse of James (120-180 AD), Gospel of Thomas (c. 130-200 AD), as well as many citations from early Christian sources such as the Didache (50-120 AD), Clement of Rome (c. 95 AD), Polycarp (110-140 AD), Papias (110-140 AD), Ignatius (c. 115 AD), Quadratus (c. 124-125 AD), and Barnabus (c. 130-131 AD). Thus, including the nine authors of the New Testament, there are at least *30 different authors* confirming the existence of Jesus Christ within 100 years of his death. That is an astounding amount of testimony concerning anything during the 1st century! There are not many people who are written about by 30 different authors today, and it is doubtful that their writings would survive for 2,000 years! The wealth of historical documentation is so conclusive that “only a nincompoop would doubt Jesus’ historical existence”.³⁶

6.3.2 Jesus is the Messiah

The main difference between Judaism and Christianity is that the Jews don’t accept that Jesus is their promised Messiah. There is no doubt that Jesus was Jewish and that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah on at least three separate occasions (Matt. 16:15-17, Mark 14:61-62, John 4:25-26). But there have been many other people who have claimed to be the Messiah throughout history, so how will the Jews know when the Messiah actually appears? All such claims can be objectively evaluated by the specific Messianic prophecies contained in the Old Testament. Consider these specific prophecies that have been fulfilled by Jesus:

- ***Born in Bethlehem*** (Matt. 2:1). “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the clans of Judah, yet from you will go forth for me to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” (Mic. 5:2)
- ***Heir to the throne of David*** (Luke 1:31-32). “Of the greatness of His government and peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and uphold it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.” (Isa. 9:7)
- ***Born of a virgin*** (Matt. 1:24-25). “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will conceive and bear a son, and will call him Immanuel.” (Isa. 7:14)
- ***Preceded by a messenger*** (Matt 1:3, John 1:23). “Behold, I will send my messenger and he will prepare the way before me.” (Mal. 3:1) “A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way of Yahweh, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’” (Isa. 40:3)
- ***Ministry in Galilee*** (Matt. 4:12-13). “Nevertheless there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish, when he first afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali. But afterward he will make it glorious by the way of the sea beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.” (Isa. 9:1)
- ***Triumphant procession to Jerusalem*** (Matt. 21:7-9). “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold your king comes to you, righteous and with salvation, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” (Zech. 9:9)

- **Beaten beyond recognition** (John 19:1-3). “Just as many were appalled at you, so his appearance was so disfigured beyond human recognition and his form marred more than the sons of men...yet we considered him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.” (Isa. 52:14, 53:4-5)
- **Would not defend himself** (Matt. 27:12-14). “He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; as a lamb is led to the slaughter and as a sheep is silent before his shearers, so he did not open his mouth.” (Isa. 53:7)
- **Ridiculed by the crowd** (Matt. 27:39-43). “But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by everyone and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads saying, ‘He trusts in Yahweh, let Yahweh rescue him. Let him rescue him since he delights in him.’” (Psa. 22:6-8)
- **Sacrificed for the people’s sins** (John 11:49-51). “For he was cut off from of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people, he was punished...Yet it was the will of Yahweh to bruise him and cause him to suffer, if he would make his soul an offering for sin...My righteous servant will justify many, for he will bear their iniquities” (Isa. 53:8-11)
- **Pierced his hands and feet and side** (John 20:25-27, Luke 24:36-40). “For dogs have surrounded me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierced my hands and my feet.” (Psa. 22:16) “But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities” (Isa. 53:5) “They will look upon me who they have pierced.” (Zech. 12:10)
- **Lots cast for his garments** (John 19:23-24). “They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothes.” (Psa. 22:18)
- **Buried in a rich man’s tomb** (Matt. 27:57-58). “He was assigned a grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death.” (Isa. 53:9)
- **Resurrected from the dead** (Matt. 28:5-7). “For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, nor will you allow your Holy One to see corruption.” (Psa. 16:10) “But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me.” (Psa. 49:15)

If these were not enough, Jesus fulfilled over 350 specific prophecies proving that he is the Jewish Messiah!^{37,38} *Indeed, most of the entire life of Jesus Christ can be reconstructed just by recounting the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament!*

Jesus clearly had a Messiah complex! 😊

Lest you think that an overactive imagination has taken a few isolated phrases out of context, please read Psalm 22 or Isaiah 53 in its entirety. You do not have to be a Jew to appreciate that Jesus’ fulfillment of these Old Testament Scriptures constitutes further proof of the legitimacy of the Bible. In order to fulfill these prophecies, it is inescapable that anyone claiming to be the Messiah would necessarily have to suffer and die (Luke 24:26,46).

Most of the entire life of Jesus Christ can be reconstructed just by recounting the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament.

Notice that all of these Old Testament Scriptures were known to be Messianic prophecies by the Jews long before Jesus fulfilled them. Obviously, if they were not already known to be Messianic prophecies, the New Testament

would not have even bothered quoting them as having been fulfilled by Jesus. But now some Jews want to go back and claim that some of these Scriptures were never really Messianic prophecies, just because it is now obvious that Jesus fulfilled them. Their disingenuousness, however, is easily refuted by their own historical record. For example, many Jewish rabbis today now teach that the “suffering servant” of Isaiah 53 does not refer to the Messiah, but the nation of Israel instead. But the fact is that, “For more than 1700 years, the Jewish rabbis interpreted this passage almost unanimously as referring to the Messiah.”³⁹ This fact is thoroughly documented throughout history as the majority of rabbis were *already on record* stating that Isaiah 53 clearly refers to the Messiah.⁴⁰

The fulfillment of these Messianic prophecies is so astounding that some have later made the claim that Jesus must have intentionally arranged to have them fulfilled. But that is absurd as Jesus could not control where he was born or how he would die. Jesus could not control that he would be a descendant of David, born in Bethlehem, or conceived of a virgin, nor could he control the manner of his death, the squabble over his clothes, or his burial in a rich man’s tomb. So now some of the critics claim that the authors must have merely made the story up to look like Jesus fulfilled the prophecies. But the fact that there were four different accounts written by four independent authors from completely different backgrounds over a period of about 45 years, renders such a conspiracy theory completely untenable, especially coupled with the fact that no one at the time objected to the validity of those accounts.

Not only is Jesus Christ the Messiah, but he was the only candidate with the credentials who could ever be the Messiah! The Jews’ own Scriptures prophesied this about the Messiah:

“Seventy ‘sevens’ have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place. Therefore, know and understand that from the issuing of the decree to restore and to build Jerusalem until the Messiah the Prince there will be seven ‘sevens’, and sixty-two ‘sevens’; it will be rebuilt with a plaza and a moat but in times of trouble. After sixty-two ‘sevens’, the Messiah will be put to death and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary.” (Dan. 9:24-26)

Given the decree to rebuild Jerusalem in 444 BC by King Artaxerxes (Neh. 2:1-8), and assuming that the “sevens” refer to seven year periods (Lev. 25:2-4,8), it can be precisely calculated that the Messiah would have been killed on April 3, 33 AD, which was the very day that it is claimed that Jesus Christ was crucified.⁴¹ Amazing! Even if such calculations were off by a few days, “the city and the sanctuary” were destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD, establishing an absolute upper bound for the Messiah’s coming. This means that not only did the Messiah have to die, but he had to die sometime before 70 AD. There is no other candidate before 70 AD other than Jesus Christ who even came close to fulfilling the 350

Messianic prophecies. If Jesus was not the Messiah, then a rational Jew must admit that there will never be one!

The Jews correctly point out, however, that Jesus did not fulfill *all* of the Messianic prophecies. There are still several unfulfilled prophecies which state that the Messiah must be a victorious king who conquers all his enemies, and Jesus did not conquer a single nation...at least not yet! Yet the Jewish Scriptures clearly teach that after the Messiah's death (Isa. 53:8-11), he will be raised from the dead (Psa. 16:10, 49:15) and thus there will be a *second coming* where Jesus will indeed be a conquering king who defeats all of Israel's enemies. The prophet Zechariah mentions these two separate comings of the Messiah in one passage (Zech. 12:9-10). Thus, Jews and Christians are both awaiting the coming of the same Messiah – the Jews think he is coming for the first time while the Christians believe he is coming for the second time. Consequently, the Christians' claim that Jesus is the Messiah entirely hinges on whether or not Jesus Christ was raised from the dead...

6.3.3 Jesus was Raised from the Dead

There have been many other religious leaders throughout history and all of them are dead! Many self-proclaimed saviors, messiahs, and gods have all come and gone. Obviously, a religious leader can claim anything he wants, but why should you believe his claims more than any other man? Why you could make up your own religion too and when you die you will be no worse off than them. Religious leaders such as Buddha, Confucius, Guru Nanak, Joseph Smith, Lao Tze, Mohammed, Moses – are all dead, but Jesus Christ backed up his claims by rising from the dead. Many religious teachers have come and gone, but Jesus is unique in that all of his claims ultimately hinge on the fact that he was raised from the dead:

“And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is useless and so is your faith. And we are then found to be false witnesses of God, because we witnessed against God that he raised Christ, who he did not raise, if indeed the dead are not raised...And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we only have hoped in Christ in this life, we are to be pitied more than all men.” (1Cor. 15:14-19)

If Jesus was not raised from the dead, then he could not be the Messiah and he would not be able to fulfill the remaining Messianic prophecies about being a conquering king. Many religions are willing to embrace Jesus as a prophet or moral teacher, but they strongly object to the idea that he was raised from the dead. Thus, they have proposed several different theories claiming that Jesus was not really raised from the dead such as the swoon theory, stolen body theory, and hallucination theory:

- ◆ **The Swoon Theory** alleges that Jesus didn't actually die on the cross and thus he was not really raised from the dead. It claims that Jesus had merely fainted and only *appeared* to die and then was later revived. The historical record, however, indicates that Jesus was clearly dead:

“Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate if their legs could be broken and the bodies taken down...But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear and immediately blood and water flowed out.” (John 19:31-34)

In medical terms, this would have been caused by hypovolemic shock resulting in a pericardial and/or pleural effusion, which in either case confirms that he was *dead*. Do you suppose that after being severely beaten (Matt. 26:67-68, Mark 14:65, Luke 22:63-64) and flogged (Matt. 27:26, Mark 15:15, John 19:1) and beaten again (Matt. 27:30, Mark 15:19, John 19:3) so that he was too weak to carry his own cross (Matt. 27:32, Mark 15:21, Luke 23:26), then crucified (Matt. 27:35, Mark 15:25, Luke 23:33, John 19:18), and entombed (Matt. 27:60, Mark 15:46, Luke 23:53) without medical treatment, food, and water for three days, that Jesus wiggled out of his tightly wrapped grave clothes (Matt. 27:59–60, Mark 15:46, Luke 23:53, John 19:40) weighed down with 75 pounds of spices (John 19:39), single handedly pushed away the stone blocking the entrance (Matt. 28:2, Mark 16:4, Luke 24:2, John 20:1), overpowered the guards (Matt 28:4) and then walked for several miles (Mark 16:12, Luke 24:13-15)? Absurd! Jesus' death is so clearly documented that Professor Wilbur Smith concludes that “we know more about the details of the hours immediately before and the actual death of Jesus, in and near Jerusalem, than we know about the death of any other one man in all the ancient world.”⁴²

- ◆ **The Stolen Body Theory** accepts that Jesus died on the cross, but alleges that the disciples later stole the body and then made up the story that Jesus had risen from the dead. Ironically, the chief priests anticipated this exact scenario, so they purposely sealed the tomb and stationed guards to prevent it from happening, “lest his disciples come and steal him and tell the people that he was raised from the dead” (Matt. 27:62-66). The disciples, however, were not planning a heist, they were afraid (Luke 23:49, John 20:19), dejected (Luke 24:17), and went fishing instead (John 21:3). The disciples really never understood that Jesus was even supposed to rise from the dead (Mark 9:9-10, 31-32, Luke 9:43-45, 18:31-34, John 12:16, 16:17-18, 20:9). No, the disciples had absolutely no motive to steal the body. Instead, we learn that it was the chief priests who made up this story afterward:

“And while they were going, some of the guards came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened. And when they had met with the elders and consulted together, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money saying, ‘You are to say, “His disciples came by night and stole him while we were asleep.” And if this is heard by the governor, we will persuade him and keep you out of trouble.’ And they took the money and did as they had been

instructed. And this story was widely spread among the Jews up to this day.” (Matt. 28:11-15)

How did the guards know that it was the disciples who stole the body if they were asleep? And what kind of thieves would bother to take the time to unwrap his grave clothes and leave them behind (Luke 24:12, John 20:6-7)? This made-up story simply is not credible and it does not fit the facts.

◆ ***The Hallucination Theory*** alleges that the disciples were either hallucinating or perhaps mistaken when they thought they saw Jesus again. This theory is quickly disproven by the fact that Jesus appeared on at least ten occasions to many different people before he ascended into Heaven:

1. Women visit the tomb (Matt. 28:8-10, Mark 16:9, John 20:14-17)
2. Appearance to Peter (Luke 24:33; 1Cor. 15:5)
3. Road to Emmaus (Mark 16:12-13, Luke 24:13-32)
4. Appearance to the Disciples (Luke 24:36-53, John 20:19-23, 1Cor. 15:5)
5. Doubting Thomas (John 20:26-29)
6. Appearance to 500 people (1Cor. 15:6)
7. Appearance to James (1Cor. 15:7)
8. Commission in Galilee (Matt. 28:16-20, Mark 16:14-18, John 21:1-24, 1Cor. 15:7)
9. Appearance in Jerusalem (Acts 1:4-5)
10. Ascension to Heaven (Acts 1:6-11)

Such diversity of appearances to hundreds of different people over a period of 40 days (Acts 1:3) rules out any possibility of a hallucination or mistaken identity. Such a hallucination could not have been brought about by wishful thinking because the disciples initially refused to believe the reports of his resurrection (Mark 16:11, 13-14, Luke 24:11, 41, John 20:25) and did not even recognize him when he first appeared to them (Luke 24:15-16,37, John 20:14, 21:4).

None of these theories are rational alternatives. Author George Hanson puts these arguments into perspective, “The simple faith of the Christian who believes in the Resurrection is nothing compared to the credulity of the skeptic who will accept the wildest and most improbable romances rather than admit the plain witness of historical certainties. The difficulties of belief may be great; the absurdities of unbelief are greater.”⁴³ If you are going to ignore the historical source materials you might as well make up any theory you want, but that is not an option for a rationalist. The diversity of the resurrection narratives proves that the authors did not collaborate to try to make their stories the same. Yet, the details can all still be harmonized into one reconstructed account.

Perhaps the ultimate proof that Jesus rose from the dead is that the disciples who had first-hand knowledge of the situation were so convinced that they were willing to die for that claim. All of the disciples were eventually martyred for their belief except for possibly John. If the disciples had made up the story, they would have been fools for dying for what they knew to be a lie. All of these alternative theories simply are not plausible because the disciples would not have

laid their lives on the line if they weren't absolutely positive that Jesus rose from the dead. Would you be willing to die for a lie? Remember the disciples had already given up and left Jesus for dead, so they had no reason to lie. Any of them could have recanted of their claim that Jesus rose from the dead, but instead they suffered excruciating deaths for their beliefs.

Secular historians may argue about whether Jesus actually rose from the dead, but they all accept that the disciples *believed* that Jesus was raised from the dead as a historical fact! Historically, there is really no other plausible explanation for the spread of Christianity. Almost any secular historian could be quoted to prove this point. For example, skeptic John Shelby Spong admits, "The change in [the disciples] was measurable and objective even if the cause of this change is debated. The change was part of that first-century explosion of power that cannot be denied by any student of history."⁴⁴ Likewise, Orthodox Jewish rabbi Pinchas Lapidé who obviously does not believe in Jesus, still believes the fact of his resurrection is inescapable: "When this scared, frightened band of apostles which was just about to throw away everything in order to flee in despair to Galilee; when these peasants, shepherds, and fishermen, who betrayed and denied their master and failed him so miserably, suddenly could be changed overnight into a confident mission society, convinced of salvation and able to work with much more success after Easter than before, then no vision or hallucination is sufficient to explain such a revolutionary transformation."⁴⁵

As a side note, some claim that the Shroud of Turin also provides scientific proof of Jesus' death and resurrection. The Shroud of Turin is a linen burial cloth bearing the image of a man who appears to have been crucified. This cloth is claimed to be the same cloth that was wrapped around Jesus' dead body after his crucifixion (Matt. 27:59-60, Mark 15:46, Luke 23:53, Luke 24:12, John 19:39-40, 20:6-7). Proponents of the shroud's authenticity claim that energy released during his resurrection produced a 3-dimensional image on the cloth⁴⁶ which still has not been duplicated yet by any known process. The Shroud of Turin, however, remains controversial as some details of its authenticity remain unresolved.

6.3.4 Jesus is God

Many religions are willing to accept Jesus as merely a prophet or wise teacher, but they do not accept him as God. There is no doubt that Jesus was many things to many people, but the problem is that Jesus clearly *claimed to be God*. Indeed, the Jews tried to kill Jesus for blasphemy precisely because he claimed to be God:

"The Jews therefore gathered around him saying, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.' Jesus answered, 'I did tell you, but you do not believe...I and the Father are one.' Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, 'I showed you many good works from the Father. For which of them do you stone me?' The Jews answered him, 'We are not stoning

you for any good work, but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, claim to be God.” (John 10:24-33; cf. Matt. 26:63-64, John 5:17-18, 8:57-58)

Normally anyone who claimed to be God would be committing blasphemy, that is, *unless it were true!* Not only did Jesus claim to be God, but he publicly allowed others to worship him as God (Matt. 2:11, 14:33, 28:9,17, Luke 24:52, John 9:38, 20:28). Jesus made claims about himself that would only apply to God – that he had always existed (John 8:58), could forgive sins (Matt. 9:2-8, Mark 2:1-12, Luke 5:187-26), and will judge the world at the end of time (Matt. 24:30-31, 27:63-64). He made the audacious claims, “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35), “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12), “I am the gate” (John 10:9), and “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25). *If Jesus is not God as he claimed, these are clearly the signs of a deranged lunatic or an egotistical liar, but certainly not a righteous man to be followed.* C.S. Lewis summed up the situation well:

“A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronising nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”⁴⁷

If Jesus were not God, then he was either a liar or perhaps a lunatic. There are no other reasonable options. This *trilemma* has been popularly referred to as “Liar, Lunatic, or Lord”. Which of these positions would you ascribe to Jesus?

- **Liar.** It is hard to imagine how someone who consistently taught the things that Jesus taught and lived the way that Jesus lived would be called a liar. Such a liar should not be emulated as a good moral teacher. Notice that nobody at the time claimed that Jesus was a liar. And if Jesus was lying about being God, then he would have been a fool because his claim directly led to his crucifixion and thus he died for nothing. Given ample opportunity to recant, only a lunatic would choose to die for such a lie.
- **Lunatic.** It is hard to imagine how the person credited with the Golden Rule and other great moral teachings could be considered a lunatic. Jesus’ teachings were way ahead of their time and provided the foundation for all of western civilization! If Jesus was crazy, then perhaps all the other leaders ought to have their heads examined. 😊 This is simply not a plausible scenario.
- **Lord.** Normally anyone who claimed to be God would be considered to be a lunatic, that is, *unless it were true!* Ask yourself, if God himself did take the form of a man, what would you expect him to do that Jesus didn’t do? His incredible love, moral teachings, miracles, and self-sacrifice are all in

keeping with God’s character. The ultimate proof that Jesus was telling the truth, though, is that he was raised from the dead, which by itself is a pretty good basis for a claim to godhood.

Some critics would add to this an additional possibility of “Legend” – perhaps Jesus never made the claim at all, but it was merely misunderstood or his followers made it up later. Such an argument, however, is not credible since Jesus’ claim of divinity appears in all the earliest manuscripts and most scholars believe the usage of *nomina sacra* provides additional indication of Jesus’ deity.⁴⁸ Even secular authors such as Pliny the Younger and Lucian of Samosata mentioned that Jesus was worshipped as God.^{§6.3.1} Jesus would not even have been crucified had it not been for his claim that he was God.

Many Jews today consider it blasphemous that Jesus claimed to be God only because they are unaware that *their own Scriptures clearly teach that the Messiah is God*. Consider Isaiah’s famous Messianic prophecy: “For unto us a child is

According to the Jewish Scriptures, Jesus would have no choice but to claim to be God, if he really were the Messiah!

born, unto us a son is given, and the government will rest upon his shoulders. And his name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” (Isa. 9:6) Here a *human* child is clearly being called “Mighty God, Everlasting Father”. What blasphemy! 😊 Notice that the same term

“Mighty God” is used to refer to Yahweh in the very next chapter (Isa. 10:20-21). The Jewish Scriptures also refer to the Messiah as the “Son of God” (Psa. 2:7,12, 89:26-27, 2Sam. 7:12-16) which is a title used extensively to refer to Jesus (Matt. 8:29, 14:33, 27:54, Mark 1:1, Luke 1:35, 22:70, John 1:49, 11:27, 19:7). This was yet another reference to his deity for it was well understood that the son of a god is also a god! Thus, the Jews sought to kill Jesus for blasphemy for claiming to be the Son of God, because “he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God” (John 5:17-18; cf. John 19:7). Furthermore, the Messiah is directly referred to as God in several other Scriptures as well (Isa. 7:14, Jer. 23:6, Mic. 5:2). According to the Jewish Scriptures, Jesus would have no choice but to claim to be God, if he really were the Messiah!

Based on all the available historical source documents, a rational person would have no reason to doubt that Jesus is who he claimed to be. It is not that a man became God, it is that God became a man. All of the religious offshoots that claim to follow the Bible but reject that Jesus Christ is God (such as Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Christian Science) are all invalidated by Jesus’ own words. We are not trying to convince atheists that Jesus is God, because they don’t believe there is a god. But if you claim to follow the Bible, then you must accept that Jesus is God because that is what the Scripture clearly teaches. If you are a rationalist, you are not allowed to fashion your own Jesus to suit your own needs, but must follow the evidence. And from that standpoint the evidence is clear – the most rational conclusion is that the historical source documents do indeed indicate that Jesus claimed to be God and was worshipped as God.

6.4 The Trinity

One area of Christianity that several religions take issue with is the concept of the Trinity. The Jews and Muslims in particular are adamant that there can only be one God. But they seem to be ignorant that Christians also agree!

- “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord” (Mark 12:29)
- “There is one God, and there is none other but him” (Mark 12:32)
- “There is no God but one” (1Cor. 8:4)
- “One God and Father of all” (Eph. 4:4-6)
- “For there is one God” (1Tim. 2:5)
- “You believe that there is one God” (Jas. 2:19)

Now that everyone agrees there is one God, perhaps we can move on to something else! But the Jews and Muslims want an explanation to how Jesus and/or the Holy Spirit could also be God then. The doctrine of the trinity teaches that the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit consists of three persons all possessing the exact same nature and making up one divine being. Although the word “Trinity” is not found anywhere in the Bible, this three-in-one concept most certainly exists in both the Old and New Testaments.

God	Old Testament	New Testament
Father	Deut. 32:6, Psa. 89:26, Isa. 63:16, 64:8, Jer. 3:4, 3:19	Gal. 4:6, Eph. 4:4-6, Phil. 4:20, Heb. 5:5, 12:7, Jas. 1:27, 1Jn. 3:1
Son	2Sam. 7:12-16, Psa. 2:7,12, Prov. 30:4, Psa. 89:26-27, Isa. 9:6, Dan. 7:13-14	Matt. 26:63-64, John 1:1,14,18, 5:17-18, 8:57-58, 10:24-33, 14:9, 20:28, Col. 1:15-16, 2:9, Tit. 2:13, 2Pet. 1:1
Holy Spirit	Gen. 1:2, 6:3, 2Sam. 23:2, Neh. 9:30, Job 33:4, Psa. 106:33, 139:7, Isa. 40:13, 63:14	Luke 1:35, John 14:26, Acts 5:3-4, Rom. 8:9,26, Acts 13:2, 1Cor. 2:11

There are also several places in the Old and New Testaments which refer to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all in the same verse (Isa. 42:1, 48:16, 61:1, Matt. 28:19, 2Cor. 13:14, Gal. 4:6, 1Pet. 1:2). Thus, the concept of the Trinity did not begin in the New Testament, but in the *Old Testament!* In fact, in the very first chapter of the Bible it states, “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.’” (Gen. 1:26). God used the plural pronouns “us” and “our” in several other places as well (Gen. 1:26; 3:22; 11:7). Notice that God is referred to in both the singular and plural in the same verse: “Whom shall *I* send, and who will go for *us*?” (Isa. 6:8). How could God simultaneously be both singular and plural at the same time? It would be logically impossible if God were restricted to our dimensions of space and

time, but it has already been shown that God exists outside of space and time as a spiritual entity.^{§4.1}

Notice that the two most frequently used words for God, “Elohim” (Hebrew “אלהים”) and “Adonai” (Hebrew “אדני”), are almost always *plural!*⁴⁹ The word “Elohim” cannot merely be considered a royal plural since it is also translated as “gods”, such as in: “I am the Lord your God [Elohim] who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods [Elohim] before me.” (Exod. 20:2-3) Even the Jewish Shema Yisrael which states “Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord is one” (Deut. 6:4) contains the word “echad” (Hebrew “אחד”) implying a *composite unity* which is demonstrated by its usage in several other verses (Gen. 2:24, 11:1,6, 34:16, Exod. 24:3, Num. 13:23, Ezra 2:64). If the authors really wanted to express a single being, they would have used the word “yachid” (Hebrew “יחיד”) instead which expresses the concept of absolute oneness (Gen. 22:2,12,16, Judg. 11:34, Psa. 22:20, 35:17, Prov. 4:3, Jer. 6:26, Amos 8:10, Zech. 12:10). And yet “yachid” is never used in reference to God.

The Bible clearly teaches that God is one, but it also clearly teaches that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are God. For example, who was the Creator – the Father (Deut. 32:6), the Son (Eph. 3:9, Col. 1:15-16), or the Holy Spirit (Gen. 1:1-2)? How would you reconcile this spiritual mystery? The doctrine of the Trinity is merely an attempt to rectify all these facts. The Trinity is perhaps best illustrated with a comparison to the nature of light. Does light consist of waves or particles? Light is obviously only one thing but its behavior can be explained by both the physic equations for waves and the equations for photons. So which is it? (And no, light is not a made up of photons which travel in waves.) Science currently does not have an explanation for this mystery of how both can simultaneously be true, but it does not hinder scientists from using both sets of equations. Although this is only a duality, it demonstrates that a *mystery* such as the Trinity is not unprecedented, especially when dealing with a spiritual entity.

Various cults, on the other hand, tend to deny the Trinity by either denying the deity of Jesus Christ and/or the deity of the Holy Spirit. There are several nontrinitarian positions which ignore one or more verses of the Bible and thus contradict the Bible:

- **Unitarianism** – there is only one God and it does not include Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit. This position obviously contradicts the Scriptures listed above in both the Old and New Testaments which state that the Son and the Holy Spirit are also God.
- **Binitarianism** – there is only one God who is the Father and the Son, but not the Holy Spirit. This position claims that the Holy Spirit is not a person, but a force or spiritual power kind of like electricity. Not only does this position contradict the Scriptures listed above which equate the Holy Spirit to God, but there are verses in both the Old and New Testaments which clearly give the Holy Spirit its own personal volition (2Sam. 23:2, 1Ki. 22:24, Neh. 9:20, Ezek. 11:5, John 16:13, Acts 13:2, Heb. 3:7, 1Tim. 4:1). Is God’s Spirit something different than himself?
- **Modalism, Sabellianism, Oneness** – there is only one God who has manifested himself in three different forms. A common version of this doctrine teaches that God was once the Father, but then turned into the Son

when Jesus was born, and later turned into the Holy Spirit after Jesus ascended. This position is easily disproven as the Bible contains several verses which depict the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all present at the exact same time (Matt. 3:16-17, Mark 1:10-11, Luke 3:22, John 1:32, Acts 7:55).

- **Mormon Godhead** – there are three separate Gods who are one in purpose, but not in essence. This position obviously contradicts the Scriptures listed above which state that there is only one God.

There are other variations on these themes, but in every case these positions contradict one or more verses in the Bible and thus are not rational choices.

6.5 Advancement to “Christian”

To become a “Christian”, an Abrahamist must simply recognize that the Bible is the most rational selection of Scriptures according to the historical record. Once the correct Scriptures are acknowledged, then it is merely a matter of applying what those Scriptures teach, which ultimately culminates in the acceptance of Jesus Christ, who is the Jewish Messiah. Abrahamic offshoots such as Islam, Gnosticism, Baha’i, Mormonism, Christian Science, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Rastafarianism, or Unificationism, may have identified the correct God, but they are not correctly following his teachings. That is because these religions fail to adhere to the historical teachings of the Bible which is the only rational choice that passes the OEC. Instead, these religions want to replace the Bible, add to the Bible, or edit the Bible in ways that contradict the Bible and are thus not intellectually honest extensions to the historical record.

Judaism, on the other hand, acknowledges some of the Scriptures, but they don’t even follow the part that they do accept. For example, the Jews no longer have a valid temple required by their Scriptures and thus they are not offering the sacrifices required by God and their prescribed feasts are not valid. All that is usually needed to convince a Jew to become a “Christian” is to merely get them to believe their own Scriptures, that is, if they are willing to be rational. For then they would recognize that Jesus is the only possible choice for their Messiah according to their own Scriptures, and then they would realize why their temple is no longer needed.

No one is saying that some of these other Abrahamic religions may not be helpful to some people, but they simply are not valid choices for a rationalist. As you will see in the next chapter, many “Christians” are not rationalists either for they do not really follow the teachings of the Bible. People are free to believe whatever they want, but a rationalist is constrained to follow the evidence. Once you are able to accept the Bible as the most reliable source of information about the Abrahamic God, you will finally be able to advance on the path to becoming a true rationalist, and as it will be shown, a follower of Jesus Christ.

¹ “Scripture”, *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., Merriam-Webster: Springfield, MA, 2003; <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/scripture>, accessed July 15, 2020.

² Ambrose Bierce, “Scriptures”, *The Devil’s Dictionary, The Collected Works of Ambrose Bierce*, vol. 7, p. 316, The Neale Publishing Company: New York and Washington, 1911; <https://books.google.com/books?id=seIQAAAAYAAJ>, accessed July 15, 2020.

³ Lee M. McDonald, *The Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon*, p. 116, Hendrickson Publishers: Peabody, MA, 1995.

⁴ Polycarp, *Letter to the Philippians*, c. 110 AD; A. Cleveland Coxe ed., Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson tr., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, Christian Literature Publishing Co.: Buffalo, NY, 1885; <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0136.htm>, accessed July 15, 2020. The list was compiled based on his Scripture quotations from those books.

⁵ Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, c. 208 AD; A. Cleveland Coxe ed., Peter Holmes tr., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, Christian Literature Publishing Co.: Buffalo, NY, 1885; <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0312.htm>, accessed July 15, 2020. The list was reconstructed based on Tertullian’s references to Marcion’s work.

⁶ Unknown, c. 180 AD; Muratori, Ludovico Antonio, *Antiquitates italicæ medii ævi*, vol. 3, col. 854, 1740; A. Cleveland Coxe ed., S.D.F. Salmond tr., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, “Fragments of Caius”, Christian Literature Publishing Co.: Buffalo, NY, 1885; <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0510.htm>, accessed July 15, 2020.

⁷ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, c. 180 AD; A. Cleveland Coxe ed., Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut tr., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, Christian Literature Publishing Co.: Buffalo, NY, 1885; <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103.htm>, accessed July 15, 2020. List was compiled based on his references to those books.

⁸ A. Cleveland Coxe ed., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3-4, Christian Literature Publishing Co.: Buffalo, NY, 1885. The list was compiled from Scripture quotations across all of Tertullian’s works.

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¹⁰ Athanasius, *Festal Letter 39*, 1:5, 367 AD; Philip Schaff and Henry Wace ed., R. Payne-Smith tr., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd series, vol. 4, Christian Literature Publishing Co.: Buffalo, NY, 1892; <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2806039.htm>, accessed July 15, 2020.

¹¹ “Canon”, *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., Merriam-Webster: Springfield, MA, 2003; <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/canon>, accessed July 15, 2020.

¹² Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, ch. 82, c. 160 AD; A. Cleveland Coxe ed., Marcus Dods and George Reith tr., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, Christian Literature Publishing Co.: Buffalo, NY, 1885; <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/01286.htm>, accessed July 15, 2020.

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- ¹⁴ Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, book 5, ch. 8, c. 207 AD; A. Cleveland Coxe ed., Peter Holmes tr., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, Christian Literature Publishing Co.: Buffalo, NY, 1885; <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103506.htm>, accessed July 15, 2020.
- ¹⁵ Hilary of Poitiers, *Tract on the Psalms*, 64:15, c. 350 AD; Antonius Zingerle ed., *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (CSEL), vol. 22, p 246, 1891; <http://books.google.com/books?id=pB4RAAAAYAAJ>, accessed July 15, 2020.
- ¹⁶ “Apocrypha”, *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., Merriam-Webster: Springfield, MA, 2003; <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/apocrypha>, accessed July 15, 2020.
- ¹⁷ Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, p. 173, Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 1968.
- ¹⁸ Joseph Smith Jr., *The Book of Mormon*, Alma 7:10, p. 240, E.B. Grandin: Palmyra, NY, 1830.
- ¹⁹ Mohammed, *Qur’an*, Sura 4:157, 632 AD.
- ²⁰ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, ch. 35, c. 150 AD; A. Cleveland Coxe ed., Marcus Dods and George Reith tr., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, Christian Literature Publishing Co.: Buffalo, NY, 1885; <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0126.htm>, accessed July 15, 2020.
- ²¹ Sextus Julius Africanus, *History of the World*, book 3, 18:1, c. 221 AD; George Syncellus, *Chronography*, c. 810 AD; A. Cleveland Coxe ed., *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Fathers of the Third Century*, vol. 6, p. 136, Christian Literature Publishing Co.: New York, 1886; http://files.libertyfund.org/files/1973/1333.06_Bk_Sm.pdf, accessed July 15, 2020.
- ²² *Talmud Bavli*, Sanhedrin, 43a, c. 70-200 AD.; I. Epstein ed., Jacob Shachter tr., *Soncino Babylonian Talmud*, Seder Nezikin, Sanhedrin, ch. 5, The Soncino Press: London, 1935.; <http://www.come-and-hear.com/tcontents.html>, accessed July 15, 2020.
- ²³ *Talmud Bavli*, Sanhedrin 67a, 107b, Shabbat 104b, Sotah 47a, c. 70-200 AD.
- ²⁴ Celsus, *The True Word (Alethes Logos)*, c. 174 AD; Origin, *Against Celsus (Contra Celsum)*, c. 231-233 AD; A. Cleveland Coxe ed., Frederick Crombie tr., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 4, Christian Literature Publishing Co.: Buffalo, NY, 1885; <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04161.htm>, accessed July 15, 2020. Celsus also provides an account of a Jew who accuses Jesus of having “invented his birth from a virgin” and claims that Jesus was “born in a certain Jewish village, of a poor woman of the country, who gained her subsistence by spinning, and who was turned out of doors by her husband, a carpenter by trade, because she was convicted of adultery; that after being driven away by her husband, and wandering about for a time, she disgracefully gave birth to Jesus, an illegitimate child, who having hired himself out as a servant in Egypt on account of his poverty, and having there acquired some miraculous powers, on which the Egyptians greatly pride themselves, returned to his own country, highly elated on account of them, and by means of these proclaimed himself a God.” (1:28)
- ²⁵ Mara Bar-Serapion, *Letter to Serapion*, c. 73-165 AD; F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* p. 114, InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL, 1972.
- ²⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, c. 90-95 AD; William Whiston tr., *The Works of Josephus: New Updated Edition*, bk. 20, 19:1 (200), p. 538, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.: Peabody, MA, 1987.

²⁷ Geza Vermes, “Jesus in the Eyes of Josephus”, *Standpoint*, January/February 2010; <https://standpointmag.co.uk/issues/january-february-2010/jesus-in-the-eyes-of-josephus-features-jan-10-geza-vermes>, accessed July 15, 2020.

²⁸ Tacitus, *Annals*, 15:44, c. 109 AD; Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb tr., *Annals of Tacitus*, MacMillan and Co.: London, p. 304, 1869/1885; <http://classics.mit.edu/Tacitus/annals.11.xv.html>, accessed July 15, 2020.

²⁹ Pliny the Younger, *Letter to Trajan*, c. 112 AD; William Melmoth tr., *The Letters of Pliny the Consul*, 2nd ed., vol. 2, 10:97, p. 672-673, Printed for R. Dodsley: London, 1747; <https://books.google.com/books?id=9zJEAAAAMAAJ>, accessed July 15, 2020.

³⁰ Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, *Life of Claudius*, 121 AD; J.C. Rolfe tr., *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, bk. 5, 25:4, Loeb Classic Library: 1913; <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Suetonius/12Caesars/home.html>, accessed July 15, 2020.

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³² Lucian of Samosata, *The Death of Peregrine*, c. 128-180 AD; H.W. and F.G. Fowler tr., *The Works of Lucian of Samosata*, vol. 4, vs. 11-13, p. 82-83, The Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1905; <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/luc/wl4/wl420.htm>, accessed July 15, 2020.

³³ Phlegon of Tralles, *Olympiads*, 2:59, c. 137 AD; Origin, *Contra Celsum* (Against Celsus), c. 231-233 AD; A. Cleveland Coxe ed., Frederick Crombie tr., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 4, Christian Literature Publishing Co.: Buffalo, NY, 1885; <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04162.htm>, accessed July 15, 2020.

³⁴ Phlegon of Tralles, *Olympiads*, 2:33, c. 137 AD; Origin, *Contra Celsum* (Against Celsus), c. 231-233 AD; A. Cleveland Coxe ed., Frederick Crombie tr., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 4, Christian Literature Publishing Co.: Buffalo, NY, 1885; <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04162.htm>, accessed July 15, 2020.

³⁵ Phlegon of Tralles, *Olympiads*, 2:14, c. 137 AD; Origin, *Contra Celsum* (Against Celsus), c. 231-233 AD; A. Cleveland Coxe ed., Frederick Crombie tr., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 4, Christian Literature Publishing Co.: Buffalo, NY, 1885; <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04162.htm>, accessed July 15, 2020.

³⁶ Alan Bunning, *Rationality: From Ignoramus to Rationalist*, 2nd edition, p. 128, Lulu Press: Raleigh, NC, December 6, 2020.

³⁷ Bible Probe, *365 Messianic Prophecies*; <http://www.bibleprobe.com/365messianicprophecies.htm>, accessed July 15, 2020.

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⁴⁰ Samuel Rolles Driver and Adolf Neubauer, *The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah According to the Jewish Interpreters*. James Parker and Co.: Oxford, 1877; <https://books.google.com/books?id=YxdbAAAQAAJ>, accessed July 15, 2020.

⁴¹ Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, p. 137-139, Zondervan Publishing House: Grand Rapids, MI, 1977.

- ⁴² Wilbur M. Smith, *Therefore, Stand*, p. 360, Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, MI, 1974.
- ⁴³ George Hanson, *The Resurrection and the Life*, p. 24, Revell: New York, 1911.
- ⁴⁴ John Shelby Spong, *Resurrection: Myth or Reality?* p. 26, HarperSanFrancisco: San Francisco, CA, 1994.
- ⁴⁵ Pinchas Lapide, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Jewish Perspective*, p. 125, Fortress Press: Philadelphia, PA, 1988.
- ⁴⁶ C. Bernard Ruffin, *The Shroud of Turin*, p. 79, Our Sunday Visitor, Inc.: Huntington, IN, 1999.
- ⁴⁷ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p. 45, The Macmillan Company: New York, 1952.
- ⁴⁸ *Nomina sacra* refers to the tradition of abbreviating “sacred names” to reference deity in the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament as well as other writings.
- ⁴⁹ The singular form “Eloah” is rarely used and the singular form “Adoni” is never used in relation to God.

“Not everyone who says to me ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in Heaven.” – Jesus of Nazareth

Chapter 7: From “Christian” To Rationalist

A “Christian” is one who merely professes a belief in Jesus Christ, which is usually associated with attendance at a church. Most of those who adhere to the Christian religion are merely cultural “Christians” who attend churches simply because it is how they were raised – either their parents were Christians or Christianity was the dominant religion of their culture. Christianity as a whole is really no different than most world religions in this regard, since the majority of religious adherents merely associate with the dominant religion of their culture: Arabs tend to be Muslims, Indians tend to be Hindus, Chinese tend to be Buddhists, etc. Most of them are not especially devoted to their religion as fanatical zealots, but they simply go along with the religious practices of their culture. Likewise, many “Christians” are not especially committed to following the teachings of Jesus either but they just attend church socially. They may agree with the basic philosophy of Christianity, but as you will see, they do not actually abide by the teachings of Jesus Christ. Since these “Christians” claim that they accept the authority of the Bible, from now on passages from the Bible will be emphasized in bold text.

Most “Christians” are not rationalists at all because they did not arrive at their religion by any logical means. But in spite of this, it turns that out that the basis for Christianity just happens to be true! With all the religions in the world, one of them was eventually bound to be right. 😊 But most “Christians” cannot defend their religion intellectually, so their claims often appear to be completely nonsensical to rational people. Accordingly, many “Christian” evangelists employ the same presuppositional approach employed by other religions that dogmatically exclaim, “We are right and if you don’t believe us you will go to Hell.”^{§i.1.1} Such evangelistic tactics usually lack credibility and simply turn many people off. But just because most “Christians” cannot defend their position rationally, does not mean that it cannot be defended rationally. The Bible itself does not use this presuppositional approach, but instead supports its points with logical arguments and evidence that can be rationally verified (Acts 1:3, 2Cor. 10:5, 1Pet. 3:15). Jesus and the apostles did not merely come with fine sounding words, but they demonstrated God’s power with miracles, providing the necessary verification to convince many who were skeptical (John 4:48, 6:2, 7:31, Acts 2:22, 8:6,13, 14:3, Rom. 15:18-19, 2Cor. 2:12, Heb. 2:3-4).

7.1 Churchianity

Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard once said, “Christendom has done away with Christianity without being quite aware of it.”¹ The spiritual type of lifestyle described in the New Testament has been radically altered into the present day religion of *Churchianity*. The sequel to this book titled “The Church: According to the Bible” outlines seven basic areas demonstrating how most “Christian” churches today have deviated so far from Biblical teaching that they are now practicing a completely different religion than Biblical Christianity.²

	Scriptural Truths	Counterfeit Philosophies
Identity	Anyone who is a true Christian is by definition a member of the Church regardless of any geographical or logistical distinctions. (Gal. 3:28, Eph. 2:19)	An institutional “church” is a religious organization or non-profit corporation that typically conducts meetings or services in a particular building.
Unity	All Christians belong to the same Church founded on the basis of one Body, one Spirit, one Hope, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, and one God. (1Cor. 12:12, Eph. 4:4-6)	Christians are divided into man-made organizations with made up names that embody their organizational doctrines and membership requirements.
Fellowship	Committed relationships are formed among the community of Christians who fellowship with one another on a daily basis by sharing their spiritual gifts as a priesthood of believers. (1Cor. 12:4-7, 1Pet. 2:9)	Christians maintain acquaintances with each other based on their religious preferences and have little to no contact with each other outside of the regularly scheduled weekly meetings.
Meetings	Every Christian actively participates in an open format, meeting together at any time or place as the Holy Spirit leads. (Matt. 18:20, 1Cor. 14:26-33)	Services are only conducted once or twice a week at a fixed location where the laity passively observe pre-planned performances as spectators.
Authority	Every Christian is able to be led by the Holy Spirit and submits directly to Jesus Christ who governs all the affairs of the Church. (John 10:3-4, 1Jn. 2:27)	Man-made decisions are handed down by boards, committees, or individuals who hold invalid positions of authority over other members.
Leadership	Christians voluntarily submit to one another and recognize servant leadership on the basis of spiritual authority. (Matt 20:25-28, Eph. 5:21)	The laity obey a hierarchical command structure of professional clergy that preside over them from elected or appointed offices.
Practices	The practices of the Church are derived from the Life of the Church through the continual direction of the Holy Spirit. (Gal. 5:25, Col. 2:8)	Business practices and traditions of men have created an institutional environment governed by unbiblical codes, schedules, and rules.

Notice that none of these modern day “church” practices were started by Jesus Christ or any of his apostles, nor are they found anywhere in the New Testament. Instead, many of these practices are condemned by the New Testament! Those who do these things may refer to themselves as “Christians”, but they are not following the teachings of Jesus Christ. In fact, church-attending “Christians” today are often statistically indistinguishable from the rest of society when it comes to problems such as divorce,³ teenage pregnancy,⁴ and several other types of immorality.⁵ Many hypocritical “Christians” say they follow God, yet they live like the Devil! Their church leaders have been caught molesting children, hiring prostitutes, and committing financial fraud. These leaders are clearly *not* following the teachings of Jesus. *It is not enough to merely profess a belief in Jesus Christ, you must actually do what he says!* If you are not obeying the teachings of Jesus Christ, then how can you say that you really believe in him? Good “Christians” may faithfully light candles, serve as ushers, sing in the choir, stuff bulletins, or run the sound system at church, but they are not truly following Jesus Christ if they have never been *born again* (John 3:3).^{7,3}

Don’t be mistaken, many people are genuinely trying to follow Jesus, but for the most part the term “Christian” is no longer necessarily representative of those who follow Jesus Christ. Indeed, even Jesus distances himself from the so-called “Christians” for he said:

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in Heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord,’ did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and perform many miracles in your name? Then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you. Depart from me you workers of iniquity.’” (Matt. 7:21-23)

If Jesus calls these “Christians” who prophesy, cast out demons, and perform miracles for him “workers of iniquity”, then perhaps the popular understanding of Christianity is not all that it is cracked up to be. Because of this, rationalists often refer to themselves as “true Christians”, “born-again Christians”, or “followers of Jesus” to distinguish themselves from those who merely profess a belief in Jesus Christ. While true followers of Jesus are willing to proudly bear the name “Christian” (1Pet. 4:16), they are also usually careful to distance themselves from many of the questionable practices that are being done in the name of Christianity.

7.2 The Gospel

It may seem surprising, but many people who call themselves “Christians” have never heard or understood the gospel message of Jesus Christ. The Greek word “ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ” translated as “gospel” literally means “good message” and refers to “the message concerning Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation”.⁶ The message of Jesus Christ is unique, because while the founders of many other

religions claimed to be the spokesmen for God, *Jesus claimed to actually be God*. The founders of all the other religions are dead, but Jesus was raised from the dead. If there are many ways to God as other religions teach, then Jesus Christ is clearly not one of them because Jesus said, **“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”** (John 14:6) If Jesus is telling the truth, then he is the only way, but if not, then he is definitely not one of the ways to God for then he would be a liar.^{§6.3.4}

Many “Christians” are not followers of Jesus as they often adhere to false gospels that are not found in the Bible such as: you can earn your way to Heaven by doing good works, you can sin all you want and still be a Christian, church attendance will save you, Christianity will make you rich, etc. Yet the gospel message is really quite clear. People are not going to Hell because the gospel is too difficult to understand, but because they refuse to obey it. Mark Twain once quipped, “It ain’t the parts of the Bible that I can’t understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand.”⁷ Instead of relying on the philosophies of men (Col. 2:8), the gospel will be presented here by quoting the relevant Scriptures. A rationalist is not interested in second-hand interpretations, but in the original source materials. The gospel is the essential message of the Bible which can be summarized as follows.

7.2.1 The Goal: Relationship with God

The Bible agrees with the previously established scientific evidence that there is one God who created the universe and possesses the qualities of being eternal, non-corporeal, living, intelligent, technological, and moral.^{§4.5} This one true God has been known by different names in many different cultures. The Bible further establishes that God is a loving Father who is holy, just, perfect, faithful, merciful, and forgiving. God is repeatedly described as **“gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in love”** (Exod. 34:6, Neh. 9:17, Psa. 86:15, Joel 2:13, Jon. 4:2). Indeed, perhaps the overwhelming message of the Bible could be summed up in the phrase **“God is love”** (1Jn. 4:16). God truly wants everyone to experience fulfillment in their lives as Jesus said, **“I came that they may have life and may have it abundantly.”** (John 10:10) God desires to bless those who follow Jesus **“with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places”** (Eph. 1:3).

God’s love for us has even been referred to as a spiritual law: “God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life.”⁸ But how will you ever know what God’s plan for you is, until you first know God himself? The Bible indicates that the main purpose of man is to enter into a personal relationship with God and glorify him by sharing in his nature (John 17:21-23). The Westminster Catechism put it this way: “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”⁹ God is not an abstract concept or an impersonal force that mere mortals must worship from afar; God wants to have a personal relationship with you! **“The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call upon him in truth.”** (Psa. 145:18) Do you want to be free from sin, guilt, worry, strife, and all the burdens of life? Jesus said, **“Come unto me, all who are laboring and burdened, and I will give you rest.”** (Matt. 11:28) The concept that each person can have their own personal

relationship with God is rare among the other religions. Many people may know a lot *about* God, but they do not really know God personally. Do you? **“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”** (John 17:3) But if God really wants all of us to have a personal relationship with him, then why doesn’t everyone experience it?

7.2.2 The Problem: Man’s Sin

Mankind’s main problem is neither a lack of intelligence nor information, but a sinful nature as our sin separates us from experiencing the presence of God. Indeed, people often only try to make up intellectual arguments as smokescreens to justify their sin. Crime, war, and poverty are all attributable to man’s sinful nature which hinders people from experiencing God’s abundant life. Throughout thousands of years of history, mankind has become more and more technologically advanced, but they have not become any more moral. If anything, mankind is getting worse for “our world is currently host to more wars and forced occupations than at any other time in history.”¹⁰ Everyone seems to accept that God is love, but the bigger question then is, do you love God? A Jewish legal expert once asked Jesus, “Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” and Jesus replied:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment and the second like it is: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matt. 22:35-40; cf. Deut 6:5, Lev. 19:18)

Whenever you sin, you are violating the Law of God. **“Everyone who commits sin also breaks the law, for sin is breaking the law.”** (1Jn. 3:4) Indeed, most people, regardless of their culture or religion, seem to ascribe to the same basic laws of morality given to us by God. Everyone seems to agree that selfishness, lying, stealing, and murder are wrong. And yet everyone still ultimately fails to live up to these basic moral requirements. **“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”** (Rom. 3:23) Yes, this means you! At one time or another, you have sinned against God.

From an atheistic perspective, there should be no such thing as sin. Any behaviors that have arbitrarily been deemed good or evil by society should theoretically be irrelevant.^{§2.5} But then, why do atheists still sin according to their *own* standards of morality? **“Therefore, anyone who knows what is good and does not do it, to him it is sin.”** (Jas. 4:17) If an atheist says they don’t want to lie, then why do they still lie? If they claim they don’t want to be selfish, then why are they still selfish? What *power* forces people to do things against their own stated will? If you can go one minute without sinning, then you should be able to double it and go two minutes without sinning. And if you can go two minutes, then you should be able to double it and go four minutes, and so on. So there is

absolutely no logical reason why you should ever sin. And yet you still sin, not because you occasionally make mistakes, but because you have a *sinful nature*!

Sin not only harms others, but it also separates you from a relationship with God who is holy. **“But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he will not hear.”** (Isa. 59:2; cf. Eph. 2:12) Because of sin, God considers you an “enemy” because you have been pursuing your own selfish interests above the interests of others (Phil. 2:3-4, Col. 1:21). Thus, you are separated from fellowship with God, and unless something changes, you will continue to be separated from God for all eternity:

“Now the works of the flesh are obvious which are sexual immorality, impurity, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, sectarianism, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I did before, that those who do these things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Gal. 19-21)

Have you ever lusted after someone, told a white lie, hated a co-worker, been jealous of a friend, or gotten drunk? Then you have committed sin and the Bible states that **“the wages of sin is death”** (Rom. 6:23; cf. Ezek. 18:20). There is no escaping the judgment of God. **“It is appointed for men to die once and after that face judgment.”** (Heb. 9:27) Everyone will have to give an account for how they have lived their lives. On judgment day, **“God will bring every deed into judgment, including everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.”** (Eccl. 12:14; cf. Isa. 57:12) So while God would love to spend eternity with you, your sin separates you from experiencing a relationship with him (1Sam. 6:20, Ezra 9:15). God does not send anyone to Hell, people have chosen to go there all by themselves!

Many people, however, are under the delusion that they are “basically good”. In fact, some religions teach that mankind is basically good and that religious works are all that is needed to bring men to a higher plain of existence. The Bible, however, teaches that men are *not* basically good, but are basically sinful. **“There is none righteous, not even one...All have turned away, together they have become worthless. There is none who does good, not even one.”** (Rom. 3:10-12) People who think they are basically good are self-deceived, just like there are no guilty people in prison – they all claim they are innocent! *Does a fish know that it's wet?*¹¹ Or as comedian Steven Wright said, “A clear conscience is usually the sign of a bad memory.” The only reason people think they are basically good is because they are using their own definitions of good, not God’s definition. They confuse their occasional desire to do good with actually being good, yet they still continue to sin:

“For what I desire not to do, this I do. And if I do what I desire not to do, I agree with the law that it is good...For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is in my flesh, for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For I do not do the good that I desire, but I do the evil that I do not desire.” (Rom. 7:15-19)

When people begin to recognize that they are sinners, they usually try to compensate for it by doing more good works. It is not unusual for them to make an additional effort to go to church, pray, read the Bible, or do volunteer work to try to offset the sins they have committed. Just like most of the other world religions, they think that performing religious rituals will somehow appease a distant God who looks down on their puny existence from above. But God is not at all impressed by these rituals. None of these things will take away your sin and no amount of good works will ever be able to offset the sins you have committed. **“For the redemption of the soul is costly and no payment is ever enough.”** (Psa. 49:8)

Most people will acknowledge that they have sinned, yet they still believe they have done “more good than bad” and thus are worthy of Heaven. They have the mistaken notion that God weighs our good and evil on scales and if the balance tips slightly toward the good, then they will be allowed to enter Heaven. But that is not true at all. If you have ever committed even a *single* sin, it separates you from fellowship with God. **“For whoever keeps the entire law, yet stumbles in just one point, has become guilty of all of it.”** (Jas. 2:10) Because of this, everyone is deserving of Hell, which is eternal separation from God. Consider this analogy: What would happen if everyone was required to swim from California to Hawaii without stopping. There is no doubt that some would swim farther than others, but no one would make it all the way without help, not even the world’s best swimmers. Some people may think of themselves as “good” swimmers, but none of them are good enough to swim all of the way to Hawaii. Likewise, even the best person in the world is not good enough to enter Heaven. Some people may be better than others, but everyone has still sinned and falls short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23).

What would you say if you stand before God on judgment day and he asks you, “Why should I let you into Heaven?” Would you tell him that you have done more good than evil? Well, there will be *no* evil in Heaven! Think about it. If those who occasionally do evil are allowed to enter Heaven, what kind of place would Heaven be? Will there be people occasionally going around lying, cheating, and stealing in Heaven? That would be like Hell on earth in Heaven! You may think you have more good in you than evil, *but there will not be any evil in Heaven*. How much evil would you let into Heaven? Would one percent evil be okay? No, God is a holy God (Mark 1:24, 1Pet. 1:16, Rev. 15:4) and there will be *no* sin in Heaven! But if everyone has sinned, then how can anyone ever get to Heaven?

7.2.3 The Solution: Jesus Christ

To solve this problem, God himself became a man, Jesus Christ, who was the only person who never committed any sin (1Pet. 2:22). Jesus was never deserving of punishment, but instead willingly chose to sacrifice himself and die in your place to pay the penalty for the sins that *you* committed. **“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him may not perish, but have eternal life.”** (John 3:16) Jesus was crucified on the cross as a sacrifice **“to take away the sins of many”** (Heb. 9:28). Because of this, Jesus was

able to provide a means of reconciliation between God and man (Rom. 5:10-11). The need for atonement is partly illustrated in the story of one of the Seleucidiae, the ancient kings of Antioch:

“The King’s son, the Prince Royal, broke a law of the realm, the penalty of which was that the culprit’s eyes should be put out. The King’s heart yearned for his son. He could not bear to see him groping his way in total darkness, but what could he do? If he had said, I can’t punish my son, I must remit the penalty, and let him go free, his subjects, from the nobles down to the meanest slaves would have said, ‘Fie! Oh! shame! If it had been a poor man, he would have put out his eyes instantly, but he puts his guilty son above the majesty of law, ordained to protect the lives of millions of more loyal subjects.’ But the just King, to maintain the majesty of law, and the righteous administration of government, and yet exercise mercy to his rebellious son, submitted to have one of his own eyes put out, and thus saved one eye of his son.”¹²

Because of God’s righteousness he must render a guilty verdict in your case because of your sin according to the law, but there is nothing that prevents him from also volunteering to pay the penalty that you deserve. No one else but Jesus was qualified to do this, because each man is already obligated to pay for his own sins and thus is not in a position to help anyone else. **“No one can by any means redeem his brother or give to God a ransom for him.”** (Psa. 49:7) Since there is no other way to work off the punishment for your sin, the only solution available to you is to accept Jesus’s offer to pay the penalty for your sins through his death on the cross, and thereby receive forgiveness from God. Have *your* sins been forgiven?

Jesus’ payment for your sin by itself, however, would not necessarily stop you from sinning. What would be the point of forgiving your sins, if you are still going to keep on sinning? That would be like pardoning a murderer, who only gets out of jail to murder again. Many people are under the delusion that “God will always forgive me” while they whole-heartedly continue to commit sin. But a just and righteous God would *not* pardon you from your sins if you simply intend to keep on sinning. No, the only way a pardon would be justified is if your *nature* could also be changed so that you will not continue to practice sin. And this is why Jesus did not only die on the cross to forgive your sins, he also rose from the dead so that his very Spirit may dwell in you! **“Thus, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away; behold, the new has come!”** (2Cor. 5:17). As a result, Jesus is willing to come into your life through the power of the Holy Spirit, which can enable you to obtain victory over sin and experience the abundant life that God has intended. The power of sin over your life can finally be broken! **“Everyone who is abiding in him does not sin; everyone who is sinning has not seen him or known him.”** (1Jn. 3:6) But there is a catch...you must repent of your sins and receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Your sins will only be forgiven if you are *born again* of the Spirit and receive this new nature. So how then can you be born again?

7.3 Spiritual Birth

If you want to be a true Christian, then you must follow the teachings of Jesus Christ who said, **“Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”** (John 3:3). Everyone has already been born once physically, but if you are going to enter the kingdom of God, you must be born again spiritually. You may consider yourself to be a “Christian”, but if you have not been born again of the Holy Spirit then you are not really following Jesus Christ. Many church members will do almost anything except follow Jesus’ teaching to be born again. It doesn’t matter how much you attend church, pray, or read the Bible, if you are not born again, you will not go to Heaven, period. No amount of religious rituals or good works will save you, for Jesus said, **“you must be born again”** (John 3:7). If you don’t want to be born again, then fine, but then you are not a rationalist (that is, a true Christian) because you are not following the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Those who are born again are not represented on earth by any particular religious organization. There are probably some born again Christians in every denomination, but there are also some who are not born again in every denomination. As Christian musician Keith Green once said, “Going to church doesn’t make you a Christian any more than going to McDonalds makes you a hamburger.”¹³ Christianity is one of the only religions where you can become official member of a church, and yet not really be a true spiritual convert. In other religions you can simply join their organization and then you are in, but in Christianity there is a spiritual group of born again believers hidden inside of the group of religious members. You may be a reputable church-going “Christian”, but if you are not born again of the Spirit then you are not a true follower of Jesus. **“But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.”** (Rom. 8:9) If you are not born again of the Spirit, how can you have spiritual fellowship with God? **“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”** (John 4:24)

How then does someone become born again? For those of you who are members of a church, being born again is *not* the same thing as water baptism: **“John baptized with water, but you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit.”** (Acts 11:16; cf. Matt. 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:33) If you are born again, then you ought to get baptized,^{7,3,4} but if you have merely been baptized with water, then you have not necessarily been born again of the Spirit. Baptism alone won’t save you, it will merely get you wet! Being born again is a spiritual transaction that cannot be accomplished by any natural means. **“That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which has been born of the spirit is spirit.”** (John 3:6) Being born again cannot be achieved through your parents’ religious status or by deciding to become a member of a church (John 1:13).

If you are not sure that you have been born again, then you can definitely be sure that you are *not*. **“The Spirit himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.”** (Rom. 8:16) Do you have this internal witness? A person cannot

**“Unless one is born again,
he cannot see the kingdom
of God.” – Jesus Christ**

gradually become born again through osmosis of church attendance or religious rituals. This life-changing transformation of the Spirit cannot come into your life without you absolutely knowing it. To offer an analogy, suppose that someone goes trolling in a boat for the first time. A first-time fisherman will often reel in his line thinking he has a fish whenever a wave or seaweed causes his rod to jiggle since he has never caught a fish in this manner before. He is not sure what a hooked fish feels like and so he often reels in his line every time he feels the slightest tug. But later, when he finally encounters a fish for the first time, there is no mistaking it because the difference is quite clear. Likewise, many “Christians” have never been born again and some reading this right now will scour their minds trying to think of a time that *maybe* they could have been born again. If you are not sure that you have been born again, then you can be pretty sure that you are *not*. **“Examine yourselves to see if you are in the faith; test yourselves. Or do you not recognize yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you – unless you fail the test?”** (2Cor. 13:5). How could you be filled with the Holy Spirit and not know that you were filled with the Holy Spirit? The following signs provide some evidence of those who have been born again. If they are missing from your life, then perhaps you have not been born again of the Spirit.

7.3.1 Faith

Those who follow Jesus Christ are **“saved through faith”** (Eph. 2:8; cf. Luke 7:50, Rom. 10:10, Heb. 10:39). You obviously cannot be a follower of Jesus if you don’t believe in him. **“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to God must believe that he exists and that he is a rewarder of those who seek him.”** (Heb. 11:6) Yes, you must have faith, but this faith does not need to be a “blind faith”, since the previous chapters have already established overwhelming evidence providing a rational basis for believing in Jesus. The faith required to believe in Jesus does not need to be “religious”, for it can be a logical conclusion for those who approach the question rationally.^{§1.2} Having faith merely for the sake of believing in something is absurd since the object of your faith must first be true!

The type of faith required of a rationalist, however, goes beyond just a mental assent of the facts. If you truly believe something, then you must also live your life accordingly. Again, the ground rules of rationality state that if your actions do not confirm what you say you believe, then you are a hypocrite and not a rationalist.^{§1.3}

“What use is it, my brothers, if someone claims to have faith, but has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food and one of you says, ‘Go in peace; be warmed and filled’, but does not give them their physical needs, what use is that? And so faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.” (Jas. 2:14-17)

A faith that does not produce the corresponding actions is not faith at all! For example, if you told someone that their house was on fire, but they took no

action, then they probably did not believe you. A person is saved by faith, not by works, but a genuine faith that saves will also produce works. Jesus said, **“Why do you call me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ and do not do what I say?”** (Luke 6:46)

More than just actions, the Greek word translated as “believe” in the Bible is “ΠΙΣΤΕΥΩ” which contains the built-in concept of *trust*. Believing in God is more like trusting a person than acknowledging a logical proof. It is not enough to merely “believe” in God’s existence, you must also put your trust in him. If you do not truly believe in Jesus, then you will not progress any further. Jesus said, **“For if you do not believe that I am [God], then you will die in your sins.”** (John 8:24) If you do not truly believe in Jesus, then you will not have any reason to repent...

7.3.2 Repentance

If you want to follow Jesus, then you must first repent of your sins. You may have never understood the gospel message before, but now you need to repent. **“Therefore, God overlooked the times of ignorance, but now he calls all men everywhere to repent.”** (Acts 17:30) The basic message that Jesus preached was, **“The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the good news.”** (Mark 1:15) To repent is “to change one’s mind” and “dedicate oneself to the amendment of one’s life”.¹⁴ In order to repent, you must first be willing to admit that you are a sinner. **“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”** (1Jn. 1:8) Perhaps you have not robbed a bank or committed murder, but telling white lies or cheating on a test are also sins. Sin is not merely a matter of actions for bad internal thoughts such as hatred and lust are also sins (Matt. 5:22,28). Sin is *any* moral failure or violation of God’s will. **“Anyone who knows the right thing to do, and doesn’t do it, to him it is sin.”** (Jas. 4:17) If you have broken even one of God’s commands, you have sinned and fall short of God’s requirements. It is your sin which keeps you from experiencing fulfillment in fellowship with God. Are any of your sins really worth it? Are you going to try to justify lying, cheating, drunkenness, selfishness? For which of these sins are you willing to spend an eternity in Hell? Sin is stupid! Do you love your sin more than you love God? After a long struggle, some people will finally come to the place that they believe in Jesus, but then their journey ends there for they are not willing to repent and change their lifestyle. Such hypocritical people cannot be considered rationalists since they do not live according to their stated belief system.^{§1.3}

If you do not truly understand your own depravity before God, then you will probably find little reason to repent. Jesus said, **“For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.”** (Luke 19:10) You cannot be “saved” if you never really understand how you are “lost”. Jesus said, **“I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”** (Luke 5:32) If you do not think you are “lost”, then Jesus’ death on the cross will have no meaning to you at all. Was Jesus wasting his time when he died for you? If you do not truly repent, then you will not progress any further. Jesus said, **“But unless you repent, you too will all**

perish.” (Luke 13:3) If you are unwilling to repent of your sins, then you will not be able to receive God’s free gift of salvation...

7.3.3 Receiving

Salvation is offered to everyone as a free gift. **“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, so that no one can boast.”** (Eph. 2:8-9) A free gift cannot be earned, you must simply accept it. Jesus was once asked, **“What may we do that we may perform the works of God?”** and Jesus answered, **“This is the work of God: that you believe in the one whom he has sent.”** (John 6:27-28) You can never do enough good works to earn God’s love or compensate for the sins you have committed; you simply must receive God’s forgiveness. Someone could offer you a check for one million dollars, but it will do you no good unless you accept it and cash the check. Will you accept God’s free gift? **“Behold! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him...”** (Rev. 3:20) If you truly choose to follow Jesus Christ then you must **“open the door”** and receive him into your life. **“But as many as received him, he gave to them the right to become children of God.”** (John 1:12) Here is an example of a prayer you might say:

“Jesus, I thank you for dying on the cross to forgive my sins. I want to be born again of the Spirit and I ask you to come into my life. I repent of my sins and give you control of my life. I acknowledge you as the Lord of my life and I will seek to do your will from this day forward.”

Of course, saying a prayer like this will do no good at all unless you sincerely mean it *from your heart*. It is not a magical incantation and it has no power of its own. You merely need to be honest with God. **“That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”** (Rom. 10:9) Rational evidence may have led you all the way to this place, but you must still open the door and accept Jesus into your life. If you do not receive Jesus in your heart, then you will not progress any further. Jesus said, **“There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not receive my words; the word that I spoke will condemn him in the last day.”** (John 12:8) If you do not receive Jesus into your heart, then you will not be able to commit your life to him...

7.3.4 Commitment

If you only pray to Jesus whenever you need help or get into trouble, that is not an example of a committed relationship. It is not enough to simply believe in Jesus, you must commit your entire life to him. Many followed Jesus because of his miracles (John 6:2), but few were willing to pay the cost of discipleship (Matt. 11:20,

John 6:60-69). Even the demons believe in God (Jas. 2:19), but they are clearly not devoted to him.

Commitment is perhaps best illustrated by the true story of Jean-Francois Gravelet, better known as Charles Blondin, who is considered to be one of the greatest funambulists of all time. On June 30, 1859, the Great Blondin was the first man to cross Niagara Falls by tightrope. Blondin eventually crossed over Niagara Falls a total of seventeen times performing feats increasing in difficulty: crossing blindfolded, walking on stilts, balancing on a chair, and cooking an omelet over the falls.¹⁵ Once after pushing a wheelbarrow across the rope, Blondin purportedly asked the crowd, “Do you believe I can push a person across in this wheelbarrow?” The crowd ecstatically shouted, “Yes, you are the greatest tightrope walker in the world, we believe in you.” Blondin responded, “Okay, who will volunteer to get in the wheelbarrow?” But no one would volunteer.¹⁶ The spectators certainly believed that he was capable of doing it, since they had seen him do several things far more difficult, and yet no one was willing to personally commit himself. Likewise, you may indeed believe in Jesus, but are you willing to get into “the wheelbarrow” and entrust your life to him?



Charles Blondin crossing the Niagara Falls

One of the first signs that you are really committed to Jesus is that you will be baptized. **“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”** (Acts 2:38; cf. Acts 10:47-48, 18:8, 22:16) In many cultures, the people do not care at all if you merely *say* you believe in Jesus, but once you are baptized then they know that you are really serious. If you are struggling to make a decision, then it probably shows that you are beginning to understand the gravity of the situation. Committing your life to Jesus is an extremely important decision that will affect the ultimate destiny of your life. But Jesus said you must first count the cost:

“For which of you would build a tower without first sitting down and counting the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?...Or what king would go to attack another king in battle without first sitting down and deliberating to see if he is strong enough with 10,000 men to encounter one coming against him with 20,000?...Likewise, any of you who does not give up everything cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:28-

33)

How much does it cost to follow Jesus? It costs everything! Jesus does not want a relationship with you for only one hour a week on Sunday, he wants your entire life! Jesus does not merely want to be number one in your life, he wants to be in charge of all the numbers. Many people continue to live in sin and say they accept Jesus as their *Savior*, but are you willing to die to yourself and make Jesus the *Lord* of your life? **“If anyone wants to come**

**“Christ is either Lord of all,
or he is not Lord at all.”¹⁷**

– Hudson Taylor

after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” (Luke 9:23) Nothing short of this is acceptable! Don’t be deceived, Jesus is not Lord of your life if you are still in control of your own life, engaging in sin and pursuing your own selfish desires. There is no middle ground. Are you willing to give up everything to follow Jesus? If you do not give your life to Jesus, then you will not progress any further. Jesus said, **“For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel will save it.”** (Mark 8:35) If you are not really committed to Jesus, then you will not bear any fruit for him...

7.3.5 Fruit

Jesus said, **“Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”** (John 12:24) Do you say that you are following Jesus? Then prove it! If you were accused in a court of law of being a follower of Jesus, would there be sufficient evidence to convict you? Jesus said, **“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”** (John 14:15) Do you read the Bible? If you really love Jesus, then you will want to know what he says. Do you pray? If you really love Jesus, then you will want to talk to him every day. Not that any of these things can save you, but they are evidence of someone who has been born again. Jesus said, **“I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him bears much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away as a branch and dried up, and they are gathered and cast into the fire and they are burned.”** (John 15:5-6; cf. Matt. 7:16-23) You can’t really produce any spiritual fruit apart from the life of Jesus. **“And the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”** (Gal. 5:22-23) Are you producing fruit? Or are you only half-heartedly committed to Jesus? Jesus said, **“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.”** (Rev. 3:15-16) Again, you cannot do any good works to get saved, but if you are really saved then you will naturally be doing good works. Ultimately, if you really know Jesus then you will be living a life of love (Eph. 5:2). **“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”** (John 13:35) But if you do not have this love, then perhaps you do not really know him. **“Whoever does not love, does not know God, because God is love.”** (1Jn. 4:8)

7.4 The Call of Christ

Do you hear the call to follow Jesus? **“For many are called, but few are chosen.”** (Matt. 22:14) Do you really care about God? Do you spend time thinking about God? Did you wake up this morning and ask God what his will was for you today? Perhaps you know the truth now, but will you sit around and do nothing about it? **“Who will rise up for me against the wicked? Who will take a stand for me against evildoers?”** (Psa. 94:16) Consider this parable that Jesus taught:

“A farmer went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some seed fell along the road, but it was trampled on and the birds of the air ate it. And other seed fell on rock, but when it grew it withered because it had no moisture. And other seed fell among thorns, but the thorns grew up with it and choked it. And other seed fell in the good soil, and when it grew it produced fruit a hundred times more...Now this is the meaning of the parable: the seed is the word of God. And those along the road are the ones who hear, but the devil comes and takes the word from their heart so that they may not believe and be saved. And those on rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root – they believe for a while, but in a time of trial they fall away. And those that fell in the thorns are the ones who hear, but as they go along they are choked by the worries, riches, and pleasures of life and do not mature. And those on good soil are those who hear the word and with an honest and good heart and retain it, bearing fruit with perseverance.” (Luke 8:5-15)

What kind of soil are you? Has the truth been snatched from you? Have you been lured away by the things of this world? If you are looking to sin as much as you can and do the minimum to make it to Heaven, then you are probably not saved at all.

What is the meaning of life? Are you just supposed to work, eat, and sleep, and then you die? Is there any more to life than acquiring material possessions? **“What good is it for a man to gain the whole world and yet forfeit his soul?”** (Mark 8:34-36) Do you know for sure where you are going when you die? **“For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction and many are those going through it. But small is the gate and narrow the way that leads to life, and few are those finding it.”** (Matt. 7:13-14) If you plan on taking the most common travelled road, you will go to Hell. If you want to go where the majority is going, you will go to Hell. If you think that “there are many roads that all lead to the same place” then that must be the wide road to Hell.

Do you feel the conviction of the Holy Spirit tugging at your heart? **“Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear.”** (Mark 4:9) If you hear the call of Christ in your life, do not delay because the Spirit will not continue to strive with you forever (Gen. 6:3). **“Behold, now is the day of salvation.”** (2Cor. 6:2) You don’t know how long you are going to live. If you haven’t responded yet, you may not get

another chance. It may seem like you can come to Christ whenever you want, but Jesus said, **“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.”** (John 6:44) Do you hear his call? May the Lord count you worthy to respond to his calling today (2Th. 1:11, Eph. 4:1)!

7.5 Advancement to Rationalist

In order to be a rationalist, you must become a true Christian and follower of Jesus Christ, which is the most logical conclusion given all the available evidence. So-called “Christians” are invited to leave the religion of Churchianity and become rationalists who put the teachings of Jesus Christ into practice. Becoming a follower of Jesus is not a matter of joining a religion; it is establishing a personal relationship with the God of the universe. No rituals, dressing up, organ music, incense, and chanting are necessary. The rationalist must learn to ignore the religious baggage associated with Christianity and instead *focus on what Jesus actually taught*. And in particular, Jesus said, **“you must be born again”** (John 3:7). Unfortunately, the majority of those who call themselves “Christians” have not been born again of the Spirit, and most of them don’t even know what that means.¹⁸ You may have followed the rational argument up to this point, but you cannot merely think your way into Heaven. A rationalist has no choice – if you are going to be a follower of Jesus Christ, then you must be born again as Jesus said.

Once you are born again, Jesus Christ will come into your life just as he has promised. He said he will never leave you or forsake you (Heb. 13:5) and he will be **“with you always until the end of the age”** (Matt. 28:20). This is not a matter of guess work, because once you are born again you will know that you know that you know! **“I have written these things to you that believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.”** (1Jn. 5:13)

If anyone is skeptical that Jesus’ words are from God, Jesus offered this test: **“If anyone aspires to do God’s will, he will know whether my teaching is from God or whether I speak for myself.”** (John 7:17) This is the type of challenge that a rationalist is more than willing to take. If someone were thinking about buying a house, he might get it professionally appraised and have it thoroughly inspected. Then if everything checks out, he would seal the deal. Likewise, you also need to consider the evidence for giving your life to Christ. But don’t be indecisive and squander this opportunity – if the facts check out, you need to seal the deal! If you are going to follow the evidence to its logical conclusion, then you must accept Jesus Christ into your life. Only then can you ultimately be considered a true rationalist.

¹ Soren Kierkegaard, Walter Lowrie tr., *Training in Christianity*, p. 31, Random House, Inc.: New York, December 2004; <https://books.google.com/books/?id=nkztQPX-YfkC>, accessed July 15, 2020.

² Alan Bunning, *The Church: According to the Bible*, 3rd edition, Lulu Press: Raleigh, NC, November 14, 2020.

³ Audrey Barrick, “Study: Christian Divorce Rate Identical to National Average”, The Christian Post, April 4, 2008; <http://www.christianpost.com/news/study-christian-divorce-rate-identical-to-national-average-31815>, accessed July 15, 2020.

⁴ Jeanna Bryner, “Teen birth rates highest in most religious states”, MSNBC News, September 16, 2009; http://www.nbcnews.com/id/32884806/ns/health-childrens_health/t/teen-birth-rates-highest-most-religious-states, accessed July 15, 2020.

⁵ “Faith Has a Limited Effect On Most People’s Behavior”, Barna Group, May 24, 2004; <https://www.barna.com/research/faith-has-a-limited-effect-on-most-peoples-behavior>, accessed July 15, 2020.

⁶ “Gospel”, *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., Merriam-Webster: Springfield, MA, 2003; <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gospel>, accessed July 15, 2020.

⁷ Alex Avres ed., *The Wit and Wisdom, of Mark Twain*, p. 24, Harper Collins Publishers: New York, 2005.

⁸ Bill Bright, *Have you heard of the Four Spiritual Laws?* Campus Crusade for Christ, Inc.: 1952.

⁹ Westminster Assembly, *The Larger Catechism*, sess. 10, Edinburg, July 2, 1648; http://www.reformed.org/documents/wlc_w_proofs/index.html, accessed July 15, 2020.

¹⁰ Patrick Henningsen, “New Theaters of Conflict Increases Risk of a Multi-Regional World War”, *21st Century Wire*, April 26, 2011; <http://21stcenturywire.com/2011/04/26/new-theatres-of-conflict-add-to-risk-of-multi-regional-world-war>, accessed July 15, 2020.

¹¹ This famous philosophical question, sometimes attributed to literary critic Marshall McLuhan, was probably derived from the Albert Einstein quote: “What does a fish know about the water in which he swims all his life?” Albert Einstein, *Autobiographical Notes*; Paul Schilpp ed., *Philosopher Scientist*, Library of Living Philosophers: Cambridge, MA, 1949.

¹² William Taylor, *Reconciliation: Or How To Be Saved*, p. 38, London, 1867; https://books.google.com/books?id=Z_wCAAAAQAAJ, accessed July 15, 2020.

¹³ Keith Green, “Jesus Commands Us To Go!”, *Keith Green: The Ministry Years 1980-1982*, vol. 2, disk 2, The Sparrow Corporation: Chatsworth, CA, 1988. Melody Green and David Hazard, *No Compromise: The Life Story of Keith Green*, p. 180, Sparrow Press: Chatsworth, CA, 1989.

¹⁴ “Repent”, *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., Merriam-Webster: Springfield, MA, 2003; <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/repent>, accessed July 15, 2020.

¹⁵ *Encyclopedia of World Bibliography*, “Charles Blondin”, Advameg, Inc.: 2011; <http://www.notablebiographies.com/supp/Supplement-A-Bu-and-Obituaries/Blondin-Charles.html>, accessed July 15, 2020.

¹⁶ The Buffalo Republic, 1859; “The Only Jones”, *Judy, Or the London Serio-comic Journal*, p. 244, Dalziel Brothers, Camden Press, N.W.: London, November 19, 1884; <https://books.google.com/books?id=Ig4oAAAAYAAJ>, accessed July 15, 2020.

¹⁷ Roger Steer, *Hudson Taylor: Lessons in Discipleship*, p. 34, OMF International: 1995.

¹⁸ It is estimated that only about 26% of Christians worldwide claim to be “born again” (BeliefBits.com; <http://www.888c.com/WorldChristianDenominations.htm>, accessed July 15, 2020). In the United States, only about 41% of Christians claim to

be “born again” (Ryan Burge, “More Non-Evangelicals Are Calling Themselves Born Again”, *Christianity Today*, January 21, 2020; <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2020/january/us-born-again-rise-mainline-catholic-evangelical.html>, accessed July 15, 2020).

“When all has been heard, here is the conclusion of the matter: fear God and keep his commandments, for this applies to all mankind.” – King Solomon

Conclusion

If not this, then what? What other philosophical position provides more reasonable and consistent answers to all the issues of life? In comparison to the Bible which has been critically analyzed for centuries, no other philosophy can begin to stand up to equal scrutiny. Atheism and agnosticism, for example, don't provide satisfactory answers to life's most basic questions. Their philosophies may appear to be “intellectual” on the surface, but they are not intellectually honest in accounting for all the scientific facts.^{§3.4} Other religions may try to answer some of life's questions, but sometimes they are just plain wrong.^{§5.2.4} The myths and folklore of Shintoism, Hinduism, and Jainism, for example, may provide rich cultural traditions, but they have no basis in scientific fact. People can try to throw stones at the rational position presented here, but we can throw bigger stones at any other position. For example, no other religious tradition except for the Bible even comes close to satisfying the Objective Evaluation Criteria (OEC).^{§5.3} Not that every imaginable argument can be answered here, but this clearly is *the most rational conclusion given all of the available evidence*. Again, you are free to believe whatever you want, but as it has been demonstrated, these other positions are just not as rational. Even if you still want to disagree, it has at least been shown that becoming a follower of Jesus is a reasonable position and reasonable people believe it.

c.1 Empirical Livability

One of the original ground rules for rationality is that a philosophy must be able to pass the test of livability.^{§1.1.3} In this regard, no other philosophy can begin to approach the affect the Bible has had on civilization. This is not speculation, it is an empirical fact! Even atheist sociologist Jürgen Habermas admits:

“Universalistic egalitarianism, from which sprang the ideals of freedom and a collective life in solidarity, the autonomous conduct of life and emancipation, the individual morality of conscience, human rights and democracy, is the direct legacy of the Judaic ethic of justice and the Christian ethic of love. This legacy, substantially unchanged, has been the object of continual critical appropriation and reinterpretation. To this day, there is no alternative to it. And in light of the current challenges of

a postnational constellation, we continue to draw on the substance of this heritage. Everything else is just idle postmodern talk.”¹

While this is not proof of anything, it certainly provides persuasive evidence for a rationalist. In comparison, the empirical evidence for atheism is horrific. Would you rather live under the atheistic regimes of Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong, and Pol Pot? The atheists object to these pristine implementations of their philosophy, but where are their shining examples? And then consider the

“To this day, there is no alternative to it...Everything else is just idle postmodern talk.”

– Jürgen Habermas

livability of the other world religions. Would you want to live under the caste system of Hinduism where poor people starve because they refuse to eat their livestock, which they believe are reincarnated relatives? Or how

about the violent nature of Islam with its oppression of women and minorities? It is not that these tragedies result from poor implementations of these religions, for these policies are the direct result of their religious philosophies! Many third world nations have only made progress to the degree that they have been influenced by the western concepts of the Bible and have been able to move beyond many of the backwards elements of their own religions. If somehow the Bible were not true, it cannot be denied that it sure seems to make a great society to live in. Nothing else even seems to come close.

c.2 The Short Cut

There are many reasons why people become followers of Jesus and a pure intellectual approach is only one of them. As stated in the Introduction, most people are not rationalists and are not really seeking the truth at all. And even when they do, most people don’t seem to have the time to carefully wade through all of these issues. Yet some are still able to become rationalists through this long road using the intellectual approach. Former skeptics such as C.S. Lewis, Josh McDowell, Lee Strobel, and Francis Collins all entered the kingdom of Heaven kicking and screaming because they did not want to become followers of Jesus. Yet that is exactly where the evidence led them. You may have followed the logical argument all the way up to this point, but are you also willing to become a follower of Jesus?

The majority of those who become followers of Jesus, however, have arrived at their position much more simply – they just heard about Jesus and put their faith in him. It is not necessary for Grandma to receive a PhD in philosophy in order to believe in Jesus. This may come as a surprise, but the reality of the human condition is that most people do not respond to logical information like computers. Many who follow Jesus may not be especially intellectual, but their conclusion is simple:

“I asked Jesus to come into my life and have experienced a personal relationship with God. When I pray to Jesus, my prayers are answered. When I live according to the teachings of the Bible, my life improves. When I turn issues over to God and trust in him, everything else is taken care of. And I notice that a lot of other people who follow Jesus are having this exact same experience.”

This subjective response is not an intellectual conclusion, and other religions could try to claim the same thing, but the difference is that the substance of a faith in Jesus is objectively true whether they are aware of it or not. It seems that many people have a general awareness of God that is not particularly dependent on theistic arguments. Many are led to a belief in God just by observing his majesty in a beautiful mountain vista or the vastness of the stars. And if someone is privileged to observe the power of God displayed through signs and wonders where the sick are healed and the dead are raised, it does not take a lot of intelligence to come to a conclusion. **“For the kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power.”** (1Cor. 4:20) Some who stumble upon the truth by this “short cut” method may indeed be irrational Bible-thumpers who angrily yell at people, “Repent and believe in Jesus or you will go to Hell.” They may be misled about a good many things and manufacture all kinds of nonsensical arguments, but they have found the truth and they know that it is true! Their illogical approach may turn others off, but this does not mean it is not true. Your spouse may offer the most convoluted directions imaginable while you are driving, but you may still end up at your destination just the same. 😊

The truth is not diminished just because you don’t like how someone else arrived at it. Theologian John Piper maintains that you could also arrive at this same position by seeking to maximize personal pleasure as a hedonist.² It doesn’t really matter *how* you arrive at this position, because if you are truly born again then you will experience all the same advantages as the rationalist who followed the intellectual approach. It works, not because people have faith in something, but *because the object of their faith is real!* Perhaps it would have been more scholarly if Newton had first discovered the phenomena of gravity through a set of equations, but the objective fact is not voided because he discovered it by watching an apple fall to the ground. It doesn’t matter how the truth is discovered, as long as it is actually true. That is one of the beautiful things about the truth – it simply is! An intellectual may not appreciate the process of those who have utilized this “short cut”, but the end result will be the same. Everyone is able to **“Taste and see that the Lord is good.”** (Psa. 34:8).

c.3 Calculated Irrationality

The most rational position may not always *appear* to be rational to someone who is not aware of all of the available information. An atheist may initially scoff at the idea that following Jesus is the most rational position, for example, and yet now that it has been broken down into the logical components, the conclusion is

inescapable. Once you have arrived at this rational position, not everything you do will necessarily appear to be rational to others who don't understand the reasons why. Rationalists who follow Jesus' teachings will necessarily follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. **"If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit"** (Gal. 5:25). But the reason why God may lead you to do one thing or another may not necessarily be apparent to others, and indeed, you may not fully understand all of the reasons why yourself.

The problem with the original definition of rationality stated in the Introduction is that no human being necessarily ever has *all* the evidence on any given issue. But God does! Thus, it logically makes more sense to trust God even though it may not seem to make sense on the surface. God is not required to explain everything to you, but it is still rational for you to put your faith in him. **"Trust in the Lord with all you heart and do not lean on your own understanding."** (Prov. 3:5) Thus, *Christianity is not primarily informational but relational* as you are nurtured through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. There are some things that we simply cannot fathom with our limited human understanding. **"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."** (Isa. 55:9; cf. 1Cor. 1:20, 3:19) It is entirely rational to trust God implicitly since it has *already* been

"We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, for those who are called according to his purpose." – Paul of Tarsus

demonstrated that he is "reliable based on proven track record through what has been demonstrated in the past",^{§1.1,2} It is more intelligent to trust in God who is more intelligent than you! A child may not understand the reasons for everything his parents tell him either, but he may greatly benefit from obeying their

instructions nevertheless. God knows the future so he knows what will work out best for you, even more than you do. Following Jesus is not anti-intellectual, it is super-intellectual!

Rationalists tend to be very skeptical in nature and some reluctantly become followers of Jesus only after everything has been sufficiently proven to them. Of course, there may still be times when you are later tempted to doubt God, but the facts remain the facts. You can review the logical arguments any time you want, for the truth persists. Many once doubted the veracity of the Bible, for example, and yet it has held up to scrutiny on every point, time and time again. Because of this, the rationalist eventually learns to trust the Bible over time as it continues to be proven true in their lives. If a new question is raised about the reliability of the Bible, they remain confident that it will be answered soon because their own experiences have *repeatedly* confirmed the accuracy of the Bible in every area they have studied. A rationalist may initially come to believe in God based on the facts, but then he learns to put his faith in God and trust him based on the track record. The facts may indeed lead you to this door,^{§1.1,2} but now you must walk through that door. The truth will never let you down!

c.4 Moving Forward

And what now? If you have reached this point, you may have come a long way from where you originally started. You may be overwhelmed by the conclusion and be tempted to fall back to your previous position, but remember the evidence presented each step of the way. For example, an atheist may read the second chapter and agree that agnosticism is more logical, and then read the next chapter and admit that supernatural phenomena may indeed exist. He may intellectually accept the logic all the way to becoming a follower of Jesus. But then suddenly begins to doubt and wonder, “How did I get here?” and then is tempted to fall back to his atheist position because he was not *emotionally* ready to accept the truth. As British Statesman John Morley pointed out, “You have not converted a man because you have silenced him.”³ You may think you are a rationalist, but you are clearly not if you are not willing to follow it through to the logical conclusion. That would not be a problem with logic, but a problem with *pride*. Those who begin to doubt merely need to go over the record again. How was Bible prophecy able to accurately predict things hundreds of years in advance? Why does the Bible continue to hold up to the scrutiny of the historical and archaeological evidence? How did the “primitive” authors of the Bible write scientifically accurate statements thousands of years before the scientific community discovered them?

If you have truly become a follower of Jesus Christ, then you have only just begun a life-long *relationship* with him. Jesus is not a celestial calculator, but is a real person who wants to develop a loving relationship with you. As Blaise Pascal said, “The knowledge of God is very far from the love of Him.”⁴ Likewise, a rationalist may conclude that it would be logical for him to be married, but after he gets married it is not recommended that he try to run their relationship like a computer program. ☺ D.L. Moody has been credited with saying, “The Bible was not given for our information but for our transformation.” Spiritual disciplines such as prayer, meditation, reading the Bible, and meeting with other Christians are definitely helpful, but you must first learn to have spiritual fellowship in a personal relationship with Jesus. Once you are born again of the Spirit, you will automatically be a member of the Church, but as discussed in the sequel to this book this is probably not what you think.⁵ Committing your life to Jesus Christ is not the end of your journey, it is just the beginning!

¹ Jürgen Habermas, Cairan Cronin and Max Pensky ed., *Time of Transitions*, p. 150-151, Polity Press: Malden, MA, 2006.

² John Piper, “Conversion: The Creation of a Christian Hedonist”, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*, ch. 2, Multnomah Publishers, Inc.: Sisters, OR, 2003; http://cdn.desiringgod.org/pdf/books_bdg/bdg.pdf, accessed July 15, 2020.

³ John Morley, *On Compromise*, p. 246, MacMillan and Co.: London, 1886; <https://books.google.com/books?id=Yp8-AAAAYAAJ>, accessed July 15, 2020.

⁴ Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*, no. 280, Paris, 1670.

⁵ Alan Bunning, *The Church: According to the Bible*, 3rd edition, Lulu Press: Raleigh, NC, November 14, 2020.

Appendix A:

Religion Analysis

There are many religions which all claim to be true, and yet not all of them can simultaneously be true because they contradict each other in multiple ways.^{§5.2.3} The most rational way to assess these religions fairly is to use the Objective Evaluation Criteria (OEC), requiring that a rational religion must exhibit ancient origins, source reliability, internal consistency, external consistency, and supernatural knowledge.^{§5.2.4} Thus, no arguments will be made here about who has the better God or other types of invalid arguments that religions normally make against each other.^{§5.2.1} Also absent is any mention of the fraudulent or cultic techniques employed by many of these religions who attempt to coerce or brainwash their members.

The world's most popular religions with more than a million adherents are analyzed below, listing all the categories under each religion where it *fails* to meet the OEC. Some individuals may have their own personal deviations from a religion's teachings, but the religion must be evaluated using the religion's official scriptures. Some holy books contain poetic expressions which should not be interpreted as literal scientific statements, so only clear examples of errors are included which could not be reasonably explained away by poetic language. This list of deficiencies is by no means exhaustive and many more could certainly be added. Borrowing the sentiment of Groucho Marx, "These are my arguments; if you don't like them, I have others."¹ 😊 There are obviously many more religions than these, but they also fail the OEC in ways similar to the religions discussed below. This doesn't mean that these religions do not contain some truth or are not helpful to others, but simply that they are not credible choices for a rationalist. The goal of this book is not to disparage other religions, but merely to point out why they are not acceptable options for a rationalist.

A1. Baha'i

The Baha'i religion began in 1844 when businessman Mirza Ali Muhammad (later known as the Bab) announced that he was the forerunner to the Promised One who would be the next manifestation of God. Later in 1863, one of his followers, Mizra Husayn Ali (later known as Baha'u'llah), came to believe that he was that Promised One and declared himself to be the "Madhi" or the next Messiah. The writings of the Bab and Baha'u'llah are considered to be divine revelation making up the Baha'i scriptures. Baha'i teaches that people cannot know God directly, but only through these appointed messengers. Although Baha'i aspires to unite many different religions, the founders of Baha'i were primarily Muslims and the religious practices of Baha'i mostly consist of a westernized version of Islam.

- × ***Ancient Origins.*** Baha'i is a relatively new religion that has only been in existence since 1863. Although Baha'i claims to follow the God of Abraham, its radical divergence in doctrine from the historical documents of the Bible nullifies any claim to a continuing tradition of revelation.
- × ***Internal Consistency.*** Baha'i's claim to unite Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism creates numerous contradictions. For example, Baha'i's claim to follow the Abrahamic God of the Bible, yet many of their teachings directly contradict the original source documents of the Bible.^{§6.2.3} Baha'i cannot build on the historical tradition of the Bible if it claims that the Bible is wrong.
 - Baha'i teaches, "Was Christ within God, or God within Christ? No, in the name of God!"² but the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ claimed to be God (Matt. 26:63-64, John 5:17-18, 8:57-58, 10:24-33).
 - Baha'i teaches that "The Voice of God commanded [Abraham] to offer up Ishmael as a sacrifice",³ but the Bible teaches that Abraham offered Isaac up as a sacrifice (Gen. 22:1-19).
 - Baha'i teaches, "They therefore refused to acknowledge, even until now, the truth of those Manifestations of Holiness that have since the days of Jesus been made manifest."⁴ but the Bible teaches that Jesus would not appear again in that manner. (Matt. 24:23-27, Mark 13:21-22).
- × ***External Consistency.*** Baha'i's teaching that "His creation, likewise, hath had no beginning, and will have no end"⁵ contradicts the scientific fact that matter could not have always existed.^{§4.1}
- × ***Supernatural Knowledge.*** There are no verifiable examples of supernatural knowledge contained in their scriptures.

A2. Buddhism

Buddhism was founded around 540 BC by prince Siddharta Gautama (later known as the Buddha) who was allegedly conceived after his mother dreamed that she had sexual relations with a white elephant. After encountering the realities of poverty for the first time, Buddha had an epiphany which was summarized in three premises: existence is suffering, desire causes suffering, and eliminating all desire ends suffering. The primary Buddhist scripture is the Tripitaka (or Pali Canon) which supposedly contains the actual words of Buddha. Additional Buddhist scriptures vary greatly according to the different Buddhist sects such as Tibetan Buddhism and Zen Buddhism. While Buddhism may have seemed simple at first, it has evolved into a complex belief system including the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, Ten Commandments, Thirty-seven precepts of Arahatsip, etc.

- × ***Ancient Origins.*** Buddhism was not founded until around 540 BC, almost a millennium later than some of the other religions. Although Buddhism is sometime considered a branch of Hinduism, its radical divergence in doctrine nullifies any claim to a continuing tradition of revelation, becoming a single-source religion based solely on the writings of Siddharta Gautama.

- × **Source Reliability.** The Pali Canon accepted by all Buddhist sects is the only complete early scripture,⁶ but it was recited *orally* for more than 500 years before it was finally written down around 29 BC and thus the original teachings may have been distorted.
- × **Internal Consistency.** While Buddhism officially claims to be nontheistic, the Pali Canon mentions several deities such as Brahma Sanankumara, Baka-Brahma, and Brahma Sahampati.⁷ (If these deities actually exist, why are they no longer being acknowledged or worshipped as they once were?) Ironically, Buddha rejected the concept of God, only to be later worshipped as God by his followers who bow before his statue and pray to him!
- × **External Consistency.** The belief in reincarnation appears to be invalid based on the scientific evidence of near death experiences since none of the subjects ever assumed the body of another person or animal.^{§3.4.1}
- × **Supernatural Knowledge.** Buddhism is a nontheistic religion that does not espouse any particular divine revelation from God and thus it is nothing more than yet another philosophy of men. There are some unfilled future prophecies concerning the Maitreya, but no predictive prophecies have ever been fulfilled.

A3. Caodaism

Caodaism was founded in 1926 by Ngo Van Chieu who claimed to receive a message from God instructing him to become a prophet to establish a new religion. Caodaism is primarily a folk religion of the Vietnamese people rooted in Spiritism. One of the primary Caodaist scriptures is the Thanh Ngon Hiep Tuyen which contains messages from an entity called the Cao Dai that the leaders received through various séances. Caodaism is also a syncretistic religion which has borrowed various religious elements from Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, and even Catholicism.

- × **Ancient Origins.** Caodaism is a relatively new religion that has only been in existence since 1926. Although Caodaism has borrowed various religious elements from many different religions, it is not a historical extension of any of them.
- × **Internal Consistency.** The claim that “Cao Dai is a universal faith with the principle that all religions have one same divine origin, which is God, or Allah, or the Tao, or the Nothingness”⁸ is invalid since all those religions profoundly contradict each other.^{§5.2.3}
- × **External Consistency.** The belief in reincarnation appears to be invalid based on the scientific evidence of near death experiences since none of the subjects ever assumed the body of another person or animal.^{§3.4.1}
- × **Supernatural Knowledge.** There are no verifiable examples of supernatural knowledge contained in their scriptures.

A4. Christian Science

The origins of Christian Science began in 1862 when Mary Baker Glover Patterson sought treatment for some physical problems from Phineas Parkhurst Quimby who was a spiritual healer that used “mind over matter” techniques. While under his care, Mary began to develop a theory regarding diseases and their cures and eventually claimed to be healed. In 1866, Mary slipped on a sidewalk and fell on the ice but later again claimed to be healed after reading the Bible. She then wrote a book titled “Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures” which became the Christian Science scriptures. Mary divorced her husband in 1877 and was remarried for a third time to Asa Eddy, taking on the name Mary Baker Eddy. Christian Science greatly deviates from orthodox Christianity by claiming that sin, sickness, and death are all illusions. Consequently, numerous people have died as a result of refusing to seek medical treatment based on their Christian Science beliefs.

- × ***Ancient Origins.*** Christian Science is a relatively new religion that has only been in existence since 1879. Although Christian Science is sometime considered a branch of Christianity, its radical divergence from Biblical doctrine nullifies any claim to a continuing tradition, becoming a single-source religion based solely on the writings of Mary Baker Eddy.
- × ***Source Reliability.*** Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures went through more than four hundred revisions before Mary Baker Eddy died.⁹ There would be no reason for anyone to edit Mary Baker Eddy’s book if it had truly been divinely inspired.
- × ***Internal Consistency.*** Christian Science explicitly claims to follow the original source documents of the Bible,¹⁰ yet many of their teachings directly contradict the Bible.^{§6.2.3} Christian Science cannot build on the historical tradition of the Bible if it claims that the Bible is wrong.
 - Christian Science teaches that “There is no sin”,¹¹ but the Bible teaches that everyone has sinned (Rom. 3:23).
 - Christian Science teaches that “The Christ is incorporeal”,¹² but the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ had a body of flesh and blood (John 1:14; 1Jn. 2:22, 1Jn. 4:2-3, 2Jn. 1:7).
 - Christian Science teaches the notion “that there are good and evil spirits is a mistake”,¹³ but the Bible teaches that evil spirits exist (Judg. 9:23, 1Sam. 16:14-23, Luke 8:2, Acts 19:11-16).
- × ***External Consistency.*** In 1904, Mary Baker Eddy falsely prophesied, “...God has told me this much for you: At the end of this century, Christian Science will be the only universally acknowledged religion in the world...”¹⁴ Ironically, Christian Science is not very scientific at all as they contend that physical existence is “An error of physical belief; a supposition that life, substance, and intelligence are in matter; an illusion...”¹⁵
- × ***Supernatural Knowledge.*** There are no verifiable examples of supernatural knowledge contained in their scriptures.

A5. Confucianism

Confucianism was founded around 500 BC by a Chinese philosopher named Confucius who taught a form of humanism that emphasized a system of ethical-sociopolitical teachings. Confucian scriptures consist of the Five Classics which were allegedly written or edited by Confucius himself. Over a millennium later, the Four Books were added to Confucianism by Zhu Xi during the Song Dynasty. Confucian teachings are rooted in Chinese traditions, ancestral worship, and social virtues. Confucianism was the official state ideology of China until it was later supplanted by communism.

- × ***Ancient Origins.*** Confucianism was not founded until around 500 BC, almost a millennium later than some of the other religions. Confucianism is a single-source religion based on the writings of Confucius without any historical tradition of revelation.
- × ***Source Reliability.*** The writings that have been attributed to Confucius were not compiled until many years after his death and it has not been demonstrated that any of them were actually authored by Confucius.
- × ***Supernatural Knowledge.*** Confucianism is a nontheistic religion that does not espouse any particular divine revelation from God and thus it is nothing more than yet another philosophy of men. Consequently, there are no verifiable examples of supernatural knowledge contained in their scriptures.

A6. Falun Gong

Falun Gong was founded by Li Hongzhi in 1992 as a combination of meditation, exercises, and moral philosophy. Falun Gong's scriptures consist of the writings of Li Hongzhi which advocate practices to cultivate a person's inner energy. Falun Gong incorporates several religious elements from Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism.

- × ***Ancient Origins.*** Falun Gong is a relatively new religion which has only been in existence since 1992. Falun Gong is a single-source religion based on the writings of Li Hongzhi without any historical tradition of revelation.
- × ***Supernatural Knowledge.*** Falun Gong is a nontheistic religion that does not espouse any particular divine revelation from God and thus it is nothing more than yet another philosophy of men. Consequently, there are no verifiable examples of supernatural knowledge contained in their scriptures.

A7. Gnosticism

Gnosticism supposedly originated with a sorcerer named Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-24) from the beginnings of Christianity and the heretical sect was directly condemned in New Testament books such as Colossians and 1st John. Gnosticism derives its name from the Greek word for knowledge "ΓΝΩΣΙΣ" and claims that

Jesus was a mystical ascetic who taught his followers through “secret knowledge”. Modern Gnostic teachings vary greatly based on a number of pseudepigraphal writings, mostly originating in the 4th century BC such as the Gospel of Thomas and others contained in the Nag Hammadi library.

- × **Source Reliability.** Most of the Gnostic writings are pseudepigraphal in nature without any legitimate historicity.^{§6.2.2}
- × **Internal Consistency.** Gnosticism claims to follow the Abrahamic God, yet many of their teachings directly contradict the original source documents of the Bible.^{§6.2.3} Gnosticism cannot build on the historical tradition of the Bible if it claims that the Bible is wrong.
 - Gnosticism teaches that spirituality can only be understood by “secret knowledge”, but the Bible teaches that God’s will is plainly revealed (Duet. 29:29, Psa. 98:2, John 18:20, 2Cor. 1:13, 1Tim. 6:20-21).
 - Gnosticism teaches that Jesus Christ was only a spiritual being without a physical body, but the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ was flesh and blood (John 1:14; 1Jn. 2:22, 1Jn. 4:2-3, 2Jn. 1:7).
 - Gnosticism teaches a form of dualism where there are equal good and evil gods opposed to each other, but the Bible teaches that God is supreme and Satan is only a created being (Job 1:6, Isa. 14:12-14, Ezek. 28:15, Luke 10:18).
- × **Supernatural Knowledge.** Gnosticism does not believe in a God which exhibits the previously determined characteristics of the Scientific God.^{§4.5} Consequently, there are no verifiable examples of supernatural knowledge contained in their scriptures.

A8. Hare Krishna

Hare Krishna is basically a branch of Hinduism founded by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu who taught that Krishna alone is the supreme Lord above every other god, and that Chaitanya himself was the incarnation of Krishna. The Hare Krishna’s primary scripture is the Bhagavad Gita although other Hindu texts are also consulted. The religion was later brought to America by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada who founded the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). The Hare Krishnas are known for their ecstatic devotion expressed in dance and song, and selling flowers in the airports.

- × **Ancient Origins.** Hare Krishna is a relatively new religion which has only been in existence since about 1510 and popularized in America in 1965. Although it is normally considered a Hindu sect, the Hare Krishnas themselves deny that they are part of the Hindu religion.
- × **External Consistency.** Since the Hare Krishnas have borrowed many of Hinduism writings and teachings, they suffer from some of the same scientific inaccuracies discussed below in Hinduism.
- × **Supernatural Knowledge.** There are no verifiable examples of supernatural knowledge contained in their scriptures.

A9. Hinduism

Hinduism is an ancient folk religion of India founded around 1500 BC. The Vedas are the most sacred of the Hindu scriptures recorded in about 1000 BC, followed by the Upanishads and Puranas and many other writings. Various forms of Hinduism include animism, polytheistic idol worship, and later pantheism and monism. In order to accommodate so many different religious practices and traditions, Hinduism tries to be inclusive of all religions. The Hindus' beliefs in karma and reincarnation have often been blamed for India's mass starvation because they feed precious grain to their rats and let their cows roam free.

- × ***Internal Consistency.*** There are thousands of contradictions among the various Hindu writings and not every sect accepts the same scriptures. For example, different texts they use do not agree on whether pantheism, monotheism, or polytheism is correct. The later writings of the Puranas and Upanishads contain a wealth of contradictions when compared to the Vedic scriptures. Most Hindus, however, don't care because you can believe almost anything you want and still be considered a Hindu.
- × ***External Consistency.*** The mythological nature of Hindu writings is abundant throughout its writings. In the area of astronomy, Hinduism repeatedly teaches that the sun is pulled across the sky by a chariot and horses¹⁶ and then is joined with water.¹⁷ This is its technical description: "The chariot of the sun is nine thousand leagues in length, and the pole is of twice that longitude; the axle is fifteen millions and seven hundred thousand leagues long; on which is fixed a wheel with three naves, five spokes, and six peripheries..."¹⁸ Hinduism teaches that there are twelve moons,¹⁹ the moon generates its own light,²⁰ and a bull lives "in the mansion on the Moon".²¹ This is its technical description: "The chariot of the moon has three wheels, and is drawn by ten horses, of the whiteness of the Jasmine, five on the right half (of the yoke), five on the left."²² Hinduism denies scientific reality when it declares that the world is only an illusion which they call "Maya". The belief in reincarnation appears to be invalid based on the scientific evidence of near death experiences since none of the subjects ever assumed the body of another person or animal.^{§3.4.1}
- × ***Supernatural Knowledge.*** There are no verifiable examples of supernatural knowledge contained in their scriptures.

A10. Islam

Islam was founded in 622 AD by Ubu'l Kassim (later known as Mohammed) who considered himself to be the next major prophet after Jesus Christ. Mohammed claimed to receive revelation piecemeal from the angel Gabriel over a 23 year period from 610-632 AD,²³ which became the Muslims' scripture known as the Qur'an. The religion of Islam was primarily spread by conquest as the Qur'an contains at least 109 verses that call Muslims to war against nonbelievers.

For example, “Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the [Bible], until they pay the Jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.”²⁴ Consequently, there is no freedom of religion under true Islamic regimes. Islam teaches that those who kill unbelievers as part of a Jihad will be given a greater reward in Heaven.²⁵

- × ***Ancient Origins.*** Although Islam claims to follow the God of Abraham, its radical divergence from the historical documents of the Bible in 622 AD nullifies any claim to a continuing tradition of revelation (Sura 4:47), becoming a single-source religion based solely on the writings of Mohammed.
- × ***Source Reliability.*** The Qur’an has rewritten numerous Biblical accounts thousands of years after the fact without any historical manuscript support whatsoever. The Qur’an was first collected into a single work after Mohammed’s death by the first Caliph Abu Bakr. Different versions of the Qur’an, however, began to surface and so one standardized edition was created and all other versions were supposedly destroyed in what became known as the “Uthmanic recension”. Thus, there is no guarantee that the original words of the Qur’an have been preserved. It has been noted that since then, different written versions of the Qur’an have varied “enormously in materials, format and aspect”.²⁶ In 1972, over 14,000 fragments of the Qur’an were recovered in the mosque in Sana’a, Yemen, making them the oldest Qur’ans in existence. These fragments contained “small but intriguing aberrations from the standard Koranic text” revealing “unconventional verse orderings” and “minor textual variations”.²⁷ Since the Qur’an has demonstratively been altered, there are now attempts being made to recover the original Qur’an through textual criticism.
- × ***Internal Consistency.*** The Qur’an claims to follow the Abrahamic God and repeatedly endorses the Bible,²⁸ yet many of its teachings directly contradict the original source documents of the Bible.^{§6.2.3} Islam cannot build on the historical tradition of the Bible if it claims that the Bible is wrong.
 - Islam teaches that Abraham sacrificed Ishmael who was the promised child,²⁹ but the Bible teaches that Abraham sacrificed Isaac who was the promised child (Gen. 17:15-22).
 - Islam teaches that Jesus did not actually die on the cross,³⁰ but the Bible teaches that Jesus died on the cross (Matt. 27:35-38, Mark 15:24-27, Luke 23:33; John 19:18).
- × ***External Consistency.*** The Qur’an claims that Zul-Qarnain followed the sun and “when he reached the setting of the sun, he found it setting in a spring of dark mud”.³¹ The sun is also repeatedly depicted as “floating in an orbit” around the earth.³² The inheritance allotment if a man dies and leaves behind a wife, three daughters, and his two parents should add up to 100 percent, but instead it adds to 125 percent.³³ In the area of prophecy, Mohammed falsely prophesied that Medina (Yathrib) would be in ruins and the Antichrist (Dajjal) would appear seven years after the conquest of Constantinople which

occurred in 1453.³⁴ Mohammed also falsely prophesied the end of the world saying, “Nobody present on the surface of the earth tonight will be living after the completion of one hundred years from this night.”³⁵ If this prophecy is unimpressively reinterpreted to mean that everyone at that time would die within 100 years, it would still be false for Abu Afak lived for 120 years.³⁶

- × ***Supernatural Knowledge.*** There are no verifiable examples of supernatural knowledge contained in their scriptures. Subsequent claims to have found vague scientific references in the Qur’an after the fact are not credible. There are also no prophecies in the Qur’an that would satisfy Krueger’s criteria.^{35,24}

A11. Jainism

Jainism was founded around 550 BC by Vardhamana (known as Mahavira) who was the son of a ruler in northeast India. Mahavira was the 24th and last of the Tirthankara which are spiritual gurus who claimed to achieve enlightenment. Mahavira’s teachings were transmitted orally and later written down into Agamas which are the Jain’s primary scriptures. Jainism borrows many teachings from Hinduism and later Buddhism and advocates non-violence toward all living things for they claim that every living thing has a soul (including plants). Remarkably, many Jains still hold that the earth is flat because that is what their scriptures teach.

- × ***Ancient Origins.*** Jainism was not founded until around 550 BC, almost a millennium later than some of the other religions.
- × ***Source Reliability.*** Mahavira’s teachings were transmitted orally for several hundred years before they were later written down in the Agamas.
- × ***External Consistency.*** Jain scriptures contain many fictional myths including that the earth is flat³⁷ and has two suns which revolve around the earth.³⁸ Jainism depicts a strange cosmology which among other things claims that the universe is arranged in the shape of a man: “Think of this loka [universe] as similar to man standing akimbo...”³⁹
- × ***Supernatural Knowledge.*** Jainism does not believe in a sentient God which exhibits the creative characteristic of the Scientific God.^{34,5} Consequently, there are no verifiable examples of supernatural knowledge contained in their scriptures.

A12. Jehovah’s Witnesses

The Jehovah’s Witnesses emerged in 1879 through a Bible study led by Charles Taze Russell. Russell’s teachings departed from orthodox Christianity by denying the deity of Jesus Christ, the Trinity, and the existence of Hell. The Jehovah’s Witnesses’ official beliefs are based on the teachings of the Watchtower Bible and Track Society and their own Bible version called the “New World Translation”. Jehovah’s Witnesses’ literature is often apocalyptic in nature describing the destruction of the world at Armageddon and claiming that only

exactly 144,000 will make it to Heaven (and all of those slots are already filled by former Jehovah's Witnesses).

- × ***Ancient Origins.*** Although the Jehovah's Witnesses' religion is sometime considered a branch of Christianity, its radical divergence from Biblical doctrine in 1879 nullifies any claim to a continuing tradition of revelation, becoming a single-source religion based solely on the writings of Charles Russell.
- × ***Source Reliability.*** The Jehovah's Witnesses have created their own erroneous translation of the Bible called the New World Translation which is not an honest translation, but has altered the meaning of the text to conform to their own doctrinal bias. This can be easily confirmed as their version repeatedly contradicts the united testimony of virtually all other Bible translations. For example, the start of the book of Genesis states that "the Spirit of God" was moving over the surface of the waters (Gen. 1:2). But the New World Translation has mistranslated the text to read "God's active force" because they want to deny that the Holy Spirit is part of the triune God. It also mistranslates the book of John to read "the Word was a god" instead of "the Word was God" (John 1:1), because they want to deny that the Word, who is Jesus Christ (John 1:14), is part of the triune God.
- × ***Internal Consistency.*** The Jehovah's Witnesses claim to follow the Bible, yet many of the teachings of the Watchtower Society directly contradict the Bible. The Jehovah's Witnesses' religion cannot build on the historical tradition of the Bible if it claims that the Bible is wrong.
 - Jehovah's Witnesses teach that Jesus was resurrected as "an invisible spirit creature"⁴⁰, but the Bible teaches that Jesus was *bodily* raised from the dead (Luke 24:36-43, John 2:18-21, 20:26-29, Acts 2:23-32).
 - Jehovah's Witnesses teach that Jesus is "not the Almighty God"⁴¹, but the Bible teaches that Jesus is the Almighty God (Isa. 9:6, John 5:17-18, 8:57-58, 10:24-33).
 - Jehovah's Witnesses teach that the Holy Spirit is "not a person" of the Trinity but only an impersonal force⁴², but the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit is part of the triune God (Gen. 1:2, Job 33:4, Psa. 106:33, Matt. 28:19, John 14:26, Acts 5:3-4, Rom. 8:26, 1Cor. 2:11).^{§6.4}
- × ***External Consistency.*** In 1943, the Watchtower Society claimed, "Man cannot by airplane or rockets or other means get above the air envelop which is about our earthly globe..."⁴³ The multitude of false prophecies by Charles Russell and the Watchtower Society is well known, so here are a few of their failed end of the world prophecies documented in their official publications:
 - **1874** – "The second advent of our Lord in the end or harvest of the Gospel age, occurring in the fall of 1874, proves to be at a point of time exactly parallel to the time of his first advent, in the end of the Jewish age."⁴⁴
 - **1878** – "...and to April 1878 as the time when he began to exercise his office of King of kings and Lord of lords .."⁴⁵ "...the resurrection of his body, the Church, we have seen, was due in the year 1878..."⁴⁶

- **1881** – “...the gathering of the bride into the place of safety, will occupy a parallel of seven years of time, ending in 1881.”⁴⁷
- **1914** – “The prophecy of the Bible, fully supported by the physical facts in fulfillment thereof, shows that the second coming of Christ dates from the fall of the year 1914.”⁴⁸
- **1915** – “In view of this strong Bible evidence concerning the Times of the Gentiles, we consider it an established truth that the final end of the kingdoms of this world, and the full establishment of the Kingdom of God, will be accomplished near the end of A.D. 1915.”⁴⁹
- **1918** – “The end of the harvest is due in the spring of 1918.”⁵⁰ “Also, in the year 1918, when God destroys the churches wholesale and the church members by millions...”⁵¹
- **1920** – “Even the republics will disappear in the fall of 1920.”⁵² (Note that after this prophecy failed to come true, the editions published after 1918 were edited to remove the references to the year 1920.)
- **1925** – “They [elected elders] had preached that in an early time God would overthrow ‘Christendom’. Many had emphasized the year 1925 as the date, and then when that date did not materialize the date was moved up to 1932.”⁵³
- **1935** – “Logically, the calling of the little flock would draw to a close when the number was nearing completion, and the evidence is that the general gathering of these specially blessed ones ended in 1935.”⁵⁴
- **1975** – “Bible chronology which indicates that Adam was created in the fall of the year 4026 B.C.E. would bring us down to the year 1975 C.E. as the date marking 6,000 years of human history with yet 1,000 years to come for Christ’s Kingdom rule.”⁵⁵

× ***Supernatural Knowledge.*** There are no verifiable examples of supernatural knowledge contained in their writings.

A13. Judaism

Judaism considers its roots to be synonymous with Biblical history starting around 4000 BC, but it was not founded as a distinct religion until about 1400 BC by Moses. The Jewish Scriptures are called the Tanakh (the Old Testament of the Bible) which contains the Torah (books of the Law) as well as the writings of the prophets. Judaism originally demonstrated a millennium of historical tradition, but has received no further divine revelation since about 400 BC. Judaism is based on a system of laws that Moses received from God on Mount Sinai which includes the Ten Commandments and requires animal sacrifices for the atonement of sin. Jewish prophesies specify that a Messiah will later come and conquer all of their enemies and usher in a New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34, 32:37-41, 50:4-5, Ezek. 16:60-63, 20:33-38, 34:25-30, 37:24-28, Hos. 2:16-23, Zech. 9:9-17, Mal. 3:1-4) with the nation of Israel.

× ***Internal Consistency.*** The Judaic Law requires animal sacrifices to be made at their prescribed temple (Deut. 12: 5-14). Since the Jewish temple was destroyed

in 70 AD, there have been no sacrifices for their sins. In addition, all of their religious holidays such as the Passover are no longer valid which require the use of their temple. As a result, modern Judaism has sought to completely *redefine* itself in its literature which ignores their laws regarding the temple and advocates the use of synagogues instead. Of course, the Jews may pray to God and ask for forgiveness (Hos. 14:2-3, Psa. 51:17), but the requirements of the Law are absolute and cannot be changed (Lev. 26:14-18, Deut. 28:15-63).

- × **External Consistency.** Daniel's prophecy specifies that the Messiah would have to come before Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed in 70 AD (Dan. 9:24-26), and thus unless Jesus Christ, or some other person can be identified as the Messiah, this would constitute a false prophesy.^{86.3.2} On the other hand, if Jesus Christ is accepted as the Messiah, then this would mean that the Jews would need to become Christians.

A14. Mormonism

Mormonism was founded in the 1820's by Joseph Smith who believed that all Christian churches were wrong and sought to establish the one true church. An angel named Moroni supposedly appeared to Joseph and told him about a book written on golden plates. Joseph retrieved the golden plates and translated them from hieroglyphics written in "reformed Egyptian" which became the Book of Mormon. Mormonism deviates greatly from Christian orthodoxy by claiming that Jesus and Satan were brothers, Yahweh was once a man from another planet, everyone pre-existed as spirit babies, and the denial of the Trinity. Mormonism is also well known for its endorsement of polygamy, in spite of the fact that it is illegal in many countries.

- × **Ancient Origins.** Although Mormonism is sometime considered a branch of Christianity, its radical divergence from Biblical doctrine in the 1820's nullifies any claim to a continuing tradition of revelation, becoming a single-source religion based solely on the writings of Joseph Smith.
- × **Source Reliability.** Parts of the Book of Mormon were plagiarized from the following sources without giving attribution to the authors: "The Wonder of Nature and Providence Displayed", "A View of the Hebrews", "Westminster Confession", and the "King James Bible".⁵⁶ There are no original golden tablets to examine from which the Book of Mormon was allegedly translated. The original Book of Mormon was significantly altered in subsequent editions: "Then through a series of photocopies taken from the 1830, 1975, and 1981 editions of the Book of Mormon, the dishonesty of the Mormon church is demonstrated by showing some of the over 4,000 changes which have been made."⁵⁷ There would be no reason to alter the doctrines of the Book of Mormon if it had truly been divinely inspired.⁵⁸ For example, the Book of Mormon originally stated that blacks who were saved would become "white", but due to societal pressure over racism, the church altered the Book of Mormon in 1981 to say that they would become "pure".⁵⁹ None of these

alterations can be excused by translation problems since the text was already written in English!

- × ***Internal Consistency.*** The Mormons claim to follow the original source documents of the Bible, yet many of their teachings directly contradict the Bible.^{60,61} Mormonism cannot build on the historical tradition of the Bible if it claims that the Bible is wrong.
 - Mormonism teaches that Jesus and Satan were brothers,^{60,61} but the Bible teaches that Jesus was God’s only begotten son (John 1:14,18, 3:16,18, Heb. 11:17, 1Jn. 4:9).
 - Mormonism teaches Enoch was “430 years old when he was translated”,⁶² but the Bible teaches that Enoch lived a total of 365 years (Gen. 5:23).
 - Mormonism teaches that Jesus was “born of Mary, at Jerusalem”,⁶³ but the Bible teaches that Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:1).

- × ***External Consistency.*** Many historical statements in the Book of Mormon have proven to be entirely incorrect. The Smithsonian Institution concluded: “Reports of findings of ancient Egyptian, Hebrew, and other Old World writings in the New World in pre-Columbian contexts have frequently appeared in newspapers, magazines, and sensational books. None of these claims has stood up to examination by reputable scholars.”⁶⁴ The Book of Mormon simply cannot compare to the historicity of the Bible: “While there continues to be mounting evidence for the historicity of the biblical record, the Book of Mormon is still seeking that first authenticated scrap of evidence. The Bible contains names of cities, rivers, nations, etc. -- nearly all of which have been proven archaeologically to have existed. However, while the Book of Mormon contains names of cities, rivers and nations, none have ever been found.”⁶⁵ In the area of prophecy, Joseph Smith prophesied in 1832 that a temple would be built in Independence, Missouri *during his generation*,⁶⁶ but it was not fulfilled. In 1838, Joseph Smith prophesied that David Patten would go on a mission trip in the spring of 1939,⁶⁷ but it didn’t occur because David Patten died in the fall of 1938.

- × ***Supernatural Knowledge.*** It is not entirely clear where the source of Joseph Smith’s revelations actually came from since the Mormon’s own newspaper admitted that he was a spiritualist and a well-known medium.⁶⁸ In fact, just before the Book of Mormon was written, Joseph Smith was found guilty of “glass looking” in the case of the “People of the State of New York vs. Joseph Smith” in 1836.⁶⁹ During his trial, it was documented how he would use divination to defraud others out of their money by using a certain stone to look for buried treasure.⁷⁰ Consequently, there are no verifiable examples of supernatural knowledge contained in their scriptures.

A15. Neopaganism

Neopaganism represents a class of new religious movements including Wicca and neo-Druidism which are mainly modern reconstructions of various pagan

beliefs held in ancient Europe. The earliest of these is probably neo-Druidism which was established in Britain in 1792 by Iolo Morganwg, but the popularly recognized forms of Neopaganism did not coalesce until the 1960's in the United States. Neopaganism does not have any definitive scriptures, but attempts to draw on the historical folklore, festivals, and traditions of these defunct pagan practices and recreate them into modern religious expressions. Many of the adherents do not actually take these religions seriously, but merely enjoy reconstructing the historical traditions and celebrating the cultural heritage.

- × ***Ancient Origins.*** Although they claim to follow ancient traditions, Neopaganism in its current form is a relatively new religion which has only been in existence since 1792 with the emergence of neo-Druidism. There was no ongoing historical tradition linking any of the ancient pagan religions to the reconstructed practices of modern Neopaganism today.
- × ***Source Reliability.*** There is no definitive scripture claiming to come from God, so there is no source to objectively evaluate.
- × ***Internal Consistency.*** Adherents can believe whatever they want and thus contradictions are abundant throughout their literature. For example, some believe in one Supreme Being, some believe in dualism, some believe there are many gods, and some believe that nature is God.
- × ***External Consistency.*** Their belief in reincarnation appears to be invalid based on the scientific evidence of near death experiences since none of the subjects ever assumed the body of another person or animal.^{§3.4.1}
- × ***Supernatural Knowledge.*** There are no verifiable examples of supernatural knowledge contained in their various writings.

A16. New Age

The New Age movement finds its roots in Spiritualism and is often linked to the Theosophy Society founded in 1875 by Helena Blavatsky. The New Age movement utilizes many different writings and does not have any definitive scripture, but the book "A Course in Miracles" written by Helen Schucman's in 1975 is probably their most prominent text. New Agers draw upon a smorgasbord of Eastern and Western religions, extracting elements from Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity, Gnosticism, Neopaganism, Spiritualism, and Universalism. Forms of theism include atheism, monotheism, pantheism, panentheism, and polytheism, along with those who popularly declare "I am god." New Age practices include holistic health, crystal healing, yoga, parapsychology, mediums, astrology, out of body experiences, etc.

- × ***Ancient Origins.*** New Age is relatively new religion which has only been in existence since about 1875.
- × ***Source Reliability.*** There is no definitive scripture claiming to come from God, so there is no source to objectively evaluate.
- × ***Internal Consistency.*** Individuals can essentially believe whatever they want and thus contradictions are abundant throughout their literature.

- × *External Consistency.* The belief in reincarnation appears to be invalid based on the scientific evidence of near death experiences since none of the subjects ever assumed the body of another person or animal.^{§3.4.1}
- × *Supernatural Knowledge.* There are no verifiable examples of supernatural knowledge contained in their various writings.

A17. Rastafarianism

The Rastafarian movement was founded in Jamaica in the 1920's based on the teachings of Marcus Garvey and later popularized by the reggae music of Bob Marley in the 1970's. The Rastafarians' primary scripture is the Holy Piby (also known as the "Black Man's Bible") written by Robert Athlyi Rogers in 1924 which reinterprets several Biblical passages. Rastafarians believe that Ras Tafari (later known as Haile Selassie I who became the Emperor of Ethiopia) was God incarnate or the second coming of Jesus Christ. Rastafarians are an unorthodox offshoot of Christianity and are known for their Afrocentric politics, anti-white racism, rejection of western society, and smoking marijuana.

- × *Ancient Origins.* Rastafarianism is relatively new religion which has only been in existence since the 1920's. Although Rastafarianism is sometime considered a branch of Christianity, its radical divergence from Biblical doctrine nullifies any claim to a continuing tradition of revelation.
- × *Source Reliability.* The Holy Piby or "Black Man's Bible" was allegedly translated from Amharic and is claimed by many Rastas as a primary religious text. The Holy Piby was not published by Robert Athlyi Rogers until 1924 and it rewrites many stories of the Bible thousands of years after the fact.
- × *Internal Consistency.* The Rastas claim to follow the original source documents of the Bible, yet many of their teachings directly contradict the Bible. Rastafarianism cannot build on the historical tradition of the Bible if it claims that the Bible is wrong.
 - Rastafarianism teaches that Haile Selassie I, the emperor of Ethiopia from 1930 to 1974, is the manifestation of Jesus Christ, but the Bible teaches that Jesus would not appear again in that manner (Matt. 24:23-27, Mark 13:21-22).
 - Rastafarianism teaches that smoking marijuana is a spiritual sacrament that will bring you closer to God, but the Bible teaches believers to maintain sobriety (2Tim. 4:5, Tit. 2:12, 1Pet. 1:13).
- × *Supernatural Knowledge.* There are no verifiable examples of supernatural knowledge contained in their scriptures.

A18. Satanism

Satanism represents a group of religions which give admiration to the Biblical character called Satan. The most popular of these was founded by Anton

LaVey who established the Church of Satan in 1966. Their scripture primarily consists of the Satanic Bible written by LaVey in 1969 which extols the virtues of self-determination. Some Satanists are actually atheists who merely view Satan as a character to admire and base their teachings on individualism and a selfish form of morality. Other Satanists believe that Satan is an actual deity who they worship.

- × ***Ancient Origins.*** Satanism is a relatively new religion which has only been in existence since about 1966 with the founding of the Church of Satan. Satanism is essentially a single-source religion based on the writings of Anton LaVey without any historical tradition of revelation.
- × ***Internal Consistency.*** The very concept of Satan originally came directly from the Bible, and yet Satanists deny the teachings of the Bible concerning Satan and his ultimate fate.
- × ***Supernatural Knowledge.*** Satanism does not believe in a God which exhibits the previously determined characteristics of the Scientific God.^{§4.5} Consequently, there are no verifiable examples of supernatural knowledge contained in their scriptures.

A19. Scientology

Scientology was founded in 1953 by science fiction author L. Ron Hubbard. Scientology's scripture consists of the various writings of Hubbard such as his book "Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health". Scientologists believe that humans are descended from a race of omnipotent gods called the Thetans and that happiness can be achieved by working through emotional hang ups and traumatic experiences that occurred in their past lives. Scientology was originally intended to provide a therapeutic answer to the modern practices of psychology, but later reclassified itself as a religion and is well known for its many lawsuits defending its religious status.

- × ***Ancient Origins.*** Scientology is a relatively new religion which has only been in existence since 1966. Scientology is a single-source religion based on the writings of L. Ron Hubbard without any historical tradition of revelation.
- × ***Internal Consistency.*** The claim that "Scientology does not conflict with other religions or other religious practices"⁷¹ is invalid since they directly contradict several other religions.^{§5.2.3} In particular, Scientologists claim they "hold the Bible as a holy work, and have no argument with the Christian belief that Jesus Christ was the Savior of Mankind and the Son of God"⁷² and yet many of their teachings directly contradict the Bible.
 - Scientology teaches that "There are probably many types of redemption"⁷³, but in the Bible, Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)
 - Scientology teaches that "There are gods above all other gods, and gods beyond the gods of the universes"⁷⁴, but the Bible teaches that there is only one God (Deut. 6:4, Mark 12:29,32, 1Cor. 8:4).

- Scientology teaches that “Man is basically good”⁷⁵, but the Bible teaches that Man is basically sinful (Rom. 3:10-12,23).
- × **External Consistency.** The belief that the Thetan is reincarnated into other bodies⁷⁶ appears to be invalid based on the scientific evidence of near death experiences since none of the subjects ever assumed the body of another person or animal.^{§3.4.1}
- × **Supernatural Knowledge.** Scientology makes no claim to divine revelation from God and thus is nothing more than yet another philosophy of men. Consequently, there are no verifiable examples of supernatural knowledge contained in their scriptures.

A20. Shintoism

The Shinto religion is a diverse collection of ancient folklore, history, and mythology of the indigenous people of Japan that coalesced around 500 BC. Shinto’s sacred texts consist of the Kojiki and the Nihon Shoki which contain a collection of various myths and history. Shintoism believes in Kami which are animistic, ancestral, and natural spirits and it also borrows many teachings from Buddhism.

- × **Ancient Origins.** Shintoism was not founded until around 500 BC, almost a millennium later than some of the other religions.
- × **Source Reliability.** Shinto teachings were transmitted orally for more than 1,200 years until they were finally written down in the 8th century AD.
- × **External Consistency.** The Shinto religion is primarily an accumulation of Japanese folklore and mythology.⁷⁷ For example, Shinto teaches that Izanagi and Izanami created the sun and moon by “the washing of their eyes”.⁷⁸ They stirred the ocean with the end of a spear until it curdled and when they pulled it out drops fell from the spear forming an island.⁷⁹ They later gave birth to eight children which became the Japanese islands.⁸⁰
- × **Supernatural Knowledge.** Shinto does not believe in a God which exhibits the previously determined characteristics of the Scientific God.^{§4.5} Consequently, there are no verifiable examples of supernatural knowledge contained in their scriptures.

A21. Sikhism

Sikhism is a monotheistic religion of India that was founded around 1499 based on the teachings of Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji. The Sikh scripture consists of the Guru Granth Sahib which is a collection of the Gurus’ teachings compiled in 1678 by Guru Gobind Singh. Sikhs believe that God is unknowable but enlightenment can be increased through meditation. Sikhism shares many beliefs with Hinduism, but rejects India’s caste system and Hinduism’s idol worship.

- × *Ancient Origins*. Sikhism is a relatively new religion which has only been in existence since about 1499.
- × *Source Reliability*. It has been reliably proven by Professor Sahib Singh that the original source documents of the Guru Granth Sahib were altered with the cooperation of some corrupt Sikhs.⁸¹ Still today, “Questions have been raised by Sikhs and non-Sikhs alike as to what was actually the Original Holy Book...The fanciful imaginary stories given in the history books, written centuries after the actual compilation of the Holy Book, made the position worse confounded.”⁸²
- × *Internal Consistency*. The ten different authors of the Guru Granth Sahib contradict themselves in many areas. In one place it teaches “Except the Word of the Guru, all other word is false”⁸³ but later it teaches “Do not say that the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran are false.”⁸⁴ The Guru Granth Sahib also contradicts itself regarding the afterlife as it teaches reincarnation,⁸⁵ Heaven and Hell,⁸⁶ and then rejects both Heaven and Hell.⁸⁷
- × *External Consistency*. Similar to Hinduism, the Guru Granth Sahib teaches that a bull “patiently holds the earth in its place”.⁸⁸ It teaches that “The sun and moon dwell in the same home in the sky”⁸⁹ and it places “the moon above the sun.”⁹⁰ It repeatedly claims that the moon generates its own light with statements such as, “The sun and the moon are the two lamps which shine”.⁹¹ It also denies reality claiming that “this world is nothing more than a dream”.⁹² The Sikh’s belief in reincarnation appears to be invalid based on the scientific evidence of near death experiences since none of the subjects ever assumed the body of another person or animal.^{§3.4.1}
- × *Supernatural Knowledge*. There are no verifiable examples of supernatural knowledge contained in their scriptures.

A22. Spiritualism/Spiritism

Spiritualism is a form of Spiritism that originated in the United States around 1845 based on the writings Andrew Jackson Davis who is usually considered its founder. The religious practices of Spiritualism range from the worship of ancestral spirit beings to communicating with the dead through séances. Mediums and psychics are often consulted to channel spirit beings that pass messages between the dead and the living. Religious beliefs regarding paranormal activities vary widely and are often associated with the New Age movement.

- × *Ancient Origins*. Spiritualism is relatively new religion which has only been in existence since about 1845.
- × *Source Reliability*. There is no definitive scripture claiming to come from God, so there is no source to objectively evaluate.
- × *Internal Consistency*. Individuals essentially believe whatever they want about the spiritual world and thus contradictions are abundant throughout their literature.

- × *Supernatural Knowledge*. Spiritualism does not claim any particular divine revelation from God. Consequently, there are no verifiable examples of supernatural knowledge contained in their scriptures.

A23. Taosim

Taoism was founded in China around 550 BC by Li Er (later known as Lao Tzu) and incorporates many rituals and traditions of the folk religions of the indigenous Chinese people. The Tao scripture is called the Tao Te Ching which was purportedly written by Lao Tzu who later became worshipped as a deity. Taoism teaches that the forces of yin and yang are diametrically opposed, but that peace will result when man lives in tune with the flow of the universe.

- × *Ancient Origins*. Taoism was not founded until around 550 BC, almost a millennium later than some of the other religions.
- × *Internal Consistency*. Taoism promotes an anti-intellectual philosophy for the Tao Te Ching claims, “The Tao that can be explained is not the real Tao.”⁹³ Thus, if you think you understand a claim that Tao is making, then it is not correct. In Taoism, contradictions are embraced as a way of expanding knowledge: “The movement of the Tao by contraries proceeds.”⁹⁴
- × *Supernatural Knowledge*. Taoism is essentially a nontheistic religion that does not espouse any particular divine revelation from God and thus it is nothing more than yet another philosophy of men. Consequently, there are no verifiable examples of supernatural knowledge contained in their scriptures.

A24. Unificationism

The Unification Church was formed in 1954 in Seoul, Korea by Sun Myung Moon who began his own unorthodox sect of Christianity that denies several Biblical teachings. Unificationist teachings are based on the textbook titled “Divine Principle” as well as other writings by Moon. The Unification Church also believes in spiritualism and engages in séances to communicate with the dead. Members of the church believe that Moon is the Messiah and they are often referred to as “Moonies”. They are popularly known for selling flowers and trinkets on street corners.

- × *Ancient Origins*. Although Unificationism is sometime considered a branch of Christianity, its radical divergence from Biblical doctrine in 1954 nullifies any claim to a continuing tradition of revelation, becoming a single-source religion based solely on the writings of Sun Myung Moon.
- × *Internal Consistency*. The Unificationists claim to follow the Bible, yet many of their teachings directly contradict the original source documents of the Bible. Unificationism cannot build on the historical tradition of the Bible if it claims that the Bible is wrong.

- Unificationism teaches that an adulterous “relationship between Zachariah and Mary was the birth of Jesus Christ.”⁹⁵, but the Bible teaches that Jesus was born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14, Matt. 1:23, Luke 1:27,34).
 - Unificationism teaches that “Jesus is not God”⁹⁶, but the Bible teaches that Jesus claimed to be God (John 10:24-33, Matt. 26:63-64, John 5:17-18, 8:57-58).
 - Unificationism teaches that Moon said, “God chose me to be the Messiah...I have fulfilled my mission as the Lord of the Second Advent, Savior and the True Parent.”⁹⁷, but the Bible teaches that Jesus would not appear again in that manner. (Matt. 24:23-27, Mark 13:21-22).
 - Unificationism teaches that “Spirit men descend and form reciprocal bases with the spirits of the earthly men” enabling them “to see many facts in the spirit world in a state of trance, give them the gift of prophecy, and inspire them spiritually”⁹⁸, but the Bible teaches that the practice of spiritism is explicitly forbidden (Lev. 20:6, Deut. 18:10, Isa. 8:19).
- × **External Consistency.** The claim that “the Second Coming should have occurred in 1917. Thus the birth of Christ should have taken place somewhere between 1917 and 1930”⁹⁹ obviously did not happen.
 - × **Supernatural Knowledge.** There are no verifiable examples of supernatural knowledge contained in their scriptures.

A25. Unitarian Universalism

Unitarian Universalism originated in 1961 with the merger of the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America. Although once considered to be a Christian denomination, Unitarian Universalism now strives to be inclusive of all religions and thus no longer embraces its distinctly Christian roots. Universalists accept the sacred scriptures of all religions, except that they ironically tend to reject many of the teachings of the Bible such as the concepts of Heaven and Hell. Universalists can believe in any form of theism, including atheism, and thus their members share little in common except their desire for personal growth.

- × **Ancient Origins.** Unitarian Universalism is relatively new religion which has only been in existence since the merger of the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America in 1961. Its radical divergence from its original Christian doctrine nullifies any claim to a continuing tradition of revelation.¹⁰⁰
- × **Source Reliability.** There is no definitive scripture claiming to come from God, so there is no source to objectively evaluate.
- × **Internal Consistency.** Individuals are free to believe whatever they want and thus contradictions are abundant throughout their literature.
- × **Supernatural Knowledge.** Unitarian Universalism does not claim any particular divine revelation from God. Consequently, there are no verifiable examples of supernatural knowledge contained in their various writings.

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¹⁷ *Rig-Veda* 1:23:1; <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/rigveda/>, accessed July 15, 2020.

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¹⁹ *Rig-Veda* 1:25:8; <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/rigveda/>, accessed July 15, 2020.

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Appendix B:

Philosophical Objections

Many critics tend to reject God simply because they don't like him, but not because of any intellectual reasons. Notice that one of the Objective Evaluation Criteria (OEC) isn't whether God agrees with modern liberal politics.^{§5.2.4} Obviously, God's existence does not depend on whether you agree with his morality or understand his reasons. Atheists often accuse God of being unfair, unloving, or even evil because he does not conform to their own sense of right and wrong and thus they conclude he must not exist? What a *non sequitur*! That would be like a teenager concluding that his parents no longer exist, just because they don't like their parents' rules. If we invent a new god that answers all the questions the way you want, then will you believe in that god?

Ironically, it is not uncommon to find atheists who are bitter, critical, and rebellious because of their *hatred* for a God that they claim doesn't even exist. Do they also get that worked up about those who believe in Satan? But wanting to *rebel* against God is not the same as not believing in him. In reality, many atheists really do believe in God deep down, but they just don't like him.^{§2.3.1} Even if God really was a belligerent tyrant, he would still be God with the power to do whatever he wants (Psa. 115:3, 135:6). And if God inherently defines what is good as some philosophers propose, this would mean that these critics merely have a warped sense of morality.

Thus, the answers to the critic's "Why?" questions are irrelevant to God's existence. You don't have to understand all of the intricacies of how an engine works in order to drive a car. You do not have to understand "Why?" or even agree with "Why?" in order for there to be a valid answer. Why does God allow critics to ask so many silly questions? 😊 Indeed, the critics often lack a basic understanding of Biblical theology and thus have many misunderstandings about who God is and what his purposes are. Without presuming to speak for God or to darken his counsel (Job 38:2, 42:3), there are rational responses to answer the critics most pressing questions. The answers provided to the following questions apply specifically to the Abrahamic God of the Bible following the Judeo-Christian tradition. Some of these questions and answers would not apply to many of the other gods.

B1. Can God create a rock so big that no one can lift it, and then later lift it?

This question presents a fallacy similar to, "Have you stopped beating your wife yet?" It assumes that making a rock *big* can somehow prevent it from being lifted which of course is scientifically incorrect. In space, for example, an entire planet can be "lifted" by a small child depending on the frame of reference. Thus, the technical answer to the question would be "no" because the first part of the question is invalid. That said, other similar questions could be substituted for this

one to challenge God's omnipotence such as, "Can God make a rock so dense that it cannot become any denser, and then later make it denser?" Indeed, there are an infinite number of such questions, "Can God make a feather so light, that it cannot be made any lighter, and then later make it lighter?" And then there are an infinite number of forms of each question, "Can God make two rocks so big...?", "Can God make three rocks so big...?" Thus, there is apparently an infinity of infinity of impossible things God can't do!

When such questions are stated in one sentence, it is obvious that the questions themselves contain a *logical contradiction*. God also can't count to 5 by 2's or create an atheist that simultaneously has a brain and doesn't have a brain (although sometimes we wonder). 😊 That is because these are not valid powers. As it has been pointed out: "God can perform miracles but not contradictions – not because his power is limited, but because contradictions are meaningless."¹ What such questions are really asking is, "Does God possess powers that do not exist?" When the Bible claims that God is omnipotent (Gen. 17:1, 18:14, Job 42:2, Matt. 19:26, Luke 1:37, Rev. 19:6), this can be more correctly expressed as "God has all the valid powers that are possible." God obviously does not possess powers that don't exist. That is like saying, "Unless God also has the power to demonstrate that he is not all-powerful, he cannot be all-powerful." Absurd! Furthermore, while God does possess all valid powers, he chooses not to use some of them for he doesn't lie (Heb. 6:18) and won't change his nature (Mal. 3:6, Jas. 1:17).

B2. Why does God allow pain and suffering?

There are many similar questions to this such as "Why is there evil in the world?" or "Why do bad things happen to good people?" Greek philosopher Epicurus states the basic contention: "Is [God] willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?"² This scenario again presents faulty logic for it assumes that allowing pain and suffering is necessarily "evil". (From an atheistic perspective, if there is no basis for morality, then there is no such thing as "evil" anyway.) If we would apply this logic to a family, then a parent who disciplines their children must not love their children. There are actually many other such scenarios where the most loving thing to do is to allow pain and suffering and sometimes even death for the *greater good*. Even Star Trek fans know that "logic clearly dictates that the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few"³ 😊

One common observation is that the majority of pain and suffering is not caused by God, but by the sins of mankind. The pain and suffering caused by wars, genocide, torture, rape, stealing, etc. are not God's fault, but men's fault. Just because a person chooses to have long hair, does not mean that barbers don't exist.⁴ Global issues such as poverty, starvation, and pollution are all rooted in man's sins of greed and selfishness. So if you are really concerned about pain and suffering, why don't you stop sinning and make efforts to ensure that others do the same? In rebuttal, Gene Roddenberry offered this assessment, "We must question the story logic of having an all-knowing all-powerful God, who creates faulty Humans, and then blames them for his own mistakes."⁵ Well no, people are

responsible for their own sinful choices. That would be as misguided as blaming a parent for all the mistakes their children make.

But this then begs the question that if God is all-powerful why doesn't he *stop* men from committing such acts of evil? And the classic answer is because God does not violate men's free will for he allows them to choose freely. Correspondingly, most philosophers today now accept that the logical problem of evil has been solved by Alvin Plantinga's free will defense.⁶ God could have indeed made a universe of automata that never sin, but he didn't. Otherwise, there would be no merit in choosing to do good, and without becoming overly philosophical, that is apparently a characteristic that God values. Alternatively, if God did choose to eliminate all evil, then every sinner would necessarily have to be destroyed. Would you prefer that as a solution?

But what about natural disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis or sickness and diseases which have nothing to do with man's free will? Well, in some cases, these may be punishments that God intentionally brings about in judgment of man's sins. But that would not explain why so many innocent people would have to suffer too. The critics think they are really on to something here, but they fail to consider the more basic question, "Why would an all-powerful loving God ever allow anyone to die?" Or to make it simpler, "Why does God allow people to get paper cuts or stub their toes?" Instead of asking, "Why does God allow people to go hungry?" perhaps a better question is, "Why does God require people to eat?"

The ultimate answer to all these questions lies in the fact that critics have no idea what God's purposes were in creating people in the first place. It may come as a surprise to the critics' limited perspective, but the maintenance of human life is not the most important thing to God, but rather the cultivation of a certain type of spiritual life. People were ultimately not created for what they experience in their limited time on this planet, but for what happens after they die. And in that future place, there will be no pain and suffering as the critics desire. The only problem is that these critics will not be there to experience it...and this is of their own choosing!

B3. Why doesn't God heal amputees?

Well, sometimes he does! For example, the Bible records that Jesus restored both a withered hand (Luke 6:6-11) and an ear that was completely cut off (Luke 22:50-51). There have been many reports of amputees being healed over the years at the Azusa Street revivals,⁷ by evangelist Smith Wigglesworth,⁸ and the well-documented Miracle of Calanda.⁹ And if healing amputees is supposed to be a difficult challenge, what about the greater number of testimonies of people being raised from the dead! For some reason, the critics seem to be purposely ignorant of these claims. Granted there seems to be fewer amputees healed than perhaps other sicknesses, but then again, there are fewer amputees compared to other sicknesses. Even if God decided not to heal amputees for some reason, it still wouldn't mean that he isn't God. Ultimately, this question is really just a subcategory of the previous question which addresses the bigger question, "Why does God allow people to become amputees in the first place?"

B4. How could a loving God promote evil things?

Critics often try to argue that the God of the Old Testament is basically evil and thus you should not believe in him. Atheist Richard Dawkins provides this highly distorted view:

“The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.”¹⁰

Notice that Dawkins is using morality defined by the Bible to judge the God of the Bible. Even if true, none of this would have any bearing on whether God exists or not, but only that Dawkins does not like him. Ironically, these “unpleasant” characteristics would actually be desirable traits in the evolutionary worldview that Dawkins espouses. If you are an atheist, then there is no particular morality that needs to be subscribed to anyway.^{52.5} Although Dawkin’s description is not a fair assessment of the Abrahamic God, there are some valid arguments worth addressing:

- ***Why is God a proponent of slavery?*** Biblical slavery was a form of voluntary indentured servitude which was utilized by people as a source of income or to pay off debts. The person was then set free from their obligation after six years unless they voluntarily wanted to sign up for an additional term (Exod. 21:2-6). If a daughter was to become a concubine or future wife by family arrangement (as is still done in many societies), she was not set free after six years but was given other provisions for freedom (Exod. 21:7-11). Also, when Israel conquered other nations through war, they were allowed to make slaves from the prisoners of war similar to other nations’ labor camps or concentration camps. The racist form of immoral slavery implemented in the United States, however, was not at all Biblical. The New Testament does not advocate slavery at all, but merely cautioned believers who were slaves to respect the laws of their nations (1Cor. 7:21, Eph. 6:5, Col. 3:22, 1Tim. 6:1-2, Tit. 2:9, 1Pet. 2:18).
- ***Why did God order entire tribes to be destroyed including innocent women and children?*** There were many times that Israel went to war and killed all of the inhabitants (Num. 21:3, Deut. 2:34, 3:3-7, Josh. 6:21, 8:26), including some in which God ordered the destruction (Num. 21:34-35, 31:7-18, Deut. 7:1-4, 20:16-17, 25:19, Josh. 10:28-40, 1Sam. 15:2-3). Most people can understand why it is normally a good idea to kill the enemy when you are at war! But why must the women and children also be destroyed? Because Israel was a *nomadic* tribe without any fortified position, it was not without precedence for them to kill the women and children so that seeds of vengeance would not fester into attacks from future generations. What else was a nomadic tribe supposed to do...put them in jail? But why did the animals also have to be killed sometimes? It is possible that the animals and/or people may have carried diseases which God did not want to be spread to others. God also used Israel as a means of judging other

nations for their sins and likewise used other nations to judge Israel for their sins. In any case, the people were not really *innocent* as is often assumed (Duet. 9:4-5, 18:9-12). God himself likewise killed people with plagues, diseases, and natural disasters. Perhaps the critics should also ask, “Why does God allow innocent people to die every day from old age?”

- ***Why does God command that people be killed for being rebellious teenagers, homosexuals, or breaking the Sabbath?*** In modern societies filled with wickedness, many people think that these measures are too extreme and that the punishment does not fit the crime. They fail to recognize that these laws were effective deterrents so that there *would not be* any rebellious teenagers, homosexuals, or Sabbath breakers in the first place. Thus, very few people actually died for committing these sins. God simply designed the laws for the nation of Israel so that they would not have these issues. Again, you may not agree with God’s sense of morality, but that does not mean that he is not God.

Though you may not agree, all these positions are at least reasonable enough to have been implemented by other civilized nations throughout history. And notice that the laws given to the nation of Israel do not apply to Christians who abide by the New Covenant. So if atheists do not like the laws of the Old Testament, this would just mean that they should want to become Christians rather than Jews.

B5. What happens to people who never heard of God?

Or in the case of Christianity, “Would God send innocent people to Hell just because they never heard of Jesus?” How is it their fault that they never heard? Author Annie Dillard provides this illustration:¹¹

Eskimo: “If I did not know about God and sin, would I go to hell?”
Priest: “No, not if you did not know.”
Eskimo: “Then why did you tell me?”

But no, the problem is not that people have never heard, the problem is that people are not innocent. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 3:23) God will not send anyone to Hell because they lack information, but because they have sinful hearts. If someone’s heart is right before God, then the amount of information they possess is only secondary. The Bible teaches:

“For when nations who do not have the law, do by nature the things of the law, these not having the Law are a law to themselves, since they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, while their conscience bears witness and their thoughts alternatively accuse and also excuse them.” (Rom. 2:14-15)

Notice that none of the great men before Moses, such as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Jacob, ever knew that God's name was Yahweh, and certainly none of them ever heard of Jesus, and yet all of them are in Heaven nonetheless. Scripture is clear that the only reason anyone is ever allowed into Heaven is because of Jesus' atonement on the cross, but not everyone was even aware of that information. Missionaries endeavor to tell others about God because it usually helps. Providing information about God will aid those who are genuine seekers of truth, though it may do little good for those with sinful hearts.

B6. Why doesn't God personally appear to you?

Perhaps he will! God has certainly appeared numerous times to people in the Bible such as Moses, Paul, etc. And he has personally appeared to thousands of people throughout history and as well as thousands of people still living today. Maybe there is something wrong with you! 😊 God, of course, is not required to appear to anyone, and it seems that he rarely speaks with an audible voice or takes on bodily form.

But if it would cause everyone to believe, why wouldn't God just personally appear to each person? Because it would *not* cause everyone to believe. A parable is told about a rich man who died and wanted to go back and warn his relatives, but Abraham told him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead." (Luke 16:31) God already has provided sufficient evidence to establish his existence for anyone who is paying attention. All of the Israelites heard the voice of God and saw countless miracles, but it did not help everyone for "the message they heard did not profit them because those who heard did not combine it with faith" (Heb. 4:2). It has already been pointed out that a direct personal experience with something claiming to be God would not by itself be sufficient evidence to convince a rationalist anyway.^{§5.2.1}

The main error of thinking in this question is that it falsely presumes that God's main goal is to get everyone to believe that he exists, but that is not his main objective at all. God would rather have everyone be filled with his Holy Spirit and lead righteous lives. Demons believe that God exists, but they work against God's purposes because believing by itself does not help anything (Jas. 2:19). Likewise, there are many people who claim to believe in God that are not filled with the Holy Spirit and do not lead righteous lives. *A personal appearance by God to each person may cause some of them to believe that he exists, but it would not necessarily cause any of them to walk in obedience to him.* Instead, it may merely increase the *judgment* against them for continuing to disobey such a clear witness of God's existence. It is for this reason that Jesus often spoke in parables (Matt. 13:10-17) so that those who seek God will endeavor to understand and those who don't won't increase the judgment against themselves. If God does exist, do you really want him telling you what to do? Why would you need to believe in God if you are not going to follow him? God wouldn't *want* to appear to you if you are going to reject him, and he wouldn't *need* to appear to you if you are going to accept him.

¹ Peter Kreeft and Ronald K. Tacelli, *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*, p. 109, InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL, 1994.

² David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, 2nd ed., p. 186, London, 1779.

³ Gene Roddenberry et al., *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*, Paramount Pictures: June 4, 1982.

⁴ “A man went to a barbershop to have his hair cut and his beard trimmed. As the barber began to work, they began to have a good conversation. They talked about so many things and various subjects. When they eventually touched on the subject of God, the barber said: ‘I don’t believe that God exists.’ ‘Why do you say that?’ asked the customer. ‘Well, you just have to go out in the street to realize that God doesn’t exist. Tell me, if God exists, would there be so many sick people? Would there be abandoned children? If God existed, there would be neither suffering nor pain. I can’t imagine a loving God who would allow all of these things.’ The customer thought for a moment, but didn’t respond because he didn’t want to start an argument. The barber finished his job and the customer left the shop. Just after he left the barbershop, he saw a man in the street with long, stringy, dirty hair and an untrimmed beard. He looked dirty and unkempt. The customer turned back and entered the barber shop again and he said to the barber: ‘You know what? Barbers do not exist.’ ‘How can you say that?’ asked the surprised barber. ‘I am here, and I am a barber. And I just worked on you!’ ‘No!’ the customer exclaimed. ‘Barbers don’t exist because if they did, there would be no people with dirty long hair and untrimmed beards, like that man outside.’ ‘Ah, but barbers DO exist! That’s what happens when people do not come to me.’ ‘Exactly!’ affirmed the customer. ‘That’s the point! God, too, DOES exist! That’s what happens when people do not go to Him and don’t look to Him for help. That’s why there’s so much pain and suffering in the world.’” – Source Unknown

⁵ Kenneth Marsalek, “Gene Roddenberry - The Last Conversation”, *Free Inquiry*, vol. 12, no. 4, Fall 1992.

⁶ Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity*, Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1974.

⁷ Tom Welchel, *Azusa Street: They told me their stories*, Dare2Dream: Mustang, OK, 2006.

⁸ Albert Hibbert, *Smith Wigglesworth, The Secret Of His Power*, p. 33-34, Harrison House, LLC: Tulsa, OK, June 15, 2009.

⁹ Vittorio Messori. *Il Miracolo, Spagna 1640: indagine sul più sconvolgente prodigio mariano*, Rizzoli: 2000.

¹⁰ Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p. 51, Mariner Books: New York, 2008.

¹¹ Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, p. 123, HarperCollins Publishers: New York, 1999.

Appendix C:

Internal Consistency

The internal consistency of the Bible provides further testimony of its divine inspiration. There is no reason to believe that God would contradict himself, so it is expected that any writings that are truly from God would be consistent with each other. With over 780,000 words in the Bible and given over 2,000 years of scrutiny, it is a miracle all by itself that the critics could only come up with about 130 alleged Bible contradictions, and that is giving them the benefit of the doubt. Not bad for a collection of writings written over a 1,600 year period by 44 different authors! There have been shorter college textbooks published by a single author that have more errata than that!

As a general rule, the authors of any literary work should always be given the benefit of the doubt unless an obvious contradiction presents itself. And with ancient works in particular, the history, customs, and metaphors referenced by authors of antiquity are often unfamiliar to modern society, so efforts must be made to understand the author's frame of reference. But when it comes to the Bible, some atheists appear to have no intentions of trying to understand a passage, but instead intentionally take passages out of context to *invent contradictions* where they don't exist. Upon closer analysis, such arguments reveal a superficial understanding of the Scriptures with a bias to jump to faulty conclusions. The impartial reader will be surprised at how petty and intellectually embarrassing many of their arguments are. Lest you think that the critics' arguments have been embellished here to try to make them look foolish, note that all of these contentions have come directly from their own literature!¹ The most commonly cited Bible contradictions are listed below and any others beyond these were considered too trivial to discuss as the answers are readily obvious. Out of all these alleged contradictions, only about nine of them pose difficult questions for rational people who are trying to consider these issues objectively (see C56, C78, C90, C98, C101, C103, C121, C123, C126 which are marked at the end with an asterisk).

In order to answer these critics' objections, it is first necessary to clarify exactly what is and isn't a contradiction. A contradiction is present when there are two mutually exclusive claims which both cannot be simultaneously true. For example, the Book of Mormon states that Jesus was born in Jerusalem,² while the Bible states that Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:1). This is a contradiction because both cannot simultaneously be correct. The Bible itself, however, is internally consistent and does not contain any such contradictions. The rationalist will note that all of the critics' so-called Bible "contradictions" are fallacious and can be classified into one or more of the following categories:

- ***Misconstrued Details.*** Most of these alleged contradictions only exist in the minds of the critics. In their zeal to find errors in the Bible, they end up

inventing them, either because they are disingenuous or because they don't read very carefully. Oftentimes they read in non-existent words such as "only", "never", "always", etc. to embellish the text and overstate its claims. But in most cases, the alleged contradiction goes away by simply pointing out the details of the text.

- ***Ignored Context.*** Much of the time the answers to the critics' questions are explained in the surrounding verses if they would just bother to read them. Instead, they purposely lift a particular word or phrase out of context and then misapply its meaning to a completely different passage. Sometimes there may initially appear to be a contradiction on the surface because they are not aware of the cultural practices which provide the proper historical context. Such "contradictions" are immediately cleared up once the author's historical framework is properly understood.
- ***Logical Non Sequitur.*** Sometimes the critics get the details correct, but then simply apply invalid logic. In what later became known as Weinberg's Corollary, such a critic is "one who avoids the small errors while sweeping on to the grand fallacy."³ This is usually because the critics have either added their own assumptions or simply because they have faulty reasoning.
- ***Complementary Testimony.*** The omission of details from one account is not a contradiction. For example, if the Mayor visited my house accompanied by his assistant, I might tell others that I had a meeting with the Mayor which is true. Someone else, however, may state more specifically that I met with the Mayor and his assistant, which is also true. And the neighbor who did not know the identity of the visitors may merely say that I visited with two people, which is also true. There is no contradiction, but only a difference in the level of details. If all of the various testimonies can simultaneously be true and harmonized into a single account, then there is no contradiction. Such is often the case with car accidents, where each witness may collaborate some of the basic facts, while providing a different set of details that were relevant to them. Such complementary details actually add credibility to the Bible as it demonstrates that the testimony was not rehearsed or edited to match the other accounts.
- ***Translation Clarification.*** The Bible was originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek and consequently several alleged contradictions are attributed to ambiguous or imprecise wording in its translation into English. The critics often fail to consult the original languages in their accusations, but instead seem to base each of their arguments on one particular English translation. When the Bible is consulted in its original languages, however, no contradiction is even evident. Consequently, many of these alleged contradictions do not appear in many Bible translations.
- ***Transmission Error.*** The Bible is only claimed to be inerrant in its original autographs which allows for the possibility that an occasional copying mistake occurred in the transmission process. In many cases, the difference is only a single letter mistake. A transmission error will only be cited here to resolve an apparent contradiction if there is divergent manuscript evidence. In other words, it cannot be used as an excuse unless there is underlying textual evidence which would support it. Most of these transmission errors have

already been resolved through textual criticism and do not even exist in many Bible translations.

- **Literary Device.** The Bible is a classic work of literature and therefore must be understood in a literary context. The Bible employs many literary devices such as allegory, hyperbole, idioms, irony, metaphor, poetry, sarcasm, similes, etc., just like any other work of literature. Several of the Bible's books are entirely poetic in nature. It seems that only the critics have trouble understanding these basic concepts of literature when it comes to the Bible which are readily obvious to most normal people. Any work must be properly understood within its literary genre before a contradiction could be claimed.
- **Theological Doctrine.** These are usually only considered to be contradictions because the critics fail to understand basic Biblical doctrine. (But don't feel bad, because many "Christians" don't seem to understand basic Biblical doctrine either. ☺) Nevertheless, a critic should at least try to understand the basic teachings of a religion, before they try to find contradictions in it.

In many cases, it is not necessary to *prove* that a contradiction doesn't exist, but only to provide a plausible interpretation which would make all statements in question simultaneously true. While some of the alleged contradictions can be resolved with more than one explanation, only the most plausible of these have been given here to save space. It should also be pointed out that even if some of these alleged contradictions were true, they would not necessarily have any impact on the Bible's information about God. For example, if for some reason the number of chariots specified were wrong, it would not have any theological significance. But as is shown below, there are no such contradictions. The reliability of the Bible is so well attested that if you find yourself doubting one or two items, it is much more likely that you are simply not understanding the issue properly, rather than that the Bible is wrong. Unlike most of the other religions' holy books, the Bible is not afraid of academic scrutiny, but rather welcomes it.

C1. Were fowl created from the waters (Gen. 1:20) or out of the ground (Gen. 2:19)?

The first passage describes two different events "let the waters bring forth" and "let the fowl fly above the earth". It never says that the fowl were created out of the waters. The second passage states they were "formed out of the ground" in a similar manner that Adam was formed. The reconfiguration of atoms is not difficult for the God who created the atoms in the first place. [*Misconstrued Details*]

C2. Were animals (Gen. 1:25-27) or man (Gen. 2:18-19) created first?

The first chapter of Genesis provides a synopsis of creation, while the second chapter provides a more detailed account focusing on the creation of man. Do you suppose that the author could not remember what he wrote only a few paragraphs earlier? In the latter case, it does not say that man was created first, but merely

that he was alone and that God “brought them to the man to see what he would call them”. [*Misconstrued Details*]

C3. How could Adam have died on the day he ate from the tree (Gen. 2:17) when he continued to live for 930 years (Gen. 3:6, 5:5)?

A foundational Biblical doctrine is that Adam died spiritually, not physically on the day he ate from the tree, thereby introducing sin and death to the world. [*Theological Doctrine*]

C4. Is marriage good (Gen. 2:18,24, Prov. 18:22) or bad (1Cor. 7:1,8)?

The latter passage is taken out of context, since the Bible obviously does not disapprove of marriage (1Cor. 7:2,7,9, 1Tim. 5:14). Paul says in some situations it is better to remain unmarried, but that does not mean that marriage is a bad thing. [*Ignored Context*]

C5. Is God omnipresent and omniscient (Job 34:21-22, Psa. 139:1-4,7-10, Prov. 15:3) or is he unaware of certain situations (Gen. 3:8-9, 11:5, 18:20-21)? Does God know the hearts of men (Acts 1:24) or not know the hearts of men (Gen. 22:12, Deut. 8:2, 13:3)?

These examples of *anthropomorphisms* applied to God are merely used to describe God’s interaction with certain human events. An omnipresent and omniscient God is certainly able to appear anywhere he wants and interact with people on a level they can understand. [*Literary Device*]

C6. Was Jesus the only one who ascended to Heaven (John 3:13) or did others ascend to Heaven too (Gen. 5:24, 2Ki. 2:11, Heb. 11:5)?

John merely means that no one has the ability to ascend (Greek “ΑΝΑΒΑΙΝΩ”) to Heaven by their own power, except Jesus Christ who is God. The others mentioned did not ascend on their own, but were *taken* (Greek “ΜΕΤΑΤΙΘΗΜΙ”) into Heaven by God, not of their own accord. [*Translation Clarification*]

C7. Is the human lifespan limited to 120 years (Gen. 6:3) or 70 years (Psa. 90:10)?

Genesis refers to the expected maximum lifespan while the Psalm refers to the average human lifespan. [*Complementary Details*]

C8. Did the Nephilim exist before (Gen. 6:4) or after (Num. 13:33) Noah’s flood?

The Nephilim were a race that formed when the “sons of God” bred with humans and were wiped out in the flood. But since there was nothing to stop the same thing from happening again, they apparently continued to breed with

humans and produced a new race again after the flood. [*Complementary Testimony*]

C9. Does God change his mind (Gen. 6:6-7, 18:23-33, Exod. 32:14, 1Sam. 15:11,35, Jon. 3:10) or does God never change his mind (Num. 23:19, 1Sam. 15:29, Mal. 3:6, Jas. 1:17)?

This was a faulty attempt to combine many dissimilar situations, but the truth is that God always remains true to his word (Num. 23:19, 1Sam. 15:29). Just because God's *nature* does not change (Mal. 3:6, Jas. 1:17) does not mean that he cannot respond in different ways to different situations. Even though God knows ahead of time how a person will respond, he may still participate in a conversation to lead the person to an ultimate conclusion (Gen. 18:23-33). Thus, it might *appear* that God is changing his mind, but God's mind was already made up. In some situations, God has given either/or ultimatums and so judgment is the expectation *unless* there is repentance (Exod. 32:14, Jon. 3:10). Thus, God is not changing his mind, but only responding to the people's choice. For example, if a child is told that he can't have ice cream unless he first cleans up his room, and he says that he isn't going to do it, then he is told he can't have ice cream. But if he later repents and cleans his room, then he is allowed to have ice cream. In this case, the parent did not change his mind, but merely responded to the child who changed *his* mind. When accurately translated, several of the verses listed above do not even say that God changed his mind, but only that he was "grieved" with the situation (Gen. 6:6-7, 1Sam. 15:11,35). [*Misconstrued Details*]

C10. Did Noah bring only one pair (Gen. 6:19-20, 7:8-9) or seven pairs (Gen. 7:2-3) of animals aboard the ark?

Noah was instructed to bring one pair of every kind of animal, and if the animal was considered to be *clean*, then he was to bring seven pairs. The seven of every clean animal were seven pairs, "a male and its mate", and thus everything was in pairs. Genesis 7:8-9 doesn't say there was "only" one pair of each animal, but that the animals came in pairs. The critic would rather accuse the author of contradicting what he wrote only a few sentences earlier, rather than understand what the text actually says. [*Misconstrued Details*]

C11. Was Arphaxad (Gen. 11:12) or Cainan (Luke 3:35-36) the father of Shelah?

This was the result of a scribal copying error as other alternate readings in Genesis from the Septuagint include Cainan as the father of Shelah. [*Transmission Error*]

C12. Was Abraham 75 years old (Gen. 12:4) or 135 years old (Gen. 11:26,32, Acts 7:2-4) when he left Haran?

Abraham was 75 years old when he left Haran (Gen. 12:4). The second figure of 135 years old was calculated by subtracting Terah's age of 70 when Abraham was born (Gen. 11:26) from Terah's age of 205 when he died (Gen. 11:32) to conclude that Abraham must have been at least 135 years old when he left after Terah died (Acts 7:2-4). This calculation, however, assumes that Abraham was Terah's *firstborn* son. Terah's sons were not necessarily listed in order according to their age, but according to their significance. This was also done with Noah's sons (Gen. 6:10, 9:22-24). Thus, it can be calculated that Abraham was born not when Terah was 70 years old, but when Terah was 130 years old. [*Misconstrued Details*]

C13. Does God tempt (Gen. 22:1) or not tempt (Jas. 1:13) people?

The Hebrew word “נָסֶה” in Genesis is better translated as “test” (1Ki. 10:1, Judg. 6:39, Eccl. 7:23, Dan. 1:12,14) and thus this “contradiction” does not even exist in most Bible translations. The word “tempt” means to try to entice someone to do evil, while “test” means to allow a person to prove themselves in a given circumstance. [*Translation Clarification*]

C14. Did Abraham buy a tomb from Ephron the Hittite (Gen. 23:16-18, 50:13) or from the sons of Hamor (Acts 7:16), or did Jacob buy it from the sons of Hamor (Gen. 33:18-19, Josh. 24:32)?

There are two different burial places mentioned – Jacob and Sarah were both buried in a cave in a field Abraham bought from Ephron the Hittite (Gen. 23:16-18, 50:13) and Joseph was buried on land Jacob bought from the sons of Hamor (Gen. 33:18-19, Josh. 24:32). The book of Acts correctly reports what Stephen said, but makes no claim as to whether or not it was accurate. Stephen's claim that Abraham bought the *tomb* from the sons of Hamor may indeed be correct if Jacob later only bought the *land* that it was on. It is also possible that Abraham previously bought both the land and the tomb since he had been there before (Gen. 12:6-7), but it had reverted back to the previous owners because it was abandoned and thus Jacob had to purchase it again. [*Misconstrued Details*]

C15. Did Abraham have two sons (Gen. 25:9, 1Chr. 1:28, Gal. 4:22) or only one son (Heb. 11:17)?

Abraham had two sons – Ishmael came through his maidservant Hagar, but only one son, Isaac, was his legitimate heir and the child of the *promise* (Gen. 21:9-12, Gal. 4:22-31). Do you really think that the author of Hebrews did not know how many sons Abraham had? [*Ignored Context*]

C16. Has anyone seen God (Gen. 32:30, Exod. 24:11, 33:11,23, 1Ki. 22:19, Isa. 6:1, John 12:45) or has no one ever seen God (Exod. 33:20, John 1:18, 1Tim. 6:16)?

This “contradiction” is easily explained by the doctrine of the Trinity.^{86.4} God the Father cannot be seen face to face by men in his full glory, but God can be seen in other physical manifestations, such as the incarnation of Jesus Christ. For example, Jesus said, “He who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9; cf. 2Cor. 4:4, Col. 1:15). All the appearances of God in these verses could have been made by Jesus Christ or even an “angel of the Lord” substituting as a theophany. [*Theological Doctrine*]

C17. Was Joseph sold by his brothers to the Ishmaelites (Gen. 37:27), by the Midianites to the Ishmaelites (Gen. 37:28), by the Midianites to Potiphar (Gen. 37:36), or by his brothers to Potiphar (Gen. 45:4).

Yes, all of those statements are true. This is yet another example where the critic would rather assume that the author cannot remember what he wrote a few sentences earlier instead of trying to understand the meaning of the text. To be precise, Joseph was sold by his brothers to the Midianite traders (who were synonymous with the Ishmaelites) and they then sold him again to Potiphar in Egypt. The brothers were the “they” who pulled Joseph out of the pit and sold them to the Midianite/Ishmaelites and so they were ultimately responsible for Joseph’s slavery in Egypt. [*Complementary Testimony*]

C18. Did Jacob’s family consist of 70 members (Gen. 46:27) or 75 members (Acts 7:14) when they went to Egypt?

It depends on what you count as a family member. There were 70 members of Jacob’s *immediate* family, 66 which are listed in the preceding verses (Gen. 46:8-25), and when Joseph and his two sons and Judah who was sent ahead are added it comes to a total of 70. The Septuagint variant also includes Joseph’s three grandsons and two great grandsons (Gen. 46:20) and then lists the total as 75. Stephen quotes from the Septuagint’s version which includes the grandchildren. [*Complementary Testimony*]

C19. Does God approve (Exod. 1:18-20, 1Ki. 22:21-23, Jer. 4:10, 20:7, Ezek. 14:7-9, Jas. 2:25, 2Th. 2:11-12) or not approve (Exod. 20:16, Prov. 12:22, Rev. 21:8) of lying?

God does not lie (1Sam. 15:29, Heb. 6:18, Tit. 1:2) and does not approve of lying. None of these verses say that God has lied and none of them say that God approves of lying. God does allow people to be deceived when they pursue their own sinful desires, but that is not the same as lying to someone. A good example of this is when David pretended to be insane in order to avoid capture (1Sam. 21:13). David never lied to them, but his actions did deceive them. [*Ignored Context*]

C20. Did Pharaoh harden his heart (Exod. 8:15,32) or did God harden Pharaoh's heart (Exod. 4:21, 9:12)?

Without wrangling over semantics, both could be said to be responsible. As an analogy, if a child is being punished and becomes bitter, would you say that the child became bitter or that the parents' actions caused the child to become bitter. The author was clearly aware of both points of view and even mentions them both in a single passage (Exod. 9:34-10:2). [*Complementary Details*]

C21. If Moses converted all the available water to blood (Exod. 7:20-21), how could the Egyptians also convert water to blood (Exod. 7:22)?

This is yet another example where the critic would rather assume that the author cannot remember what he wrote in the previous sentence instead of trying to understand the meaning of the text. It never says that Moses converted all the water to blood, but only all the water in the Nile. If the critic would bother to read on, it says that the people dug by the Nile to get drinking water. Thus, there was other water available that the magicians used to convert to blood. [*Ignored Context*]

C22. Is God a warrior (Exod. 15:3) or a God of peace (Rom. 15:33)?

These are not mutually exclusive traits. A person can simultaneously be both a soldier in an army and also a man of peace. A policeman, for example, is sometimes even referred to as a "peace officer". [*Non Sequitur Logic*]

C23. Are children punished (Exod. 20:5, 34:7, Deut. 5:9, 2Sam. 12:14, Isa. 14:21) or not punished (Deut. 24:16, Jer. 31:29-31, Ezek. 18:20) for the sins of their fathers?

The negative *effects* of a father's bad choices may be felt for several generations, but the child is not held *legally* responsible for their father's sins. Everyone is held responsible for their own sins. [*Misconstrued Details*]

C24. Is killing forbidden (Exod. 20:13) or commanded (Exod. 32:27)? Should we respond to violence with an "eye for eye" (Exod. 21:24, Lev. 24:20, Deut. 19:21) or "turn the other cheek" (Matt. 5:38-39, Luke 6:29, John 18:22-23)? Did Jesus tell his disciples to use swords (Matt. 10:34, Luke 22:36,38) or not to use swords (Matt. 26:52)?

There are different interpretations given for these passages, but there are no contradictions here. First of all, *murder* is not the same thing as *killing*. Murder is a premeditated hateful act of sin which is forbidden, but there are many situations in the Bible where killing is not a sinful action such as self-defense, justified wars, death penalty for crimes, etc. The "eye for eye" punishment of the Law represents a *societal* response for governments to deal with criminals, whereas the instruction to "turn the other cheek" is a *personal* response when being

individually accosted. Those in authority have a responsibility to protect the members of their society. For example, if a nation is attacked by another nation, the government does not “turn the other cheek” and let all of their citizens be killed. If an individual, however, is slapped by someone in anger, he should “turn the other cheek” which is to demonstrate a personal act of love. Also notice that a slap in the face is not a serious injury, for the Bible does allow for self-defense in certain life-threatening situations (Exod. 22:2-3). Jesus, of course, always opposed personal revenge and instead taught us to love our enemies (Matt. 5:43-44, Luke 6:27-35). He allowed his disciples to carry swords as an outward deterrent and possibly for use in self-defense. Jesus’ overturning the money tables was not an act of violence towards others for nobody was hurt, but merely restored the temple to its *lawful* state (Matt. 21:13, Mark 11:17, Luke 19:45). [*Misconstrued Details, Logical Non-sequitur*]

C25. Does God approve (Exod. 29:18,36, Lev. 1:9, 23:27) or disapprove (Psa. 50:9-13, Isa. 1:11-13, Jer. 6:20, 7:22) of burnt offerings?

God commanded the Israelites to make burnt offerings, so he obviously approved of them. God did not disapprove of the system of burnt offerings, but disapproved of those who hypocritically made them instead of obeying his commands (1Sam. 15:22). [*Ignored Context*]

C26. Does God never grow tired (Isa. 40:28) or does he need rest (Exod. 31:17)?

God never grows tired and the Bible never says that God was ever tired. When God “rested” from his creation, it simply means that he stopped what he was doing and was “refreshed” as he admired his work of creation. God ceased from his work but it was not because God *needed* to rest because he was physically exhausted. Instead, God simply chose to rest to set a pattern for the Israelites to observe the Sabbath day, which the critics could have noted if they would have bothered to read the previous verse (Exod. 31:16; cf. Exod. 20:11). [*Misconstrued Details*]

C27. Was Moses meek (Num. 12:3) or ruthless (Num. 31:14-18)?

The first verse is better translated as “humble” which would describe Moses’ character, but having humility would certainly not prevent someone from carrying out God’s judgment. [*Logical Non Sequitur*]

C28. Is God angry, wrathful, and cruel (Num. 25:4, 32:13, 1Sam. 15:3, Psa. 2:12, Jer. 13:14) or loving, merciful, and kind (1Chr. 16:34, Psa. 30:5, 145:9, Jer. 18:23, Jas. 5:11)?

Critics allege there are contradictions in God’s character by noting how God responds to different situations, but this is simply an error in logic. God is indeed loving, merciful, and kind, but that does not mean that he does not punish the

wicked when it is appropriate. Similarly, if a parent never disciplined their children and they grew up to be brats, that would not be merciful, it would be cruel both to them and others (Prov. 3:11-12). Likewise, a policeman may be a loving and gentle person, but may appear to be wrathful and cruel as he apprehends a criminal. Thwarting evil *is* a loving act for it would be cruel to allow criminals to inflict damage on society without restraint. Critics try to stereotype the God of the Old Testament as wrathful and the God of the New Testament as loving, but they ignore examples where God is loving in the Old Testament (Exod. 34:6-7, Lev. 19:18, Jer. 31:20, Psa. 103:8, 146:7-9) and wrathful in the New Testament (Matt. 13:41-42, Acts 5:1-11, Rev. 16). [*Logical Non Sequitur*]

C29. Did 24,000 Israelites (Num. 25:9) or 23,000 Israelites (1Cor. 10:8) die in the plague in Shittimie?

Assuming both passages are referring to the same plague, Paul said that 23,000 died “in one day” while Numbers refers to the total number of deaths. Considering the nature of a plague, it would not be surprising that 1,000 more died in subsequent days after the initial infection. [*Complementary Testimony*]

C30. Should we love God (Deut. 6:5, 1Jn. 4:16-18) or fear God (1Pet. 2:17, Luke 12:4-5)?

Believers are to both love God and to fear God (meaning to have reverential awe and respect). Non-believers, on the other hand, may indeed “fear” God (meaning to be afraid of) as Luke points out because he has the power to throw them into Hell. [*Translation Clarification*]

C31. Did God create evil (Isa. 45:7, Jer. 18:11, Lam. 3:38, Ezek. 20:25, Amos 3:6) or not create evil (Deut. 32:4, Jas. 1:13)?

The Hebrew word “רע” rendered as “evil” in the first set of passages is better translated along the lines of “calamity” or “distress”. Accordingly, this “contradiction” does not exist in many Bible translations. [*Translation Clarification*]

C32. Did the Israelites capture Jerusalem (Josh. 10:23,40) or not capture Jerusalem (Josh. 15:63)?

The earlier passages never stated that Jerusalem was captured. They captured the king of Jerusalem who fled in battle, but his city was not taken (Josh. 10:16-20). Other cities were captured in this campaign, but not Jerusalem. [*Misconstrued Details*]

C33. Is God not all-powerful (Judg. 1:19) or all-powerful (Jer. 32:27, Matt. 19:26)?

God is all-powerful. It should be fairly obvious that the “he” in the passage in Judges is referring to Judah, not God. [*Ignored Context*]

C34. Is the correct genealogy order “Azariah, Joash, Amaziah, Azariah, Jotham...Josiah, Jehoiakim, Jeconiah” (1Chr. 3:11-16) or “Uzziah, Jotham...Josiah, Jecohniah” (Matt. 1:9-11)?

Matthew does not mention every descendant in his genealogy and uses the Greek word “ΓΕΝΝΑΩ” which does not necessitate an immediate father/son relationship, but merely indicates that the descendant was “brought forth” from an ancestor such as a patriarch. The same word is similarly used to refer to Abraham who was the father of many nations (Heb. 11:12). (Note that minor variations in names are common between the Old Testament and New Testament because of transliterations from Hebrew/Greek to English.) [*Translation Clarification*]

C35. Was Joram (1Chr. 3:11, Matt. 1:8) or Amaziah (2Chr. 26:1) the father of Uzziah?

The Hebrew word “אב” translated as “father” in 2nd Chronicles carries a wide range of meanings including “forefather” which is more appropriate here. [*Translation Clarification*]

C36. Was Jeconiah the father of Shealtiel (1Chr. 3:17, Matt. 1:12) or was he childless (Jer. 22:30)? Does David’s throne endure forever (Psa. 89:35-37) or was his throne cast down (Psa. 89:44)?

The curse recorded in Jeremiah only says that Jeconiah was to be recorded as if he were childless, not that he actually was childless. This form of disgrace was only limited “during his lifetime” (Jer. 22:31). Although Jesus retained a legal right to the throne through this line, any effects of a curse would not apply anyway since he was also a physical descendant of David through Nathan’s line. David’s throne will indeed endure forever through the reign of his descendant Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Ethan who was the author of the Psalm obviously did not forget what he wrote only a few sentences earlier, but was merely referring to David’s recent defeat in battle at that time, not that his throne would permanently end. [*Misconstrued Details*]

C37. Did Jesse have eight sons (1Sam. 16:10-11) or seven sons (1Chr. 2:13-15)?

Jesse once had eight sons, but his third son, Shammah (1Sam. 16:9), had presumably died after David was chosen by Samuel, because he was not listed in the genealogy in Chronicles which was recorded long after the event. It was not

uncommon for a Hebrew genealogy to omit children that had died. [*Misconstrued Details*]

C38. Did David (1Sam. 17:23,50) or Elhanan (2Sam. 21:19) kill Goliath? Did Elhanan kill Goliath (2Sam. 21:19) or Goliath's brother (1Chr. 20:5)?

David killed Goliath and Elhanan killed Goliath's brother. This was the result of a scribal copying error as other alternate readings in 2nd Samuel correctly contain "Lahmi the brother of Goliath". Accordingly, this "contradiction" does not even exist in some Bible translations. [*Transmission Error*]

C39. Was Ahimelech (1Sam. 21:1, 22:20) or Abiathar (Mark 2:26) the high priest when David ate the consecrated bread?

There could have certainly been more than one high priest (Luke 3:2), but it is more likely that the phrase "in the days of Abiathar the high priest" would be better interpreted as "in the days of Abiathar [who became] the high priest", because Abiathar did later become the high priest (1Sam. 23:9, 30:7). Similarly, stating "when President Washington was a boy" does not imply that Washington was president when he was a boy, but that Washington was a boy who later became president. [*Translation Clarification*]

C40. Did Saul commit suicide (1Sam. 31:4) or was he killed by an Amalekite (2Sam. 1:9-10)?

The Bible doesn't say that Saul was killed by an Amalekite, but accurately reports the Amalekite's story which contradicts the Bible's own account. The Amalekite, whose people had just been defeated (2Sam. 1:1), apparently made up the story that he had killed David's longtime nemesis Saul hoping to get on David's good side and have his life spared. Needless to say, the ploy did not work and he was killed anyway. [*Ignored Context*]

C41. Did David bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem after (2Sam. 5-6) or before (1Chr. 13-14) defeating the Philistines?

The Ark of the Covenant was actually moved twice. The Ark was first moved to the house of Obed-Edom where it remained for three months (2Sam. 6:10-11). And then after the Philistines were defeated, it was brought to Jerusalem. If the critic would have bothered to read on, he would noticed that 1st Chronicles agrees that the Ark was moved after defeating the Philistines (1Chr. 15). The two authors merely chose to narrate the story differently – 2nd Samuel chose to discuss both trips of the Ark together, while 1st Chronicles chose to discuss them separately. [*Complementary Testimony*]

C42. Did Michal have no children (2Sam. 6:23) or five sons (2Sam. 21:8)?

This was probably the result of a scribal copying error as other alternate readings in 2nd Samuel refer to Merab who was Saul's other daughter. Accordingly, this "contradiction" does not even exist in many Bible translations. Another possible translation is that five sons were "brought up for Adriel" (2Sam. 21:8) in which case they would have been raised as adopted children. [*Transmission Error*]

C43. Does God dwell in temples (2Chr. 7:16) or not in temples (2Sam. 7:6, Acts 7:48)? Does God dwell in light (1Tim. 6:16, Jas. 1:17) or darkness (1Ki. 8:12, Psa. 18:11, 97:2)?

An omnipresent God is not *exclusively* limited to any particular location. God can dwell anywhere and everywhere he wants. [*Logical Non Sequitur*]

C44. Did David capture 1,700 horsemen (2Sam. 8:4) or 7,000 horsemen (1Chr. 18:4)?

This was the result of a scribal copying error as the majority of ancient manuscripts of 2nd Samuel correctly contain the 7,000 figure. Accordingly, this "contradiction" does not even exist in some Bible translations. [*Transmission Error*]

C45. Did David strike down 18,000 Arameans (2Sam. 8:13) or did Abishai strike down 18,000 Edomites (1Chr. 18:12)?

David was Abishai's commander so David can also take credit for the victory. The discrepancy in nationality was the result of a scribal copying error as other alternate readings in 2nd Samuel correctly refer to the Edomites. Accordingly, this "contradiction" does not even exist in some Bible translations. [*Transmission Error*]

C46. Did David capture 700 horsemen (2Sam. 10:18) or 7,000 horsemen (1Chr. 19:18)?

In the first passage it says David killed the men of 700 chariots while in the second passage it says David killed 7,000 men which fought in chariots. The "men of 700 chariots" would be more than 700 men since several soldiers rode in each chariot, in this case an average of 10. Thus, there would be 7,000 men who fought in chariots. [*Translation Clarification*]

C47. Was King Abijah's mother's name Maachah, daughter of Absalom (2Sam. 13:27, 2Chr. 11:20) or Michaiah, daughter of Uriel of Gibeah (2Chr. 13:2)?

Maachah and Michaiah are simply two different spellings of the same name. The Hebrew word "בת" translated as "daughter" can also refer to more distant

descendants and thus Maachah was actually the daughter of Uriel and the granddaughter of Absalom. [*Translation Clarification*]

C48. Did the chief of David's mighty men kill 800 men (2Sam. 23:8) or 300 men (1Chr. 11:11) at one time?

These are two different people who both held the title “chief of the captains” at one time or another. After Adino the Eznite was killed, Jashobeam the Hachmonite presumably became his successor. [*Misconstrued Details*]

C49. Did God (2Sam. 24:1) or Satan (1Chr. 21:1) incite David to conduct the census?

It can be said that God indirectly incited David to count the fighting men because he allowed Satan to tempt him. Such was also the case where God allowed Satan to test Job in order to demonstrate his character (Job 1:8-12). [*Complementary Testimony*]

C50. Were there 800,000 (2Sam. 24:9) or 1,100,000 (1Chr. 21:5) fighting men in Israel? Were there 500,000 (2Sam. 24:9) or 470,000 (1Chr. 21:5) fighting men in Judah?

This census was never officially completed (1Chr. 27:24) and thus various groups were omitted at different stages of reporting (1Chr. 21:6). Furthermore, 1st Chronicles counted all men of fighting age (but not necessarily trained), while 2nd Samuel counted those who were ready for battle. [*Misconstrued Details*]

C51. Was David given the choice of 7 years (2Sam. 24:13) or 3 years (1Chr. 21:12) of famine?

This was the result of a scribal copying error as other alternate readings in 2nd Samuel correctly contain the number three. Accordingly, this “contradiction” does not even exist in some Bible translations. [*Transmission Error*]

C52. Did David pay 50 shekels of silver (2Sam. 24:24) or 600 shekels of gold (1Chr. 21:25) for a threshing floor?

David paid 50 shekels of silver for “the threshing floor and oxen” (2Sam. 24:24) and 600 shekels of gold for the entire land on “the site” (1Chr. 21:25). [*Misconstrued Details*]

C53. Did Solomon have 40,000 (1Ki. 4:26) or 4,000 (2Chr. 9:25) stalls of horses?

This was the result of a scribal copying error as an extra zero was mistakenly added in 1st Kings as indicated by other alternate readings which correctly contain the number 4,000. Accordingly, this “contradiction” does not even exist in some Bible translations. [*Transmission Error*]

C54. Did Solomon appoint 3,300 supervisors (1Ki. 5:16) or 3,600 supervisors (2Chr. 2:2,18) for the work of building the temple? Were there 550 chief officers (1Ki. 9:23) or 250 chief officers (2Chr. 8:10) who ruled over the people?

The books of Kings and Chronicles are simply classifying the officials differently for notice that in both cases there are a total of 3,850 officials. There were apparently three classes of officials with 3,300 of the lowest rank, then 300 that were over them, and then 250 that were the highest ranking officials. The book of Kings classifies the middle 300 officials with the 250 chief officers, while the book of Chronicles classifies them with the 3,600 lower supervisors. There is no contradiction if the 300 middle-tier officials participated in both capacities. [*Ignored Context*]

C55. Was the porch on the temple 20 cubits high (1Ki. 6:2) or 120 cubits high (2Chr. 3:4)?

1st Kings does not mention the height of the porch, so this is technically not a contradiction. However, it is probable that the porch on the temple was only 20 cubits high, which is attributable to a scribal copying error as other alternate readings in 2nd Chronicles contain the 20 cubit figure. Accordingly, this “contradiction” does not even exist in some Bible translations. [*Transmission Error*]

C56. Were the pillars of the temple 18 cubits high (1Ki. 7:15, 2Ki. 25:17, Jer. 52:21) or 35 cubits high (2Chr. 3:15)? Were the capitals on the pillars 3 cubits high (2Ki. 25:17) or 5 cubits high (1Ki. 7:16, 2Chr. 3:15, Jer. 52:22)?

The pillars of the temple were 18 cubits high and the capitals on them were 5 cubits high. The passage in 2nd Chronicles can be translated as “which together were 35 cubits long” (which may not have included the half cubit bases) and thus the first “contradiction” does not exist in some Bible translations. 2nd Kings states that the capitals on the pillars were 3 cubits high, but may not have included the network of pomegranates in the measurement which presumably accounts for the other 2 cubits. [*Translation Clarification*]*

C57. Did Solomon build a metal bowl that could hold 2,000 baths (1Ki. 7:26) or 3,000 baths (2Chr. 4:5)?

Two different verbs are used in these passages. The book of Kings indicated that it actually “contained” (Hebrew “כיל”) 2,000 baths while the book of Chronicles indicated that it could “receive” (Hebrew “הזיק”) 3,000 baths as a maximum capacity. Notice that this “contradiction” does not even exist in many Bible translations. [*Translation Clarification*]

C58. Does everyone sin (1Ki. 8:46, 2Chr. 6:36, Prov. 20:9, Eccl. 7:20, 1Jn. 1:8-10) or do those born of God not sin (1Jn. 3:8-9)?

The Greek word “*ἀμαρτία*” (1Jn. 3:8-9) in the present active indicate tense merely indicates that those who follow Jesus do not keep on sinning as a habit. The Bible is quite clear that everyone (except Jesus) has sinned (Rom. 3:23), but those who follow Jesus no longer continue to practice sin. [*Translation Clarification*]

C59. Did Solomon receive 420 talents (1Ki. 9:28) or 450 talents (2Chr. 8:18) of gold from Ophir?

These were two separate occurrences as this trip was made every three years (1Ki. 10:22). In all, over 3,000 talents of gold were brought from Ophir (1Chr. 29:4). [*Misconstrued Details*]

C60. Did king Baasha die in the 26th year of king Asa’s reign (1Ki. 16:6-8) or was he still alive in the 36th year (2Chr. 16:1)?

1st Kings refers to king Asa’s 26th year, while 2nd Chronicles refers to the 36th year of king Asa’s *reign*. Although Asa had already been king, Jewish chronology does not count his reign as starting until the kingdom of Judah was divided from the ten tribes of Israel, which would have not been until Asa’s 16th year. [*Ignored Context*]

C61. Did Ahaziah begin to reign in the 12th year (2Ki. 8:25) or 11th year (2Ki. 9:29) of Joram’s reign? Was he 22 years old (2Ki. 8:26) or 42 years old (2Chr. 22:2)?

This first question is yet another example where the critic would rather assume that the author cannot remember what he wrote only a few paragraphs earlier instead of trying to understand the meaning of the text. In the 11th year Ahaziah “had become king” (2Ki. 8:25) but did not “begin to reign” (2Ki. 9:29) until the 12th year. This is probably because Ahaziah ascended to the throne when Joram had become sick (2Chr. 21:18-19), but could not officially reign until Joram had died. The discrepancy about his age was the result of a scribal copying error as other alternate readings in 2nd Chronicles correctly contain the number 22. Accordingly, this “contradiction” does not even exist in some Bible translations. [*Translation Clarification, Transmission Error*]

C62. Was Zechariah the son of Jehoiada (2Chr. 24:20) or Berekiah (Matt. 23:35)?

These are two different people for there were many people who were named Zechariah. There are at least 30 different Zechariahs mentioned in the Bible, so the critics could have imagined at least 900 such “contradictions”! The Zechariah

in the latter passage is probably referring to John the Baptist's father. [*Misconstrued Details*]

C63. Was Jehoahaz (2Chr. 36:1) or Shallum (Jer. 22:11) Josiah's successor?

These were two different names that both refer to the same person. People were often referred to by more than one name in the Scripture – Simon was called Peter (Matt. 4:18), Saul was called Paul (Acts 13:9), etc. In fact, one of Josiah's other sons, Eliakim, had his name changed to Jehoiakim (2Ki. 23:34). [*Complementary Testimony*]

C64. Was Jehoiachin 18 years old (2Ki. 24:8) or 8 years old (2Chr. 36:9) when he began to reign? Did he reign for 3 months (2Ki. 24:8) or 3 months and 10 days (2Chr. 36:9)?

This discrepancy in age was the result of a scribal copying error as other alternate readings in 2nd Chronicles correctly have the number 18. The length of Jehoiachin's reign was 3 months and 10 days for the author of 2nd Kings was merely rounding his figures. Technically speaking, 3 months and 10 days is still only 3 complete months since it is not enough to be 4 months. [*Transmission Error*]

C65. Why do Ezra's census statistics (Ezra 2) differ from Nehemiah's (Neh. 7)? Were there 200 singers (Ezra 2:65) or 245 singers (Neh. 7:67)? Why don't either set of numbers add up to 42,360 (Ezra 2:64, Neh. 7:66)?

Ezra's census figures are correct. Nehemiah had not yet conducted a census, but merely *found* a copy of an earlier census and reported its contents. It was never claimed that it was the same as Ezra's census or that it was even accurate. It is possible that this census was taken several years after Ezra's census and thus it would be expected that the numbers would vary somewhat as families expand and change. It is also possible that the census Nehemiah found was simply an errant copy of Ezra's census. If you add up all the numbers listed, Ezra's count totals 29,818 while Nehemiah's count totals 31,089. The fact that neither census' numbers add up to total of 42,360 was due to the fact that the census was not exhaustive and only "the number of men" of certain families was listed. [*Misconstrued Details*]

C66. Do the righteous flourish (Psa. 37:28, 92:12, Prov. 12:21, 1Pet. 3:13) or suffer (Isa. 57:1, Heb. 11:37, 12:6, 2Tim. 3:12)?

These verses taken from different contexts are not really "contradictions", but merely provide another example where the critic lacks understanding. In general, the righteous do tend to flourish physically in this world, and also spiritually with paradise awaiting them in Heaven. Yet every righteous person will ultimately die

and may also suffer some temporary trials or persecution along the way. [*Logical Non Sequitur*]

C67. Will the earth be destroyed (Heb. 1:10-12, 2Pet. 3:10, Rev. 20:11) **or never be destroyed** (Psa. 104:5, Eccl. 1:4)?

Everything on this earth will be destroyed, but the earth will be later replaced in some fashion by a new earth (2Pet. 3:13, Rev. 21:1), and thus the earth will always remain forever in some form. [*Ignored Context*]

C68. Is it good (Prov. 4:7) **or not good** (Eccl. 1:18) **to gain wisdom?**

Here is another example of a non-contradiction where the critic clearly lacks wisdom. ☺ Of course it is good to gain wisdom, but it may also bring some grief. That does not mean you will not be better off for it. [*Logical Non Sequitur*]

C69. Is it okay (Prov. 31:6-7, John 2:1-11) **or not okay** (Prov. 20:1, 31:4, Isa. 5:11,22) **to drink liquor?**

Those who were given highest calling of ministry were not allowed to drink any liquor (Lev. 10:9, Num. 6:3, Deut. 29:6, Judg. 13:4, 1Sam. 1:15, Luke 1:15, 1Tim. 3:3). Those in lesser non-ministerial roles were allowed to drink in moderation (Exod. 22:29, Deut. 14:26, Prov. 31:6-7, John 2:1-11, 1Tim. 3:8, 5:23), but no one was ever allowed to get drunk since drunkenness is clearly a sin (1Cor. 5:11, 6:10, Gal. 5:21, Eph. 5:18, 1Pet. 4:3). [*Misconstrued Details*]

C70. Should a fool be answered (Prov. 26:5) **or not be answered** (Prov. 26:4) **according to his folly?**

Only a fool would think that this is a contradiction. ☺ Do you suppose that the author could not remember what he wrote in the previous sentence? This was merely a humorous way to indicate that sometimes it is good to answer the fool and sometimes it is not. Did that answer your question? [*Literary Device*]

C71. Did Nebuchadnezzar invade Jerusalem in the 4th year (Jer. 25:1, 46:2) **or the 3rd year** (Dan. 1:1) **of Jehoiakim's reign?**

This discrepancy is due to the difference between the Israeli and Babylonian calendar systems. In the Israeli system, the first year of a reign began immediately upon his accession to the throne, whereas in the Babylonian system, the first year of a reign was not counted until after the start of the next calendar year.⁴ Jeremiah was using the Israeli system, but Daniel, who was living in Babylon, used Babylonian system. [*Ignored Context*]

C72. Was Jonah swallowed by a fish (Jon. 1:17) or by a whale (Matt. 12:40)?

The writers of the Bible did not use our modern system of taxonomic classification which was not created until thousands of years later. The Israelites generally classified organisms by their observational features, so in this case, if it swam in the water it was a fish. The Greek word “KHTOC” used in Matthew is ambiguous and can range in meaning from fish, whale, or even sea monster. [*Translation Clarification*]

C73. Were there 28 generations (Matt. 1:1-16) or 43 generations (Luke 3:23-38) from David to Jesus? Was Jacob (Matt. 1:6) or Eli (Luke 3:23) the father of Joseph? Is the correct order “Jeconiah, Shealtiel, Zerubbabel, Abihud” (Matt. 1:12-13) or “Rhesa, Shealtiel, Zerubbabel, Neri” (Luke 3:27)?

Matthew presents the genealogy of Jesus’ father Joseph (providing a legal right to David’s throne through Solomon), while Luke presents the genealogy of Jesus’ mother Mary (providing a blood descendant to David’s throne through Nathan). Notice that Matthew was careful to denote the virgin birth by using the feminine Greek pronoun “of whom” referring only to Mary. Luke also references the virgin birth by adding the phrase “as was supposed” while still trying to conform to a proper Jewish genealogy which could not include women. The difference in number of generations between two separate lineages would be expected given almost a thousand years of descendants. It is not at all unusual for the generations in one line of descent to increase more rapidly than in another. In addition, Matthew omitted at least four descendants in his genealogy (1Chr. 3:10-17) using the Greek word “ΓΕΝΝΑΩ” which does not necessitate an immediate father/son relationship, but merely indicates that the descendant was “brought forth” from the ancestor, such as a patriarch. Thus, the average generation in Joseph’s line would be less than 31 years and the average generation in Mary’s line would be about 23 years. The fact that both genealogies contain the common Hebrew names “Shealtiel” and “Zerubbabel” is also not surprising. Indeed, from Joseph’s genealogy, Shealtiel had a brother named Pedaiah who also named one of his son’s Zerubbabel (1Chr. 17-19). Anyone who has worked extensively with genealogies is well aware that common names may reappear quite frequently. The same skeptics would also imagine similar “contradictions” in Dutch genealogies which often list several generations of repetitive sequences. [*Misconstrued Details*]

C74. How can there be 14 generations from the exile until Jesus (Matt. 1:17) when only 13 generations are listed (Matt. 1:12-16)? How can there be 42 generations (Matt. 1:17) when there are only 41 generations listed (Matt. 1:1-16)?

Matthew explicitly says there are fourteen generations and he includes both Jeconiah and Jesus in his count which does indeed equal fourteen generations. Matthew never says that there are a “total” of 42 generations, but lists them in 14

generation segments. The second segment does not end with a person's name but ends with the "exile in Babylon". Thus, a generation is counted from Josiah until the Babylonian captivity and another generation is counted from the Babylonian captivity until Jeconiah was born. [*Misconstrued Details*]

C75. Did Joseph's family immediately flee to Egypt (Matt. 2:14-15,19-23) or did they go to Jerusalem (Luke 2:22,39) before settling in Galilee?

The family did not go to Jerusalem until 40 days later after the purification was over (Luke 2:22), and then they didn't flee to Egypt until about two years later when Herod tried to kill all male children who were less than two years old (Matt. 2:16). Contrary to the popular Nativity scene depiction, the Magi were not present at Jesus's birth (Matt. 2:1) and the family didn't flee to Egypt until after they had left (Matt. 2:13). [*Complementary Testimony*]

C76. Did John the Baptist recognize who Jesus was before his baptism (Matt. 3:13-14), after his baptism (John 1:32-33), or not at all (Matt. 11:2-3)?

John the Baptist recognized who Jesus was to different degrees at different times. John and Jesus were cousins (Luke 1:36) and John knew from the very beginning that Jesus was special (Luke 1:39-44). Then after Jesus was baptized, John was given confirmation that this was indeed the Son of God (John 1:33). Later when John was in prison, he probably wondered if something had gone wrong and was questioning why Jesus had not yet taken his place as conquering king (and perhaps set him free) which was his expectation for the Messiah. Jesus gave him reassurance that he was the Messiah, but just like the other disciples, John probably did not fully understand how the Messiah must first become a suffering servant (Isa. 53). [*Complementary Testimony*]

C77. Did Jesus immediately go to the desert after his baptism (Mark 1:12) or was he still there the next day after his baptism (John 1:35)?

Mark documents the events of Jesus' baptism in the present tense, while John was retelling the story from the past (John 1:19). Thus, the "next day" in John 1:35 is referring to the day after John retold the story of Jesus' baptism, not the day after Jesus' baptism. [*Misconstrued Details*]

C78. Was the order of Jesus' last two temptations jumping off of the temple then worshipping Satan (Matt. 4:1-11) or worshipping Satan then jumping off the temple (Luke 4:1-13)?

A contradiction does not exist if one author presents his material chronologically while another author presents his material topically. Matthew uses Greek words such as "ΤΟΤΕ" and "ΤΑΛΛΙΝ" which indicate that his material is arranged in sequential order. Luke, however, simply makes statements

beginning with “ΚΑΙ” and “ΔΕ” which does not have any chronological implications. When reconstructing the precise order of the events contained in the gospels, it is necessary to note whether an author uses definite linking words or is just stating that something happened. The latter may occur when an author remembers what happened, but may not remember the precise order of events. [*Complementary Testimony*]*

C79. Did Simon and Andrew first meet Jesus while they were fishing on the Sea of Galilee (Matt. 4:18-22, Mark 1:16-17) or when he was identified by John the Baptist at the Jordan river (John 1:35-42)?

Jesus probably first met Simon and Andrew at the Jordan river and then they walked back together to Galilee (John 1:43) since they all lived in the same area. Thus, it was no surprise that when Jesus was later ready to begin his public ministry, they were willing to follow him when he called them by the Sea of Galilee. Notice that neither account said it was when they “first” met Jesus. [*Misconstrued Details, Complementary Testimony*]

C80. Was Jesus’ first sermon on the mount (Matt. 5:1) or on the plain (Luke 6:17)? Did Jesus give nine blessings and no woes (Matt. 5:3-11) or four blessings and four woes in the beatitudes (Luke 6:20-26)?

Nowhere does the Scripture imply that this was Jesus’ “first” sermon or that these were the same event. Jesus was an itinerate evangelist who spoke on many occasions, much like a politician gives multiple stump speeches with similar themes and overlapping material. There is no reason to try to match the details of these two distinct speeches just because they have some similar content. Even if we were to imagine that these were the same speech, it still would not be a contradiction if different witnesses were merely reporting different parts of the same speech. [*Misconstrued Details*]

C81. Should you display your good works (Matt. 5:16) or keep them secret (Matt. 6:1-4)?

This is yet another example where the critic would rather assume that the author cannot remember what he wrote only a few paragraphs earlier instead of trying to understand the meaning of the text. It is quite simple – the one who does good works should not brag or draw attention to himself, yet his good works will speak for themselves as they are noticed by others. [*Complementary Testimony*]

C82. Did Jesus fulfill (Matt. 5:17-18) or abolish (Rom. 7:6,10:4, Eph. 2:14-15, Heb. 7:18-19, 8:13) the Law?

Jesus fulfilled the Law of the Old Covenant and in doing so put an end to it for those who have entered into the New Covenant. The purpose of the Law was

to convict people of their sin and lead them to Christ (Gal. 3:24). Those who follow Jesus have “died to the Law” (Rom. 7:4), “been released from the Law” (Rom. 7:6), and are “no longer under its supervision” (Gal. 3:25), for “Christ is the end of the Law” (Rom. 10:4), “having abolished the Law with its commandments and regulations” (Eph. 2:15), “canceling the written code...by nailing it to the cross” (Col. 2:14). Several other similar “contradictions” raised by the critics over animal sacrifices, clean and unclean foods, Sabbath days, circumcision, divorce, etc. are resolved by simply understanding the differences between the Old and New Covenants. [*Theological Doctrine*]

C83. Should you judge (1Cor. 2:15, 6:2-4) or not judge (Matt. 7:1-2, Luke 6:37, 1Cor. 4:5) others?

If you read Jesus’ words in context (Matt. 7:3-5, Luke 6:41-42), he was not stating that you should not judge others, but that you should not judge others *hypocritically*. The Greek word “ΚΡΙΝΩ” that is translated as “judge” does not necessarily mean “to condemn”, but can mean “to appraise”. Paul further distinguishes between judging others in the world versus judging others in the church (1Cor. 5:12). [*Translation Clarification*]

C84. Did the centurion personally ask Jesus to heal his slave (Matt. 8:5) or did he send others on his behalf (Luke 7:3,6)?

The centurion sent others on his behalf who repeated his words to Jesus. The centurion did in fact say all of those things *through* his messengers. This arrangement is really no different than the White House Press Secretary who speaks for the president and answers questions for him. [*Complementary Testimony*]

C85. Had Jairus’ daughter “just died” (Matt. 9:18) or was she “at the point of death” (Mark 5:23) when he met Jesus?

Both phrases are merely two different ways of saying the same thing. The phrase “at the point of death” was an idiom that when literally translated means “has finality”. Quite literally, if someone has reached the point of death then they have just died. [*Translation Clarification*]

C86. Was Jesus’ tenth disciple called Thaddaeus (Matt. 10:14; Mark 3:13-19) or Judas the son of James (Luke 6:12-16)?

Thaddeus, like many people in the Bible, was referred to by more than one name. Thaddeus was known by other names such as Jude Thaddaeus, Judas Thaddaeus, and Lebbaeus. [*Complementary Testimony*]

C87. Was John the Baptist the reincarnation of Elijah (Matt. 11:14; 17:10-13) or was he not Elijah (John 1:19-21)?

Obviously, John the Baptist was not literally Elijah reincarnated which would go against Biblical teaching (Heb. 9:27), but it says he came “in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:17) in partial fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy (Mal. 4:5). That is why Jesus qualified it saying “if you are willing to accept it” (Matt. 11:14) and that “the disciples understood that he had spoken to them about John the Baptist” (Matt 17:13). [*Theological Doctrine*]

C88. Was Jesus’ testimony about himself valid (John 5:31) or invalid (John 8:14)?

This is yet another example where the critic would rather assume that the author cannot remember what he wrote only a few paragraphs earlier instead of trying to understand the meaning in context. The first passage means that the *legal* testimony of a single witness would not be valid in a court of law (Deut. 19:15). But even if Jesus did testify on his own behalf, it would still be true anyway regardless of the setting. [*Ignored Context*]

C89. Did Jesus speak in parables (Matt. 13:10-11, Mark 4:34), speak everything openly (John 18:20), or were some things kept secret (Matt. 16:20, Mark 9:30)?

Jesus’ public teachings such as the Sermon on the Mount were spoken openly, including the parables. Jesus responded to his accusers by pointing out that his teachings were *public knowledge* and were not kept secret from them. But that was not meant to imply that everything Jesus ever said in his life was a matter of public record. [*Misconstrued Details*]

C90. Did Jesus instruct the disciples to take a staff and sandals (Mark 6:8-9) or not to take them (Matt. 10:9-10, Luke 9:3) on their mission?

Except for interpretive differences in the Greek translations, this could have been a contradiction. Luke’s gospel does not allow them to “take” a staff and does not mention sandals. The word “except” in Mark’s gospel is more literally “if not” and used with the subjunctive tense, it carries the sense that they could “take” nothing on their trip “even if it were only a staff”. Mark’s account does allow them to wear their sandals. Matthew’s gospel does not allow them to “acquire” or buy an extra staff or sandals on their journey. Thus, none of the accounts actually contradicts the others. [*Translation Clarification, Complementary Testimony*]*

C91. Is everyone who is not for Jesus against Jesus (Matt. 12:30, Luke 11:23) or is everyone who is not against Jesus for Jesus (Mark 9:40, Luke 9:50)?

This is not a contradiction for these statements do not present a mutually exclusive situation. While these words were given in two different contexts, everyone still falls into one of two camps – you are either for Jesus or against Jesus. If you are not one, then you are the other, there is no middle ground. [*Logical Non Sequitur*]

C92. Did Herod (Matt. 14:5) or his wife Herodias (Mark 6:19-20) want to kill John the Baptist?

There is no doubt that Herodias wanted to kill John the Baptist and provided the impetus for his imprisonment. Herod would have killed him *at first*, but did not because he was afraid of the people (Matt. 14:5). But later Herod enjoyed talking with John and found him “perplexing” (Mark 6:20). Thus, Herod eventually became “distressed” (Matt. 14:9, Mark 6:26) at the thought of killing him, but ultimately did so to maintain his reputation in front of his dinner guests. [*Complementary Details*]

C93. When Jesus walked on the water, did his disciples worship him (Matt. 14:33) or were they astounded due to their hardened hearts (Mark 6:51-52)?

The disciples worshipped Jesus which is not surprising since they were utterly astounded by his miracle. Their hearts were hardened because they still had not learned anything from this miracle or the previous miracle with the loaves. Still today, many worship Jesus but their hearts are far from him. [*Complementary Details*]

C94. Did a Canaanite (Matt. 15:22) or Greek (Mark 7:26) woman ask Jesus to help her daughter?

The Syrophenicians were descendants of the Canaanites. [*Ignored Context*]

C95. Did Peter find out that Jesus was the Messiah by revelation (Matt. 16:17) or through his brother Andrew (John 1:41)?

Peter may have first heard the claim that Jesus was the Messiah from his brother Andrew, but that does not mean that he necessarily believed it. Indeed, the disciples at times did not seem to understand who Jesus was (Matt. 8:27, Luke 8:25). Jesus’ parents were also told that he was to be the Messiah, but they did not really understand it either (Luke 2:49-50). Later, Jesus asked Peter, “Who do *you* say that I am?” not, “Who have you heard that I am?” By then, Peter had received his own revelation from God confirming that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. [*Complementary Details*]

C96. Is salvation obtained through works (Matt. 16:27, Rom. 2:6-8, Jas. 2:14,17) or by faith (Rom. 3:28, Gal. 2:16, Eph. 2:8-9, Tit. 3:5)?

Salvation obviously comes through faith, but the faith that truly saves is demonstrated by works. If you truly believe something, you will back it up with actions.^{§7.3.1} The passage in James goes on to explain this in detail (Jas. 2:14-26). [*Theological Doctrine*]

C97. Are you supposed to hate (Luke 14:26) or love (Exod. 20:12, Eph. 5:25,28) your family members?

This use of hyperbole was meant to indicate that we should love Christ even more than our biological family members (Matt. 10:37). This polarizing use of the word “hate” was a well-known Jewish idiom which more literally means to “love less” in comparison and was also used elsewhere in the Bible (Gen. 29:30-31, Luke 16:13). [*Literary Device*]

C98. Did the blind men call out to Jesus as he was leaving (Matt. 20:29-34, Mark 10:46-52) or approaching (Luke 18:35-43) Jericho? Were there two blind men (Matt. 20:30) or only one blind man (Mark 10:46, Luke 18:35)?

This would be a clear example of a contradiction, except for the fact that there were two different Jerichos. Matthew and Mark (writing to a Jewish audience) referred to the original city of Jericho of the Old Testament where people had resettled in the ruins; while Luke (writing to a Greek audience) referred to the new city of Jericho that Herod had rebuilt about two miles south of the ruins.⁵ Indeed, there are numerous examples today of “old town” and “new town” designations of the same name. Thus, the healing of the blind men occurred as between the Jerichos, as he was leaving the old Jericho and approaching the new Jericho. Matthew points out that there were actually two blind men, but the other gospels mention only the prominent one who was named Bartimaeus. [*Ignored Context, Complementary Details*]*

C99. Did Jesus ride into Jerusalem on a colt and a donkey (Matt. 21:7) or on just one colt (Mark 11:7, Luke 19:35, John 12:14-15)?

This is the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy which designates that there would be a colt and a donkey (Zech. 9:9). It should be pretty obvious that Jesus only rode one animal at a time. When it says he “sat on them” in Matthew, the “them” refers to the coats. It is also possible that he may have ridden on both animals at one time or another. In any case, there is no contradiction. [*Complementary Testimony*]

C100. Did Jesus cleanse the temple upon arriving in Jerusalem (Matt. 21:10-12) or on the next day (Mark. 11:11-12,15-16)?

Jesus cleansed the temple on the next day. Matthew's gospel is more narrative in nature and often arranges his material topically instead of chronologically. Notice that Matthew merely says "And Jesus entered the temple", not "next", "then", or "afterward". [*Misconstrued Details*]

C101. Did the fig tree that Jesus cursed wither at once (Matt. 21:19-20) or did it wither overnight (Mark 11:13,20-21)?

The fig tree withered immediately but it wasn't noticed until the next morning. Mark said only that the disciples *heard* Jesus curse the fig tree, so they did not necessarily see the result. Whether it was night or they returned by another road, the disciples did not see the withered fig tree until the next morning. Matthew said that the fig tree withered immediately, but he did not say how much later the disciples saw the tree. [*Complementary Testimony*]*

C102. Was Jesus less than (Matt. 24:36, John 14:28) or equal to (John 10:30, Phil. 2:5) God the Father?

Alleged contradictions like these come from failing to understand the doctrine of the Trinity.⁶⁴ Jesus was one with God in Spirit, and yet he limited himself when he took on human form. [*Theological Doctrine*]

C103. Was Jesus crucified during the daytime before (John 13:1, 18:28, 19:14) or after (Matt. 26:17-20, Mark 14:12-17, Luke 22:7-16) the Passover meal?

There is no contradiction here, but there are numerous interpretations concerning exactly when Jesus was crucified. There is some confusion concerning the historical context because some Jewish traditions celebrate 8 days for the Passover/Feast of the Unleavened Bread, while others only celebrate 7 days. There is also a dispute among Jews about when the Passover lamb was supposed to be sacrificed stemming from the phrase "between the two evenings" (Exod. 12:6). To complicate matters, the Passover was a special Sabbath day (John 19:31) and there was a preparation day for the Passover which was not necessarily the same as the preparation day for the regular Sabbath. Further confusion arises because the Jewish days start at sundown, so the evening is actually the start of the next day. Thus, the answer really depends on which Jewish chronology you accept for when the Passover occurred. The general consensus seems to be that Jesus was crucified the day before the Passover and that Jesus' last supper was an early celebration of the Passover which fell within the preparation day(s). Notice that Mark includes the phrase "when it was customary" (Mark 14:12) indicating that the cultural practice may have deviated from the traditional date. [*Ignored Context*]*

C104. Did Satan enter Judas before (Luke 22:3,7) or during (John 13:27) the last supper?

Since Satan had the ability to possess Judas, he would have been able to come and go as he pleased and did so at several opportune times. Notice that in a similar situation, an evil spirit kept coming upon king Saul at different times (1Sam. 16:14-23, 18:10, 19:9). [*Complementary Details*]

C105. Did Jesus pray (Matt. 26:39; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42) or not pray (John 12:27) to avoid the crucifixion? Did he go away three times (Matt. 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42) or only once (Luke 22:39-46) to pray? Did Jesus pray the same words the second time (Mark 14:39) or were they different (Matt. 26:39,42)?

Jesus struggled with the weight of impending death and hypothetically asked if there was an alternative solution, but clearly knew that it was the Father's will and prayed for it to be done instead. Jesus withdrew from his disciples to pray three times. Luke does not say that Jesus "only" prayed once, but simply does not include all of the details of the other gospels. Mark does not imply that the *words* were exactly the same, but that the gist of the *prayer* was the same. Notice that the Greek word "ΛΟΓΟΝ" is singular, not plural. Indeed, Matthew who records the different words the second time also says that Jesus prayed the "same thing" (Matt. 26:44). [*Misconstrued Details*]

C106. Did Judas kiss Jesus (Matt. 26:48-50, Mark 14:44-45, Luke 22:47-48) or did he fail to get close enough (John 18:3-12)?

Nowhere in John does it say that Judas could not get close enough to kiss Jesus. Sometime after Judas kissed Jesus they later "drew back and fell to the ground", but that does indicate how close they were to him. On the contrary, Peter was close enough to a soldier to cut his ear off (Matt. 26:51, Mark 14:47, Luke 22:50, John 18:10). [*Misconstrued Details*]

C107. Did the cock crow once (Matt. 26:34, 74-75, Luke 22:34, 60-61, John 13:38, 18:27) or twice (Mark 14:30, 72) after Peter disowned Jesus?

The word "twice" in both verses in Mark may not have been present in the original autograph, since it did not exist in several early manuscripts. This is further supported by the fact that Mark never records a first time that the cock crowed. But even if the word "twice" were present, the additional information would not be a contradiction. Someone could say they heard a dog barking and another could say they heard a dog bark twice and there is no contradiction. [*Transmission Error, Complementary Testimony*]

C108. Was Jesus given a scarlet robe (Matt. 27:28) or a purple robe (Mark 15:17, John 19:2) to wear?

It would probably depend on who you ask, since people perceive colors differently. Since the same dye was used to create both red and purple cloths, the actual color would have probably been some continuum between the two. It is also possible that the robe displayed both colors in a pattern or was composed of different sections. [*Complementary Testimony*]

C109. Did Simon of Cyrene (Matt. 27:32, Mark 15:21) or Jesus (John 19:17) carry the cross?

Jesus started out carrying his cross and then Simon of Cyrene carried the cross for a portion of the journey. John never says that Jesus carried the cross all the way to Golgotha, but only that he “went forth” with the cross (John 19:17). [*Complementary Testimony*]

C110. Was Jesus crucified at the third hour (Mark 15:25) or the sixth hour (John 19:14-16)?

Mark uses the traditional Hebrew time system where the hours began at sunrise and ended at sunset. Since the sun would have risen about 6:00 AM during that season, Jesus would have been crucified around 9:00 AM. John, however, uses the Roman time system which is similar to ours where hours begin and end at midnight. Thus, John’s account places the crucifixion sometimes later than 6:00 AM which is in agreement with Mark. [*Ignored Context*]

C111. Did the words written on the cross read, “This is Jesus, the king of the Jews” (Matt. 27:37), “The king of the Jews” (Mark 15:26), “This is the king of the Jews” (Luke 23:38), or “Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews” (John 19:19)?

The difference in wording was probably attributed to the fact that the sign was written in three different languages (John 19:20). Matthew may have translated it from Aramaic, John from Latin, and Mark and Luke from Greek. Also note that there are no quotation marks in the original Greek language. The minimal wording of Mark is common to them all, but it is not contradiction that the other gospels recorded more parts of the entire inscription. [*Translation Clarification, Complementary Testimony*]

C112. Was Jesus given wine mixed with gall (Matt. 27:34) or wine mixed with myrrh (Mark 15:23) to drink?

The Greek word “ΧΟΛΗ” translated as “gall” is a more generic word representing a number of bitter substances including myrrh. Thus, there is no contradiction. [*Translation Clarification*]

C113. Did both the criminals insult Jesus (Matt. 27:44, Mark 15:32) or did one of them defend Jesus (Luke 23:42)?

Both criminals began insulting Jesus, but apparently one of them later had a change of heart and began defending him, perhaps after Jesus said, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34) [*Complementary Testimony*]

C114. Did Jesus say “Eli, Eli” in Hebrew (Matt. 27:46) or “Eloi, Eloi” in Aramaic (Mark 15:34)?

Jesus probably originally spoke these words in Aramaic. The difference in the *spellings* used by the authors is due to the way the words were transliterated. The words in Mark were transliterated from Aramaic to Greek to English, while the words in Matthew were presumably transliterated from Aramaic to Hebrew to Greek to English. The Bible’s claim to divine inspiration does not mean that the details of the authors’ literary choices have to be the same. [*Misconstrued Details*]

C115. Were Jesus’ last words “Father into your hands I commit my spirit” (Luke 23:46) or “It is finished” (John 19:30)?

Neither gospel declares that these were Jesus’ “last words” and so he obviously said both phrases before his death. Matthew and Mark did not specify exactly what his last words were either (Matt. 27:50, Mark 15:37). [*Complementary Testimony*]

C116. Did Jesus die before (Matt. 27:50-51, Mark 15:37-38) or after (Luke 23:45-46) the curtain of the temple was torn?

The two occurred simultaneously for Matthew is clear that the curtain was torn “at that moment” (Matt. 27:51). Neither Mark or Luke actually specify when the curtain was torn in relation to his death, but there is no reason to *invent* a contradiction based on the order of their words. [*Misconstrued Details*]

C117. Was Jesus in the tomb for three nights (Matt. 12:40) or for only two nights (Mark 15:42, 16:1-2, Luke 24:7)?

The phrase “a day and a night” was a Jewish idiom which included any part of a day as a whole day.⁶ Jesus was only in the tomb for part of Friday and Sunday, but according to Jewish custom that would still be counted as three days. [*Literary Device*]

C118. Did the chief priests (Matt. 27:3-10) or Judas (Acts 1:18-19) buy Potter's field? Did Judas hang himself (Matt. 27:5) or did he fall headlong and his body burst open (Acts 1:18)? Was the "field of blood" named because it was bought with blood money (Matt. 27:8) or because of Judas's bloody death (Acts 1:19)?

Judas threw his blood money for betraying Jesus back into the temple and it was used to purchase Potter's field in Judas' name. The chief priests could not use the money themselves since it was blood money (Matt. 27:6), so they were merely acting as an agent on Judas's behalf. As an analogy, it may be said that a business owner transacted a deal, when it was actually carried out by one of his employees. This field was previously mentioned by Jeremiah (Jer. 32:6-9) and the type of arrangement was an exact fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (Zech. 11:12-13). Judas hung himself in this field and then presumably the rope later snapped and he fell headlong and his body burst open. According to tradition, the "Field of Blood" is located near a cliff by the Valley of Hinnom which would accommodate both his hanging and subsequent falling. The field was called the "Field of Blood" because it was purchased with blood money. When Acts states that everyone "heard about this" it is referring to the field he "received for his wickedness" and thus named because of the blood money. [*Complementary Testimony*]

C119. Was Jesus' body wrapped in spices before his burial (John 19:39-40) or did the women administer the spices later (Mark 16:1)? Did the women buy their spices before (Luke 23:55-24:1) or after (Mark 16:1) the Sabbath? Did the women go to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body with spices (Mark 16:1; Luke 23:55-24: 1), to see the tomb (Matt. 28:1), or for no reason (John 20:1)?

None of these statements (or the ones in the following questions) are incompatible as different authors were merely providing different details according to what they thought was significant to mention. Jesus' body was prepared with spices by Joseph and Nicodemus according to the Jewish burial customs and later the women came to administer more spices. The women did not intend on performing the entire burial custom for they did not bring strips of linen, but merely wanted to show their devotion to their Lord. There were at least two groups of women who met at the tomb – Mary Magdalene's group bought their spices after the Sabbath, whereas Joanna's group had bought their spices before the Sabbath. Notice that Joanna is only mentioned by Luke (Luke 24:10) who mentions the spices being bought before the Sabbath (Luke 23:56). Joanna's husband was the manager of Herod's household (Luke 8:3) so it is likely that her group left from the royal residence. Most of the women obviously went to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body with spices, although there could have been other motivations as well. [*Complementary Testimony*]

C120. Was Mary Magdalene and Mary (Matt. 28:1), Mary Magdalene, Mary, and Salome (Mark 16:1), or Mary Magdalene alone (John 20:1) at the tomb? Did the women arrive at the tomb at dawn (Matt. 28:1), just after sunrise (Mark 16:2), early in

the morning (Luke 24:1), or while it was still dark (John 20:1)? When the women arrived at the tomb, was the stone already rolled away (Mark 16:4, Luke 24:2, John 20:1) or did they see an angel do it (Matt. 28:16)?

Several women including Mary Magdalene, Mary, Salome, and *Joanna* (Luke 24:10) all went to the tomb. The women left early in the morning while it was still dark and the sunrise occurred “while they were on their way” (Mark 16:2). When the women arrived at the tomb, the stone had already been rolled away. (It never says that the women saw it happen.) [*Complementary Testimony*]

C121. Did an angel (Matt. 28:2), a young man (Mark 16:5), two men (Luke 24:4), or two angels appear (John 20:12) at the tomb? Were the women told what happened to Jesus’ body (Matt. 28:5-7; Mark 16:6-7; Luke 24:5-7,23) or was Mary not told (John 20:2)? Did the women go back and tell the disciples what happened (Matt. 28:8, Luke 24:9) or did they tell no one (Mark 16:8)? Did Mary Magdalene meet Jesus during her first visit (Matt. 28:9) or on her second visit (John 20:11-17) to the tomb?

When Mary Magdalene saw that the stone had been rolled away, she immediately ran back to tell the disciples. The rest of the women approached and saw two angels at the tomb, but only one of the angels did the talking. The Greek word “*ἄγγελος*” merely refers to a messenger without any indication of whether it is angelic or human. Indeed, angels are often indistinguishable from men in Scripture (Gen. 18:1-19:1, Heb. 13:2). The rest of the women were gripped with fear and left to tell the disciples what had happened, but told no one else along the way. Meanwhile, Mary Magdalene had told Peter and John what had happened and they ran back to the tomb (John 20:3-8). So it was on Mary Magdalene’s second trip back to the tomb that she met Jesus. [*Complementary Testimony*]*

C122. Did Jesus appear to eleven disciples (Matt. 27:35; 28:16; Mark 16:14; Luke 24:9,33; Acts 1:9,26) or twelve disciples (1Cor. 15:5) after his resurrection?

After Judas committed suicide there were only eleven official disciples, but it should be noted that there were many others who also witnessed Jesus’ resurrection (1Cor. 15:6). One of these was Mathias who was later chosen to replace Judas and became one of the apostles. By the time Corinthians was written, Mathias was already officially considered to be one of the twelve. [*Complementary Testimony*]

C123. Did Jesus tell his disciples to go to Galilee (Matt. 28:10) or wait in Jerusalem (Luke 24:49, John 20:17, Acts 1:4) after his resurrection? Did Jesus first appear to the disciples in Galilee (Matt. 28:16-17) or in Jerusalem (Luke 24:33-37, John 20:19-20)?

Jesus met with his disciples both in Galilee and Jerusalem on separate occasions. On the day of his resurrection, he met with the disciples in Jerusalem

(Luke 24:33-37, John 19). Sometime after that in the 40 days before he ascended, Jesus met with his disciples again in Galilee (Matt. 28:16-17) as they had repeatedly been instructed (Matt. 26:32, 28:7,10). Matthew skips over several details in his account, but never said that Jesus “first” appeared to his disciples in Galilee. Jesus’ instruction to remain in Jerusalem was made after the disciples had returned to Jerusalem from Galilee. (Notice that Luke, John, and Acts do not specify when that instruction was made). [*Misconstrued Details*]*

C124. Did Jesus ascend to Paradise directly after his crucifixion (Luke 23:43), the night after the resurrection (Mark 16:19, Luke 24:51, John 20:17), or after 40 days (Acts 1:3,9)?

Jesus *descended* to Paradise directly after his crucifixion. Hades, or the place of the dead, contained two compartments which are depicted in the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) – there was a place of punishment and a place of reward called Paradise. This arrangement is also described by the Jewish historian Josephus who refers to the Paradise compartment as “The Bosom of Abraham”.⁷ When Jesus died on the cross, he defeated the power of death (1Cor. 15:54-55) and those in Paradise were set free to enter Heaven (Matt. 27:52-53, Eph. 4:8-10, 1Pet. 3:18-19). After Jesus rose from the dead he appeared to several people, but he had not yet ascended to Heaven (John 20:17). Mark and Luke do not specify what day Jesus ascended, but Acts makes it clear that it was after 40 days. [*Misconstrued Details*]

C125. Did Jesus ascend from Bethany (Luke 24:50-51) or the Mount Olives (Acts 1:9-12)?

Bethany is located on the eastern slope of Mount Olives. [*Misconstrued Details*]

C126. Did Saul’s companions hear (Acts 9:7) or not hear (Acts 22:9) a voice on the road to Damascus? Did they stand (Acts 9:7) or fall to the ground (Acts 26:14)? Did the voice explain Paul’s mission (Acts 26:16-18) or was he to receive it later in Damascus (Acts 9:6, 22:10).

This is yet another example where the critic would rather assume that the author cannot remember what he wrote earlier instead of trying to understand the meaning of the text. The Greek word “*ἀκοῦω*” is used in both verses but it can mean either “to hear” or “to understand”. Both meanings of this word are used in the phrase, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” (Mark 4:9,23, Luke 8:8, 14:35; cf. Matt. 13:15, Mark 8:18, Acts 28:27) The men with Saul clearly heard a voice (audibly), but they did not hear (understand) it. Accordingly, this “contradiction” does not even exist in most Bible translations. All of Paul’s companions fell to the ground when they saw the bright light, and they may or may not have stood back up. The Greek word “*ἵστημι*” that is translated as “stood” could also mean that they “were still”. Paul was told of his mission by the voice and it was probably confirmed to

him again later in Damascus. [*Translation Clarification, Complementary Testimony*]*

C127. Is all (2Tim. 3:16) or only some (1Cor. 7:6,12, 2Cor. 11:17) Scripture inspired by God? Is all (2Tim. 3:16) or only some (Ezek. 20:25, Heb. 7:18-19) Scripture profitable?

Paul never says that his counsel on marriage was not inspired by God, but only that it was not the Lord's command. Many things can be inspired by God in addition to the commands of Jesus. In fact, Paul affirms that what he wrote was clearly led by the Spirit (1Cor. 7:40) and Peter later confirmed that Paul's writings were Scripture (2Pet. 3:15-16). The Law of the Old Testament was also inspired and had a specific purpose that was fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ (Matt. 5:17). The existence of the Law serves as an integral part in leading people to Christ (Gal. 3:24). [*Misconstrued Details*]

C128. Should you bear (Gal. 6:2) or not bear (Gal. 6:5) one another's burdens?

This is yet another example where the critic would rather assume that the author cannot remember what he wrote two sentences earlier instead of trying to understand the meaning of the text. This is not a mutually exclusive condition for you should both carry your own burden and help carry others' burdens as well. [*Logical Non Sequitur*]

¹ Jim Meritt, "A List of Biblical Contradictions", July 24, 1992; http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/jim_meritt/bible-contradictions.html, accessed February 19, 2012. Shabir Ally, *101 Clear Contradictions in the Bible*, Al Attique Publishers: 2001; <http://www.missionislam.com/compred/biblecontra.html>, accessed July 15, 2020. P. Wesley Edwards, "Bible Errors and Contradictions", September 1, 2004.

² Joseph Smith Jr., *The Book of Mormon*, Alma 7:10, p. 240, E.B. Grandin: Palmyra, NY, 1830.

³ Eugene Clute et al., *Progressive Architecture*, vol. 37, p. 135, Reinhold Publishing Corporation: 1956.

⁴ Gleason L. Archer Jr., "Daniel", *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, p. 14, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI, 1985.

⁵ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Matthew 20:29, Broadman Press: Nashville, TN, 1930.

⁶ *Babylonian Talmud*, Shabbath 86a, Pesahim 4a.

⁷ Josephus, "Josephus' Discourse To The Greeks Concerning Hades", *The Works of Josephus*, new updated ed., p. 813, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.: Peabody, MA, 1987; <http://www.ccel.org/j/josephus/works/hades.htm>, accessed July 15, 2020.

Appendix D:

External Consistency

The external consistency of the Bible is impressive for there is not any valid contradiction between the Bible and any factual scientific, historic, or archeological finding. Some people assume that there must be many, but can you name even one? Overall, the scientific reliability of the Bible is outstanding and famous scientists such as Newton, Pasteur, Pascal, Faraday, and Kepler were all Christians who used their Biblical knowledge to help advance the cause of science. It is important to understand, however, that the Bible is not a science textbook and does not claim to be one. God spoke accurately in a manner that the people could understand at the time, not with modern day scientific jargon.

The Bible simply claims to be *true* and must be interpreted according to the literary devices it employs. The Bible contains history, demographics, genealogies, and many hard facts that are verifiable, but also conveys many truths through poetry, symbolism, idioms, parables, and analogies that are not scientific in nature. For example, when Jesus said “You are the salt of the earth” (Matt. 5:13) no one takes that to mean that the chemical composition of men consists entirely of NaCl! Poetical references to a “sunrise” or describing the clouds as “storehouses” are literary terms *still used by poets today*; yet no one today believes that the sun actually rises in the sky around a stationary earth or that there are tanks of water suspended above the clouds. Consider this poetic passage describing the presence of God (Hab. 3:10):

The mountains saw you and trembled.
The torrents of water swept by.
The deep uttered its voice and lifted high its waves.

No one who read this passage in 600 BC really thought that the mountains had eyes or that the ocean could speak, for personification has long been utilized as a literary device. Certainly, anyone who wants to misconstrue a passage beyond its *original intent* could easily deride a poet’s intelligence for using these scientifically inaccurate terms; but then we will simply deride their intelligence for *trying to interpret the genre of poetry like a science textbook!* The Bible asks for no special treatment, but only the same literary interpretation that would be applied to any other work of literature. Let the reliability of the Bible stand on its many hard facts that are scientifically verifiable, not by an assault on its subjective artistic expressions.

The Bible also notes that several events were simply miracles^{§3.3} that cannot be explained by any other natural processes which of course would be expected from a supernatural God.^{§4.5} Some miracles, however, may also have alternative physical explanations whereby God used natural forces to bring about his desired result. For example, it is possible that the occurrence of manna and quail in the

desert could be explained by natural processes that were brought about by God.¹ Reasonable answers are provided below to the questions most commonly raised by critics against the Bible.

D1. Is the earth only about six thousand years old? (Gen 1)

Many scientists interpret the Bible to be fully compatible with the standard evolutionary timeline denoting an age of billions of years, so this is not necessarily a problem. Some would argue, however, that the most straightforward reading of the Bible seems to indicate six literal days of creation (Gen. 1) and that the earth is only about 6,000 years old based on the genealogical records (Gen. 5).³ Surprisingly, there does not seem to be a single *valid* scientific fact that would necessarily contradict that claim either! All radiometric dating techniques which have been used to date the earth, for example, such as potassium-argon, argon-argon, uranium-lead, and rubidium-strontium rely on three assumptions which have all been proven to be unreliable: the decay rate is constant, there is no initial daughter component, and there is no external addition/loss of material. These dating techniques have repeatedly been disproven as rocks from recent lava flows only a few years old are consistently dated at millions of years old when tested by independent laboratories.^{4,5,6}



Hammer allegedly Carbon-14 dated at 700 years old embedded in lower cretaceous rock dated at 110-115 million years old?

But doesn't the star light coming from distant galaxies prove that the universe is billions of years old? Not necessarily. Based on the theory of relativity, if the earth were in a gravitational well, time would be moving much slower on earth but faster in the rest of the universe due to the Gravitational Time Dilation Effect.⁷ Remember, according to Einstein *time is a variable*. It should also be pointed out that everything God created had an apparent age – animals were created as adults, the trees had rings, rocks were already hardened, etc. It is not necessary to assume that God was dishonest and created light in-transit to make the universe look older than it is, because according to the theory of relativity, that is just how laws of the universe work.

Furthermore, there is some scientific data confirming that the earth is only thousands of years old. Tree ring and ice core dating place the age of the earth at a magnitude of thousands of years, not billions of years.⁸ Geologists are well aware that objects which are supposed to be millions of years old such as diamonds,⁹ coal,¹⁰ fossil fuels,¹¹ dinosaur bones,¹² and petrified wood¹³ are routinely dated to only be thousands of years old by Carbon-14 dating. Any rock which still contains substantial amounts of ¹⁴C cannot possibly be over one million years old!¹⁴ Processes which were once thought to take millions of years have now been conclusively proven to take only a few years. For example, 600

feet of geological strata were formed at Mount St. Helens in only about 6 years¹⁵ and petrification naturally occurs in about 5 months at the Petrifying Well at Mother Shipton's Cave in Knaresborough, England.¹⁶ An in-depth analysis of this topic is well beyond the scope of this book, but any theory of origins formed by a rationalist must at least account for these scientific facts.

D2. How could there be light with day and night before the sun was created?

(Gen. 1:3-5, 16-18) How could the plants survive before the sun was created? (Gen. 11-13, 16-18)

The creation of the universe was clearly a miraculous event that is not testable, observable, or repeatable. Even according to the Big Bang theory “all of the known laws of physics” did not apply.¹⁷ Ironically, the Big Bang theory also maintains that light existed before the sun was created. Night and day could still be marked due to the rotation of the earth relative to this light. The plants could also use this light before the sun was created, but they would have easily been able to survive for one day without light anyway since the sun was created the next day.

D3. Do the heavens exist as a solid vault or dome over the earth? (Gen. 1:17, Job 22:14, Psa. 19:1, Isa. 40:22, Ezek. 1:22-26, 10:1, Amos 9:6)

Such a structure exists only in the imagination of the critics who are not being fair to the Bible translations. There are at least three different meanings of the word “heaven” used in the Bible: the sky above the earth, the expanse of outer space, and the spiritual place where God dwells. None of these verses depict a *solid* dome covering the earth, and the word that is sometimes translated as “firmament” is definitely not a solid structure since the birds are able to fly through it (Gen. 1:20). It should be noted that the atmosphere of the sky may appear like a “dome” surrounding the entire earth giving further credence to the Bible's teaching that the earth is round!

D4. Do snakes eat dirt? (Gen. 3:14)

Well yes, technically in a sense they do as they repeatedly dart their forked tongue in and out to sample the particles in the air, but this is probably not what the author meant either. 😊 This was just a normal figure of speech such as the modern phrase, “Eat my dust!” Similar metaphors are used in other verses in the Bible to indicate a lowly existence (Psa. 72:9, Isa. 49:23), and one of them contains another reference to a snake (Mic. 7:17).

D5. Who did Cain marry? (Gen. 4:17)

Adam and Eve had many other children, who also had many other children, etc. By the time Cain considered marriage, there were many other people who had

populated the earth. In fact, there were so many people that God had to protect Cain so that others would not kill him (Gen 4:15-16).

D6. Can people live to be over 900 years old? (Gen 5)

Although there are many factors which have been correlated with aging, researchers do not really know for sure what causes aging and thus there is no theoretical physical upper bound.¹⁸ Extremely old ages were similarly listed for ancient Sumerian kings prior to Noah's flood in other non-Biblical literature.¹⁹ Some scientists theorize that the early atmospheric conditions on earth were completely different than today which could account for these longer lifespans. Notice that after Noah's flood, peoples' ages gradually decreased until the expected maximum lifespan was reduced to 120 years (Gen. 6:3).

D7. How did all of the animal species in the world fit on Noah's Ark? (Gen. 7:2-10)

The dimensions of the ark are 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high (Gen. 6:15) resulting in approximately 1,518,000 cubic square feet, or about 569 railroad stock cars. There are currently millions of species of animals, but the vast majority of these were *not* taken on the ark including all the species of fish, tunicates (sea squirts, sea pork, etc.), echinoderms (star fish, sea urchins, etc.), mollusks (clams, oysters, etc.), coelenterates (corals, sea anemones, etc.), aquatic-mammals (whales, porpoises, etc.), amphibians, jellyfish, sponges, protozoans and other single-cell creatures; as well as many species of amphibians (frogs, salamanders, etc.), reptiles (sea turtles, alligators, etc.), arthropods (lobsters, crabs, etc.), and insects, and worms. It has been calculated that only about 16,000 species (including young dinosaurs) were needed on the ark and the average size of all those animals compares to a small rat.²⁰ (Many of these species were insects which do not take up that much space.) Thus, it has been calculated that there was more than ample room for all of the animals on the ark as well any food that might have been necessary to feed them.

D8. Is the account of global flood possible? (Gen 7:11-24)

Many scientists interpret Noah's flood to only be a local flood and argue that the Bible does not explicitly say that the flood was "global", so this is not necessarily a problem. Some would argue, however, that the most straightforward reading of the Bible seems to indicate that the flood was global in nature (Gen. 6:13,17, Isa. 54:9, 1Pet. 3:20, 2Pet. 3:6). Many are surprised to learn that this proposition is also scientifically sustainable. In addition to the historical account of a flood from every continent,^{§5.3.4} there is much scientific evidence confirming the existence of a global flood. Geologists are well aware that coal, oil, and fossils are only formed when organic matter is rapidly buried by a geological process such as a flood. How did that incredible volume of organic matter get buried under hundreds of feet of dirt? The once held uniformitarian myth that animals would die and gradually be covered by dust until it formed a layer of the geological

column is now universally rejected by scientists in favor of catastrophism.²¹ Obviously, when animals die, their bodies just rot and decay; they do not form fossils unless they are buried by a geological process like a flood. Likewise, marine animals do not turn into fossils when they die underwater, since they also just rot and decay unless they are rapidly covered over by sediment. The uniformitarian myth is also disproved by the existence of polystrate fossils which span multiple layers of geological strata²² and by the numerous fossils found in the wrong geological strata.²³ Scientists are not allowed to throw away facts just because they contradict the secularist's religion.

Geologists now admit that all of these phenomena are caused by flooding, but some propose that they were only caused by a series of *local* floods. Coal, oil, and fossils can be found about everywhere, however, so how did almost every square inch of the earth get flooded? Especially where there are no water sources? Why are fossilized shells found on the tops of mountains, including Mount Everest? And where are coal, oil, and fossils being formed by any *local* floods today? Based on the magnitude of sediment deposited, it is much more likely that these phenomena were caused by a global flood, perhaps from a large comet or asteroid hitting the ocean. The very existence of the geological column with several continuous layers spanning much of the globe would only be possible if it was deposited by a global flood. The upheaval caused by a global flood also nicely explains phenomena such as extinction of the dinosaurs, petrification of objects where there is no water, the resulting ice age, and plate tectonics. An in-depth analysis of this topic is well beyond the scope of this book, but there is little doubt that rationalists who objectively investigate *both sides of the issue* will be able to establish the matter for themselves.



In situ polystrate fossilized lycopoid in the Joggins Formation, Nova Scotia

D9. Did no rainbows exist until after the flood? (Gen. 9:12-13)

Obviously, the physical laws governing the refraction of light were in existence before Noah's flood. The Bible never claims that the rainbow was *created* after the flood, but only that it would serve as a *sign* after the flood. Notice that the phrase "I have set" is in the past tense indicating that rainbows had already been in existence.

D10. Aren't there a number of unfulfilled prophecies in the Bible? (Gen. 15:18-21, Josh. 3:10, Isa. 52:1, Ezek. 29:9-14)

Why yes, and there are many more than these. There are still portions of several *future* prophecies which either apply to the millennial reign of Jesus Christ or the establishment of a new Heaven and Earth which have not been fulfilled yet. In order for something to be classified as false prophecy, though, it would have to fail to meet the conditions specified for its fulfillment. But these futuristic prophecies are given as open-ended events that are not tied to any specific event which has already happened.

D11. Do striped sticks cause livestock to become genetically altered? (Gen. 30:39)

Jacob may have *thought* that making the ewes look at something striped might help them conceive spotted offspring, but the Bible states that Jacob's breeding success was not a natural phenomenon, but a miraculous one brought about by God's intervention (Gen. 31:12).

D12. Aren't the Amalekites still being remembered? (Exod. 17:14-16)

The phrase "blot out the memory of Amalek" refers to the eventually extinction of the Amalekites, not that no one could remember that they ever existed or else God would not have commanded their defeat to be recorded. Indeed, the same verses indicated that God would continue to be at war with them "from generation to generation". Saul was later commanded to wipe out the Amalekites but failed to obey his instructions (1Sam. 15). The remnant of the Amalekites was not totally destroyed until many years later (1Chr. 4:43).

D13. Do rabbits chew the cud? (Lev. 11:6, Deut. 14:7)

Critics correctly point out that rabbits do not regurgitate their food and chew the cud like other ruminants. But they do eat their feces and chew it in a process called pseudoruminantion. Apparently, the Israelites did not make a distinction between these two similar processes. The Israelites generally classified organisms by their observational features, not by modern biological terminology that had not been invented yet.

D14. Is the bat a bird? (Lev. 11:13-19, Deut. 14:11-18)

Modern science uses a different taxonomic classification system than the one used by the Israelites. To them, a bird was simply classified as any animal that flies. That is not an error, but merely a difference in classification. The Israelites generally classified organisms by their observational features, not by modern biological terminology that had not been invented yet.

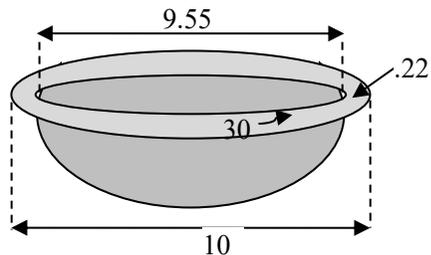
D15. Do insects have four feet? (Lev. 11:21-23)

Modern science uses a different taxonomic classification system than the one used by the Israelites. While modern science classifies insects as having six legs, the Israelites classified the locust, katydid, cricket or grasshopper as having four front “feet” (Hebrew “רגל”) used for walking and two back legs (Hebrew “כרע”) used “for hopping on the ground”. Thus, the Bible’s description is perfectly correct, but just different than our modern classification. The Israelites generally classified organisms by their observational features, not by modern biological terminology that had not been invented yet.

D16. Does the value of π equal 3? (1Ki. 7:23,26, 2Chr. 4:2,5)

Because the bowl that was mentioned was 10 cubits in diameter and 30 cubits in circumference, the critics naively *assumed* that the value of π was 3. (The same misinformed critics often claim that Indiana passed a law to set π equal to 3, but that bill was not based on the Biblical account, the value of 3.2 was proposed for π , and it was never passed.)²⁴ Notice that God himself made no comment whatsoever there concerning the value of π , nor did he even specify those dimensions. The Bible merely states that Hiram made an object with those dimensions. One could argue that the level of precision was not specified so they could have been using rounded figures, and a cubit which is measured from the length from the elbow to the outstretched fingers is not exactly an accurate measuring device.

Although that answer would be sufficient, it turns out that when the object is actually made, the Biblical dimensions are astoundingly precise. That is because what the critics failed to realize is that the *rim had a thickness!* That’s right, objects in the real world do not consist of lines of



infinitesimal width! The Bible specifically says that the rim was a “handbreadth in thickness” (1Ki. 7:26, 2Chr. 4:2) which would be approximately .22 cubits thick (assuming the common standard of 4 inches for a handbreadth and 18 inches for a cubit). So based on a circumference of 30 cubits, the bowl had an *inside* diameter of 9.55 cubits to its inner edges, and then had a rim “like a cup” at the top extending .22 cubits outward all the way around. Thus, the outside diameter of the bowl including the rim would be 9.99 cubits. Notice that the Bible specifically states that the bowl’s measurement of 10 cubits was “from rim to rim” which would be the *outside* diameter. This places the Bible’s dimensions at 99.9 percent accuracy for the object that was actually made, with precision to about one hundredth of a cubit! This is yet another example of critics who apparently have their own problems with precision when it comes to reading and thinking.

D17. Is the earth flat? (Job 9:6, 28:4, 37:3, 38:4,13,44, Psa. 104:5, Isa. 11:12, Jer. 16:19, Dan. 4:11, Matt. 4:8, Rev. 7:1)

Nowhere in the Bible does it ever say that the earth was flat! Most of these verses contain poetic expressions such as the “ends of the earth” (Job 38:13, Jer. 16:19, Dan. 4:11), “four corners of the earth” (Isa. 11:12, Rev. 7:1), and the “foundation” (Job 9:6, 38:4,44, Psa. 104:5) of the earth. Critics seem to be unaware that most of these metaphors continue to be used to this day by many famous authors and poets. For example, the “four corners” (sometimes translated as “four quarters”) is a metaphor that refers to the four directions of north, south, east, and west. Some of these verses seem to indicate that the whole earth can be viewed from a single point which the critics then *assume* to mean the earth must be flat (Dan. 4:10-11, Matt. 4:8, Rev. 1:7). But these contexts are clearly spiritual, not physical in nature: a dream, an encounter with Satan, and Christ’s second coming. Even ancient people knew that you could only see but a few miles from the top of a mountain. To the contrary, the Bible actually describes the earth as being round (Isa. 40:22, Prov. 8:27) centuries before science ever figured it out. It also states that God “suspends the earth on nothing” (Job 26:7) which is not a bad explanation of space for a book written in 2000 BC.

D18. Did dinosaurs coexist at the same time as humans? (Job 40:15-24, Job 41, Psa. 74:13-14, 104:25-26, Isa. 27:1)

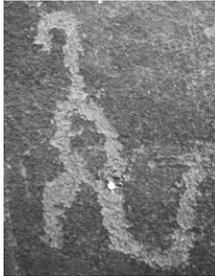
Some scholars interpret the behemoth and leviathan as being poetical descriptions of animals such as a hippopotamus or a whale. While these passages do contain poetical expressions, there are several details which do not really fit any animal today, but seem to depict creatures more like dinosaurs. For example, the description of the behemoth sounds more like a brontosaurus than a hippopotamus:

“Look at the behemoth which I made along with you. It eats grass like an ox. Consider the strength it has in its loins and the power of the muscles of its belly. Its tail sways like a cedar; the sinews of its thighs are knit together. Its bones are tubes of bronze; its limbs like bars of iron...It lies under the lotus plants, in the cover of the reeds in the marsh.” (Job 40:15-22)

Likewise, the description of the leviathan sounds more like a plesiosaurus than a whale:

“Can you pull out leviathan with a fishhook or tie its tongue down with a rope?...Its ring of teeth are fearful. Its scales are its pride, tightly sealed together so that no air can come between them. They are joined one to another; they cling together and cannot be separated...Strength resides in its neck...When it rises up, the mighty are terrified; they retreat because of its thrashing, The sword that reaches it has no effect, nor does the spear, the dart, or the javelin. It treats iron like straw and brass like rotten wood.” (Job 41:1-27)

Such descriptions of dinosaurs in ancient literature are not uncommon and are probably responsible for the legend of dragons in cultures from every continent.²⁵ If indeed, “no human being has ever seen a live dinosaur” as reported by National Geographic,²⁶ then there would not be depictions of dinosaurs found in ancient petroglyphs.



Edmontosaurus petroglyph dated before 500 AD at Havasupai Canyon²⁷



Brontosaurus petroglyph dated 700-1250 AD found at Natural Bridges National Monument²⁸



Stegosaurid stone carving dated 1186 AD found at temple of Ta Prohm²⁹

Since the authenticity of these petroglyphs is not questioned, the best the critics can do is try to convince you that these don't really look like dinosaurs. 😊 These petroglyphs are particularly astonishing given that dinosaurs were unknown to modern science until the late 17th century, and they did not know what they looked like until the mid-19th century.³¹

Scientists have now found numerous samples of *soft fleshy tissue* from various dinosaurs complete with blood vessels, red blood cells,³² collagen,³³ and amino acid sequences³⁴ that have been Carbon-14 dated to only a few thousands of years old.³⁵ And while the first reports of human and dinosaur tracks from the Paluxy riverbed have been largely discredited, there have been reports of human and dinosaur tracks found by other archaeologists.³⁶ Still today, there are claims that dinosaurs have been sighted in modern times such as the Mokele-Mbembe.³⁷ If some dinosaur species did coexist with humans, it would not have any impact on evolutionary theory any more than other “living fossils” which have been found such as the coelacanth³⁸ or the Wollemi pine.³⁹



Possible plesiosaurus caught in net off New Zealand coast³⁰

D19. Do snails melt? (Psa. 58:8)

In a poetic book such as Psalms, this is just considered to be a figure of speech since slugs and snails leave behind a trail of liquid as they move. Snails do

actually shrivel up and appear to melt if they are not able to replenish their moisture when exposed to the heat.

D20. Does the moon generate light? (Isa. 13:10, 30:26, Matt. 24:29)

Light does indeed come from the moon in the form of *reflected* light. The Bible never says that the moon “generates” its own light.

D21. Was Ezekiel’s predicted destruction of Tyre a false prophecy? (Ezek. 26)

Similar to many other poetic and prophetic passages in the Bible, this prophecy in Ezekiel contains at least three different chiasmic structures designated by the pronouns “he”, “they”, and “I”. The “he” pronoun refers to Nebuchadnezzar’s attack on the city which was fulfilled when the city was first besieged. The later shift to the “they” pronoun (Ezek. 26:12) refers to destruction by “many nations” (Ezek. 26:3) which was fulfilled by Alexander the Great’s destruction of the city. The final shift to the “I” pronoun (Ezek. 26:13) refers to God’s final judgment on the city, including the statement that it “will never be rebuilt” (Ezek. 26:14). The original city of Tyre was totally destroyed, and as a result of the causeway that was built by Alexander the Great in 332 BC,⁴⁰ the city became completely submerged underwater “in the bed of the sea”⁴¹ just as the prophecy predicted (Ezek. 26:19). The ancient city was never rebuilt, but another city which is sometimes referred to as “new” Tyre was built nearby.

D22. Was Belshazzar the son of Nebuchadnezzar? (Dan. 5:2)

Belshazzar, who critics once denied even existed, is now acknowledged to be the son of Nabonidus. When Daniel refers to Nebuchadnezzar as his “father” (Hebrew “אב”), it simply means that he was his forefather or predecessor similarly to how it was used elsewhere in the Bible (Gen. 4:21, 17:5, Josh. 24:3, Isa. 51:2).

D23. Why is there no record of Darius the Mede? (Dan. 5:30-31, 9:1)

Rulers often had dual titles and thus the name “Darius the Mede” was probably another name for Cyrus the Great whose mother was a Mede, or possibly Gubaru (not to be confused with Ugbaru) who was the first governor of Babylon.

D24. Do stars fall to the earth? (Dan. 8:10, Matt. 24:29, Rev. 6:13-14, 8:10-11)

The words that are being translated as “star” can also have the meaning of comet, meteor, or asteroid. In English, we still refer to meteorites as “falling stars” or “shooting stars”. It should also be pointed out that all of these references are future events which have not occurred yet, so any of those meanings are

possible. The context of the “star” called Wormwood would fit nicely with the scenario of the impact of a meteor or comet (Rev. 8:10-11).

D25. Could Jonah survive being swallowed by a whale for three days? (Jon. 1:17, 2:10)

This was probably just another miracle documented in the Bible, although a natural explanation may also be possible. As previously mentioned, the “whale” could have been any sea creature.^{8C72} While the similar report of James Bartley being swallowed by a whale seems somewhat dubious,⁴² there are several other stories of interest:

- In 1758, a sailor fell overboard and was swallowed by a large shark in the Mediterranean. The crew shot the shark with a gun and it vomited up the sailor who was still alive and only slightly hurt.⁴³
- In 1771, after being struck by a whaling vessel in the South Seas, a sperm whale attacked a boat and took Marshall Jenkins under the water, but resurfaced later and spit him back out alive but bruised.⁴⁴
- In 1863, Peleg Nye was knocked out of his long boat at Cape Cod and swallowed by a sperm whale which had just been harpooned. The dead whale and his unconscious body later floated to the surface, but Nye was still alive.⁴⁵
- A dog was lost overboard from a ship in the Bearing Sea, but was found alive in the air chamber of the whale captured seven days later.⁴⁶

So while it is possible that this miracle could also have a natural explanation, it seems that it was primarily considered to be a supernatural sign (Matt. 12:38-42, 16:1-4).

D26. Was Jesus born during the reign of Herod the Great in 4 BC or when Quirinius was governor of Syria in 6 AD? (Matt. 2:1, Luke 2:2)

The Greek word “ΗΓΕΜΟΝΕΥΩ” that was rendered as “governor” can also designate lesser positions of leadership, so it is possible that Quirinius was only a procurator or prefect at the time the census was conducted around 4 BC. Others have held that Quirinius was actually governor twice which is supported by the *Lapis Tiburtinus* inscription found in Tivoli in 1794 which mentions that an unnamed Roman citizen served as governor twice, and at least the second time was the governor of Syria.⁴⁷

D27. Is the mustard seed the smallest of all seeds? (Matt. 13:32)

There are indeed smaller seeds than the mustard seed, but the passage is perhaps better translated that the mustard seed was the “least” (Greek “ΜΙΚΡΟΤΕΡΟΣ”) of the seeds in terms of importance, not necessarily the

“smallest” in size. The passage also limits the flora’s genre by specifying “among the herbs”.

D28. Was Jesus’ second coming a false prophecy since it was not fulfilled before the disciples died during his generation? (Matt. 16:28, 24:34, Mark 9:1, 13:30, Luke 9:27, 21:32)

The first prophecy did not say that Jesus would return before the disciples died, but that they would *see* the coming of the kingdom of God before they died. This was fulfilled when the disciples saw the miraculous establishment of the Church when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). The Greek word “ΓΕΝΕΑ” rendered as “generation” literally refers to those who are descendants and is better translated along the lines of a “race” or “kind”.

D29. Must a seed die before it can grow? (John 12:24, 1Cor. 15:36)

Although a seed may appear to be dead, scientists note that it must still contain a vestige of life in its embryo or it will not germinate. The Greek word “ΑΠΟΘΗΝΗΚΩ”, however, does not imply physical death here, but is being used figuratively. The Bible merely says that the seed must die (i.e. sacrifice its life in its current form) in order to become a plant. And this is precisely what Jesus said in context, “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains only a seed.” This echoes the sentiment in the next verse that unless we die to ourselves (which also is not implying physical death), we will not be transformed to experience eternal life (John 12:25, Rom 7:4).

D30. Didn’t the Bible borrow its stories from other religious traditions?

The allegation that the Bible has borrowed or stolen stories from other ancient religions is a relatively new criticism and was never argued when the Biblical accounts were written. There are certainly many pagan myths that share some similar aspects to some of the Bible’s *historical* accounts, but there is no evidence that the Bible ever borrowed from any of them. Instead, many of these myths are poor renditions of Biblical accounts such as the creation story or Noah’s flood that were distorted as they were orally passed down in other cultures. In some cases, the pagan myths were syncretistically applied to the Biblical account *after the fact*. For instance, pagan deities such as Mithra and Attis were subsequently endowed with characteristics similar to Jesus such as a virgin birth, performing miracles, crucifixion, and



A man was sent to this earth by his father and raised in humble circumstances. His destiny was to help the oppressed and stand for justice for all humanity. This is not that man.

resurrection from the dead, but the details are all exaggerations of their original mythology. For example, Attis was born from a pomegranate fruit and Mithra was born from a rock, neither which is comparable to Jesus' virgin birth.

¹ Werner Keller, *The Bible as History*, 2nd revised ed., p. 128-130, Barnes and Noble, Inc.: New York, 1995; <https://books.google.com/books?id=GWwuKrbNY5EC>, accessed July 15, 2020.

² Glen J. Kuban, "The London Hammer: An Alleged Out-of-Place Artifact", 1997; <http://paleo.cc/paluxy/hammer.htm>, accessed July 15, 2020. Ian Juby, "Cretaceous Hammer Time! (The London artifact, a fossil hammer)", *CrEvo newsletter with Ian Juby and CORE Ottawa*, Jan 30, 2011; <http://ianjuby.org/newsletter/?p=424>, accessed July 15, 2020.

³ James Usher, *Annales Veteris Testamenti* (Annals of the Old Testament), 1650.

⁴ Andrew A. Snelling, "The Cause of Anomalous Potassium-Argon 'Ages' for Recent Andesite Flows at Mt. Ngauruhoe, New Zealand, and the Implications for Potassium-Argon 'Dating'", Fourth International Conference on Creationism, Pittsburgh, PA, August 3-8, 1998; <http://static.icr.org/i/pdf/technical/The-Cause-of-Anomalous-Potassium-Argon-Ages.pdf>, accessed July 15, 2020.

⁵ M. Ozima, S. Zashu, Y. Takigami & G. Turner, "Origin of the anomalous ⁴⁰Ar-³⁹Ar age of Zaire cubic diamonds: excess ⁴⁰Ar in pristine mantle fluids", *Nature*, vol. 337, p. 226-229, January 19, 1989; <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v337/n6204/abs/337226a0.html>, accessed July 15, 2020.

⁶ Steven A. Austin, "Excessively Old 'Ages' For Grand Canyon Lava Flows", *Acts & Facts*, vol. 21, no. 2; <http://www.icr.org/article/excessively-old-ages-for-grand-canyon-lava-flows>, accessed July 15, 2020.

⁷ D.R. Humphreys, *Starlight and Time*, Master Books: Green Forest, AR, 1994.

⁸ Tree rings have been dated up to 11,000 years but this does not take into account that multiple rings are often formed in a single year. Ice core have been dated up to 150,000 years but those estimates of ice accumulation have been proven to be flawed. For example, several World War II airplanes were buried under 260 feet of ice after only 50 years (R. Bloomberg, "WW II planes to be deiced", *Engineering Report*, March 9, 1989). In both cases, the age estimates are nowhere close to even a million years, let alone a billion years.

⁹ R.E. Taylor and J. Southon, "Use of Natural Diamonds to Monitor ¹⁴C AMS Instrument Backgrounds", *Nuclear Instruments and Methods in Physics Research*, vol. 259, no. 1, p. 282-287, June 2007.

¹⁰ David C. Lowe, "Problems Associated with the Use of Coal as a Source of ¹⁴C Free Background Material", *Radiocarbon*, vol. 31, no. 2, p. 17-120, 1989; <https://journals.uair.arizona.edu/index.php/radiocarbon/issue/view/84>, accessed July 15, 2020.

¹¹ A. E. Litherland and K. H. Purser, "The measurement of very old Radiocarbon ages by Accelerator Mass Spectrometry", Lüderitz, Namibia, November 13-17, 2000; S. H. Connell and R. Tegen ed., *Fundamental & Applied Aspects of Modern Physics*, World Scientific Publishing Company: Singapore, 2001; <https://books.google.com/books?id=yi-GyiUM-o0C>, accessed July 15, 2020.

¹² Paleochronology Group, "Carbon Dating of Fossils", <http://www.dinosauric14ages.com/carbondating.htm>, accessed July 15, 2020.

¹³ Roelf P. Beukens, “High-Precision Intercomparison at Isotracer”, *Radiocarbon*, vol. 32, no. 3, p. 335–339, 1990; <https://journals.uair.arizona.edu/index.php/radiocarbon/issue/view/88>, accessed July 15, 2020.

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¹⁵ Steven A. Austin, “Mt. St. Helens and Catastrophism”, First International Conference on Creationism, Pittsburgh, PA, August 4–9, 1986; R. E. Walsh, C. L. Brooks and R. S. Crowell ed., *Proceedings of the First International Conference on Creationism*, p. 3-9, Creation Science Fellowship: Pittsburgh, PA, 1986; <http://www.icr.org/i/pdf/technical/Mount-St-Helens-and-Catastrophism.pdf>, accessed July 15, 2020.

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¹⁷ Stephen W. Hawking, “Breakdown of Predictability in Gravitational Collapse”, *Physical Review D*, vol. 14, no. 10, p. 112, November 15, 1976.

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¹⁹ Raul Lopez, “The Antediluvian Patriarchs and the Sumerian King List”, *CEN Technical Journal*, vol. 12, no. 3, p. 347-357, 1998.

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