

# THE ANTI-CHRISTIAN BOOK



TRUTH IS ANTI-CHRISTIAN

THE BIBLE TELLS  
ENORMOUS LIES  
ABOUT GOD

KIM JOHNSON

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2024

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## Dear God

Dear God,

I don't understand. I've spent my life trying to understand. Yet here I am, in my seventies, with many questions. I have ideas about why I'm here and what may happen after death. But war? Disease? Genocide? Are they really necessary? It's not that I'm demanding an explanation; I have no right to demand anything. But the question remains. Why?

And then there's the Bible. The Bible. It says you once "regretted" creating humanity, so you drowned the entire world (minus Noah & Co.) in a worldwide flood. You regretted? God does something and then regrets it? But even if humanity had to be wiped out, why not just blink it into non-existence? Was it necessary to flood the entire world? Was it necessary to slowly drown all the infants, toddlers, and elderly? Was it really necessary to drown all the puppies and kittens and little baby rabbits, too?

Science tells us a worldwide flood never really happened. Believers should welcome the news: "Look! God didn't really drown the entire world. Good news!" But, no. Some Christians would rather believe you slowly drowned infants and kittens and pregnant women than believe a book that has a talking serpent (Genesis) and a talking donkey (Numbers) says something untrue. It seems they have more regard for the book than for you.

And there's the Passover story. You harden the Pharaoh's heart. That is, you interfere with his free will so that he refuses to let the Hebrews leave Egypt. Then you punish all the people of Egypt with a swarm of frogs. You harden the Pharaoh's heart again. You punish with a lice infestation. Harden; wild animals into the cities. Harden; a disease that kills domestic animals. Harden; painful boils. Harden; fire and ice. Harden; a plague of locust. Finally, harden, then kill the firstborn child of each and every Egyptian. Lastly, you drown the Pharaoh and his army in the sea. Better to have drowned this sick fairy tale about you in the sea! Today, archeologists, including Israeli archeologists, know the whole story never really happened; the Hebrews were never enslaved in Egypt. But many believers

cannot accept this simple fact. They think they possess divine Truth but spurn simple facts, simple truths. Pathetic.

Christians say the Bible is your very special book, the very Word of God. I say, "It's not." But I also say, "Believe in God no matter what the Bible says."

Christians and Jews have the Passover story. Muslims tell of Muhammed flying to heaven on a winged horse. Buddha could levitate and pass through solid rock, say the Buddhists. Krishna lifted a hill with his finger, according to Hindus. Given the choice between atheism or believing in God and far-fetched miracle stories, many people choose belief. But there's another option.

## Childhood

I first learned about God from my mother, at about the age of five. The idea thrilled me. The world lit up when I thought about God. My theology at the time was a simple one: God? Wow!!!

I suppose I accepted what my mother said as gospel. In any case, I've never doubted that something exists that deserves to be called "God." But I've doubted much of what is said about God.

Catholic children learn the basics of their religion before accepting the sacraments of Confirmation and First Holy Communion. At about age seven I was sent to an after-school religions education class, taught by an intimidating nun dressed in black with a white habit and head covering, a nun of the **Sisters of St. Joseph**.

The nun said I'd been born with a stain on my soul, the stain of original sin. She was talking about God, but the world didn't light up. It got dark. I was guilty of a sin because someone else had done something wrong? That seemed unfair; not something that God would really do. I couldn't imagine my parents holding me responsible for something someone else had done. Even less could I imagine God doing it. Something was wrong. Very wrong.

Later, the nun said a Catholic baptism was required to get into Heaven. The sin of Adam and Eve, said the nun, had “closed the gates of Heaven” to humanity. Not to worry, though, because Jesus had come to reopen those gates. So, we could now get into Heaven because we’d been baptized. A Catholic baptism, said the nun, was a requirement for getting into heaven.

My blue-collar neighborhood included mostly Italians, Jews, and a few Irish. The family in the next home was Jewish. Their son was a bit younger than I; their daughter, a bit older than my sister. Our families were friendly. (The son and I are still friends; the others have passed.) I couldn’t imagine my Jewish neighbors going to hell simply because they were not Catholic. (Note: this was in the 1950s when the centuries-old Catholic dogma of “No salvation outside the Catholic Church” was still being taught. The Second Vatican Council of the 1960s softened dogma a bit. In 2007, Pope Benedict reaffirmed the dogma.)

Worse, the nun said baptism wasn’t sufficient. To get into Heaven, it was necessary that any mortal sins committed must have been forgiven at the time of death. Die with even one mortal sin on your soul and it was hell. Forever. A young child wasn’t capable of committing a mortal sin. But once a child reached the “age of reason”, which the Catholic Church defines as seven years of age, a child could commit a mortal sin. Putting two and two together, it wasn’t hard to figure out the Church was saying that a child of seven might end up tortured in hell forever.

It didn’t bother me so much that I could end up in hell, being the more or less “good boy” that I was, or, at least, the “good boy” my parents and relatives said I was. What bother me was the feeling that something was very, very wrong. With hindsight, I’d say it was the first time I felt the Catholic Church was teaching *enormous lies about God*, although at the time it was a vague feeling rather than the phrase itself.

As if to double-down on the absurdity, the nun said that intentionally missing Mass on Sunday was a mortal sin. OK, so little Johnny Smith, ten years of age, is walking to Mass one Sunday, sees some friends playing outside, and decides to join them, knowing full well that intentionally

missing Mass on Sunday is a mortal sin. Johnny thinks it's OK; he'll confess to a priest later and receive forgiveness. Later that day, Johnny is struck by a car and dies. This happened, let's say, in the 1950s. So, the unfortunate Johnny Smith has been suffering indescribable tortures of hell for the past few decades, is now suffering them, and will be suffering them *for all eternity*.

How is this not insanity? How is this not an enormous lie about God? How can anyone believe it and take it seriously? I certainly couldn't.

### The Garden of Eden

Once upon a time, the great god Yahweh, also known as God the Father, created the Heavens and the Earth, Adam and Eve, and the Garden of Eden. In the Garden, Yahweh put a tree and sternly warned, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, **for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.**"

They didn't eat of the tree.

So, Yahweh allowed a talking serpent to talk to Eve. "You will not surely die," said the Serpent. "For God knows that in the day you eat of it, **your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.**"

Someone was lying. Was it Yahweh? Or the talking serpent?

Eve decided it was Yahweh. She ate of the tree. Adam ate of the tree. They received knowledge of good and evil, just as the serpent promised. They realized they were naked. And they did not die that very day, as Yahweh said. Why didn't Yahweh tell them the truth?

As punishment for eating of the tree, Yahweh evicted Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Yahweh ordained that men must earn their bread "by the sweat of their brow." Yahweh ordained that childbirth would be painful. So, Yahweh punished all men and women for the sin of Adam and Eve. And

he condemned all serpents for the sin of one: "On your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life." Lastly, Yahweh "closed the gates of heaven" to humanity until the death of Jesus.

It is said that Adam and Eve were the first humans, the first man and woman. But they didn't know they were naked and did not understand the difference between good and evil, which makes them toddlers not adults. When the toddlers who didn't have knowledge of good and evil, didn't eat of the tree, Yahweh allowed a walking, talking serpent to tempt Eve.

Some theologians say it wasn't really a serpent but Satan. (In other words, some theologians don't believe the Bible.) If the theologians are correct, then Yahweh allowed Satan himself to tempt the little toddlers, and punished all snakes for what Satan posing as a snake did.

It gets worse. Some theologians say that "consequences of the Fall" are that sin, evil, and death *entered the entire universe*, that the sin of a fairy tale couple degraded a universe which literally has more stars than more grains of sand of all of Earth's beaches.

To sum up, Yahweh created a "paradise" that included a ridiculous doomsday device with a hair trigger. Yahweh put the doomsday device with easy reach of two people with the minds of toddlers. When the toddlers didn't trigger the doomsday device, Yahweh allowed a walking, talking serpent (or Satan himself, take your pick) to tempt the toddlers. As a result, sin, evil, and death flooded the entire universe.

Theologians call this "the Sin of Eve." They blame Eve. But the obvious mastermind is Yahweh.

The Bible's first fairy tale is one of its silliest.

### Third Grade: The Pain Banker

For third grade, my parents sent me to Catholic school. It took some persuading; I didn't want to go. My seat was in the row of desks next to a

wall of south-facing windows. Sometimes, the sun felt quite hot, especially because I was wearing a regulation suitcoat and tie. A thin pillar between the windows cast a shadow. I recall eagerly waiting for relief as the sun moved in the sky, causing the pillar's shadow to move towards me. I'd lean forward at my desk to catch the shadow as soon as possible, and lean backwards to stay in the shade as long as possible.

The nun who taught the class was quite aware of the distress suffered by the boys in the row by the window. She refused to draw the shades, recommending instead that we "offer it up for the poor souls suffering in purgatory." The idea seemed to be that souls in purgatory must suffer until they had paid for their venial sins. (Venial sins because had they died with even one mortal sin, they wouldn't be in purgatory; they'd be in hell.)

So, God was a banker who dealt in pain. Mary Jones dies with a few venial sins and owes God payment of, say, 100 pain dollars to atone for her sins before she can enter heaven. But I could suffer, say, 2 pain dollars and, rather than putting them in my own account, give them to Mary. My donation would help her pay her pain debt to God and get out of purgatory.

Of course, no one explained purgatory and "offering up" in terms of pain dollars. But that's what it boiled down to. After all, accumulating and donating pain dollars was what Jesus had done for all humanity. After the fall of Adam and Eve, humanity owed a huge pain debt to God, a debt so huge that only the torturous death of God Himself on the cross could possibly generate enough pain dollars to redeem humanity. Jesus suffered a tortuous death, but then donated his pain dollars to atone for our sins and reopen the gates of heaven for humanity. "Jesus suffered and died for your sins." Bizarre.

## The Flood

Once upon a time, the sons of God impregnated daughters of men, who gave birth to giants. This and other wickedness troubled Yahweh, Lord, God of the Old Testament, and the father of Jesus.

The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every

inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. The **Lord regretted** that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled.

God regretted? What type of God does something then regrets it? “Well, gosh, if I had known it was going to turn out that way, I never would have done it,” said no God, ever.

Yahweh realized he had screwed up and decided to try again. But first, humanity had to be wiped from the face of the Earth. Being God, Yahweh could have merely snapped his fingers and made all the evil people simply vanish. But no, Yahweh had a better plan: he would flood the entire world.

Slowly. In 40 days.

As the waters rise, the little bunnies and puppy dogs drown. The kittens climb a tree and watch the waters rise and rise, and eventually drown too. Not to mention the infants and elderly. And everyone else. Or rather, almost everyone else. Yahweh told a man named Noah to build a big boat, which saved Noah, Noah’s wife, Noah’s sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and their wives.

Noah & Family were hardly the cream of humanity’s crop. Once, Noah drank himself to unconsciousness and lay naked in his tent. His son Ham, “the father of Canaan,” invited his brothers to witness the spectacle, but they refused. So, Noah said, “Cursed be Canaan; A servant of servants he shall be to his brethren.” (Many centuries later, the “Curse of Ham” was used to justify slavery.)

Yahweh had screwed up again. Humanity wasn’t much better than before the flood. Later, Yahweh would devise another plan to straighten out his creation. He would impregnate a woman who was not his wife so their little boy could grow up to be tortured to death. Seriously. But that’s a story for later.



## Sixth Grade: Do *They* Even Believe It?

I certainly didn't believe the dogma of hell for an unforgiven mortal sin. In sixth grade, an incident occurred which made me wonder if anyone believed it.

A boy in another grade died unexpectedly of appendicitis. By what we'd been taught, it was entirely possible the boy had died with an unforgiven, unrepented mortal sin and was at the moment being tortured and would be tortured forever. The nun assured us this was not the case. So did the parish priest, who visited the classroom. But how could they know? They couldn't. I wondered if they really believed what they taught. Somehow, they didn't seem genuinely worried about the little boy's eternal fate. What I'd been told about hell began to smell suspiciously like what I'd been told about Santa Claus.

It was obvious my parents, relatives, and most of the people in my blue-collar neighborhood didn't believe the dogma of eternal hell for a mortal sin. When my "C&E" neighbor (who only went to Mass on Christmas and Easter) died, no one evidenced any concern that he was in hell—not even the priest who gave the homily at the funeral mass. Never have I been to a funeral, Catholic or otherwise, where anyone showed any genuine concern about the eternal fate of the deceased. (Of course, some people who accept the enormous lie about eternal torture may grieve in private.)

The actions of the priest and nun after my classmate died of appendicitis made me question if they really believed in the mortal sin and eternal hell dogma.

I have the same question about popes. The Catholic Church teaches the Pope is the "vicar of Christ," i.e., the representative of Christ on earth. The belief is based in part on Matthew 18:18 "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." The binding and loosening refer to what is and is not a sin. Missing Mass on Sunday is a mortal sin not because the Bible says so, but because the Pope says so. In the 1950s, eating meat on

Friday was a mortal sin because the Pope said it was. Later, the pope changed the teaching. Today, eating meat on Friday is not a mortal sin.

If I had the power to define what is and is not mortal sin, I would be very, very reluctant to define anything as a mortal sin, knowing what I made a mortal sin would result in more people ending up in hell. The Church has traditionally defined the seven sins as mortal sins: the so-called *Seven Deadly Sins* of pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath, and sloth. I don't have a good word to say about the seven sins, but do they really merit an eternity of torture? Does someone who had led a mostly moral life but who habitually was envious deserve an eternity of torture? Does intentionally missing Mass on Sunday really merit eternal torture? If we take the dogma seriously, then the number of people in hell because they intentionally missed Mass must be in the hundreds of millions.

It seems only someone intent on populating hell would make such acts mortal sins. And if I defined masturbation, contraception, and pre-marital sex as mortal sins, how many more millions would be added to hell's population? Yet the Church defines those acts as mortal sins. In Catholic high school, we were even told that "French kissing" (kissing which involves tongues) was a mortal sin. And the joke was if a man "shook more than three times" at a urinal, that, too, was a mortal sin. (At least, I always presumed it was a joke.)

To defend what is fundamentally indefensible dogma, a Catholic apologist might employ the false dilemma logical fallacy ("Either you condemn pride, greed, lust, etc. or you accept them. The Church condemns them.") or the slippery slope fallacy ("Once we decide lust is OK, what's to stop the raping of children?"). Of course, there is nothing wrong with pointing out common pitfalls which tend to degrade us, make us less than we can be, pitfalls such as pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath, and sloth. But saying God will punish such failings with eternal torment makes God a bogeyman for gullible children. And for some gullible adults.

In seventh grade, the parish priest visited our classroom. "Oh, what wonderful boys and girls. And how many of you boys and girls want to be a

priest or a nun?” Lots of hands went up. Mine didn’t. I still cared very much about God, but I didn’t trust what the Catholic Church said about God.

## Sola Scriptura

Truth be known, many Protestants would happily admit the Catholic Church is wrong, even corrupt. Martin Luther believed the Catholic Church represented the anti-Christ. Some Baptists even deny Roman Catholics are genuine Christians; rather, they say Catholics are “in need of salvation.”

Some Protestants criticize the Catholic Church and insist on *Sola Scriptura*, i.e., the doctrine that scripture is the only legitimate source of religious authority. Everyone, they say, should read the Bible and learn about God. But until the invention of the printing press in the year 1,436, Bible manuscripts were hand-copied, in the original language. To read a Bible, you’d need access to the manuscripts, and you’d need to be able to read Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. So, for centuries, the common person got their information about Jesus and God from the Catholic Church. It reflects poorly on Jesus if he came and taught, but it took humanity over a thousand years to have access to his true teachings.

Besides, the idea that Christians follow the Bible is nonsense, as we’ll see.

## The Bible

Before high school, I had only a very dim idea that the Bible existed and could be bought and read. Of course, I had heard Bible stories in school and in Sunday sermons. But it seemed the stories were in the keeping of the priests. I knew of no home which had a Bible and didn’t know you could go to a store and purchase one.

The New American Bible was on the required texts for my freshman high school year. I read the book with interest. And disappointment, enormous disappointment. God! The ridiculous Garden of Eden story, God “regretting” creating humanity and slowly flooding the Earth to kill every man, woman and child (aside from Noah & Co), a psychopathic God torturing the Egyptian nation like a sick little boy tortures some helpless

animal—that such nonsense about God was taught seemed to me a “miracle” exceeding any in the Bible.

And the (supposedly) God-ordered killings. Why should I care what peoples the ancient Israelites had conquered and, in many cases, massacred? Worse, the Bible had verses that seemed to disagree with what I had been taught.

For instance, Matt 12:40 has Jesus saying, “Just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be **in the heart of the earth three days and three nights.**” A footnote called the verse “a prefigurement of Jesus’ sojourn in the abode of the dead.” But there are only two nights between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, as any Catholic knows. Did Jesus prophesy falsely? Something was very wrong.

Or there’s Matt 1:25, which says of Joseph and Mary: “He had no relations with her **until** she bore a son.” It is a key dogma of Catholicism that Mary was a virgin throughout her entire life. A footnote to Matt 1:25 had, “The Greek word translated ‘until’ does not imply normal marital conduct after Jesus’ birth, nor does it exclude it.” The point is technically correct. If I say, “George Washington did not betray the United States **until** he was fifty years of age,” then technically I’m only saying he did not betray the U.S. *before* he was fifty; I’m not saying anything about what he did after he was fifty. But I couldn’t believe God would inspire a Biblical verse that comes with a hair’s width of denying the perpetual virginity of Mary if Mary indeed was a virgin all her days.

And Matt 13:55-56 says of Jesus, “Is he not the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother named Mary and his brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas? Are not his sisters all with us?” A common response is that the “brothers” are actually half-brothers or cousins. But, again, I couldn’t imagine God inspiring such verses if God wanted us to believe that Mary was a virgin her entire life.

Does the Bible ever mean what it says?

## Bible Bait-and-Switch

Believers often refuse to acknowledge the least flaw or absurdity in the book they have made into an idol. The Bible, we are told, is the Word of God. Some believers even say it's the inerrant Word of God, meaning it contains absolutely no contradictions or errors.

Is the Bible the really God's Word? The question is not worth discussing **because Christians do not follow what the Bible says**. Rather, they follow what their priests and preachers **tell them** the Bible says. I call this phenomenon "The Bible bait-and-switch." The bait is when the Bible is billed as the Word of God. Who wouldn't want to follow the Word of God? The switch occurs when the believer begins to follow the preacher rather than the Bible.

Some children as young as six or seven experience the Bible bait-and-switch. The children are told the Bible is the Word of God, that Genesis says a serpent tempted Eve, and that the serpent is Satan. God's Word says "serpent" but their preacher says that God "really meant Satan." A child who accepts what their preacher says is clearly following their preacher, not the Bible.

It's irrelevant whether the switch is justified or not. Either the believer follows what the Bible says or follows what their preacher says. (Of course, if the preacher happens to teach something the Bible actually says, then there is no switch.)

To cite another example, a believer may ask why Christians take an oath upon entering the military, assuming political office, or when testifying in court. Court is especially ridiculous because a witness is asked to place a hand on the Bible and asked "Do you solemnly **swear** to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?" Yet, the Bible in Matthew 5 has Jesus saying:

"Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.' But I

tell you, **do not swear an oath at all:** either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. **All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.**

In the Bible, there are people like Moses who report what God said. And then there are verses, such as in Matthew, where (supposedly) **God himself is recording his very own words in his very own, special, super-duper book.** It just doesn't get more certain and definitive at that. Yet, preachers tell believers that the verses mean that it's OK to swear an oath, and believers believe them. Anyone who can read the verses and not see the verse say "Don't take oaths" is plainly under the spell of their preacher.

However, it's sometimes fortunate that believers don't follow the Bible, because the Bible teaches some truly horrible things, like keeping slaves and burning witches. For many centuries, the Church put those teaching into practice. Exodus 22:18 says, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." For centuries, women were tortured and then put to death for the "sin" of witchcraft. Christians in the United States argued God was fine with them owning other human beings as property and cited specific verses in Exodus as justification. Today, preachers condemn slavery and don't insist witches be put to death. Sometimes a Bible bait-and-switch is for the best.

"God said it; I believe it; and that settles it for me," was a popular catchphrase some years ago. Popular, but misleading. "My preacher claims 'God said it'; I believe my preacher; and that settles it for me" is more truthful.

Calling the Bible "holy" and pretending to teach the Bible **allows preachers to pretend they are teaching with the authority of God.** It's an obvious trick once you see it.

## Bible Idolaters

Some believers insist the Flood and Passover stories actually happened. That is, they would rather believe what a book with a talking serpent says (that the stories occurred as described) rather than what scientists say.

Think about that. If some book said my father killed all of humanity (minus Noah & Co.) but scientists said it never happened, I'd believe the scientists. Forget the scientists. If some book (especially a book with a talking serpent in it) said my father killed anyone, I'd refuse to believe it unless I saw iron-clad, irrefutable evidence. Why? Because I loved my father.

But many believers insist the Biblical story of the Flood is true. That is, they would rather believe God actually did the sadistic killing of practically the entire world rather than believe the Bible is untrue. And they believe the story about Egypt and the Pharaoh. Rather than "believers" I'd say "Bible idolaters" is a more accurate description. I say this not to condemn, but to invite abandonment of idolatry.

## The Passover

The story begins with the ancient Hebrews enslaved in Egypt. Never mind that modern archeologists, even Israeli archeologists, say the Hebrews were never enslaved in Egypt. Let's suppose they were. And let's suppose Yahweh wanted to get them out of Egypt. So, he sends Moses and Aaron to impress Pharaoh with a miracle.

When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, 'Show a miracle for yourselves,' then you shall say to Aaron, '**Take your rod and cast it before Pharaoh, and let it become a serpent.**' So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and they did so, just as the Lord commanded. And Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent.

Pharaoh was not impressed.

But Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers; so the magicians of Egypt, **they also did in like manner** with their enchantments. For every man threw down his rod, and they became serpents.

Yahweh told Moses and Aaron to do a miracle which he knew the Egyptian magicians could duplicate; bad advice if the goal was to impress Pharaoh.

Yahweh advised Moses and Aaron to impress Pharaoh with another miracle.

Moses and Aaron . . . lifted up the rod and struck the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants. **And all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. The fish that were in the river died, the river stank,** and the Egyptians could not drink the water of the river. So there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.

Yahweh punishes the entire Egyptian nation! But, as before, the Pharaoh was not impressed because his magicians were able to duplicate the feat. “Then the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments.” What? The Egyptian magicians were able to turn water to blood **that Moses and Aaron had already turned to blood, or kill fish which Moses and Aaron had already killed?** How is that possible? Simple. In a fairy tale, anything is possible. (Advice for would-be gods: if you want to impress a pharaoh, don’t tell your people to perform miracles that the pharaoh’s magicians can easily match.)

Next, Yahweh hardens Pharaoh’s heart so that he (Yahweh) has an excuse to torture all the people of Egypt. Yahweh sends swarms of frogs, a lice infestation, wild animals into the cities, a disease that kills domestic animals, painful boils, fire and ice, and a plague of locust. Finally, Yahweh finally kills all the firstborn children of Egypt. All because the Pharaoh would not allow the Hebrews to leave Egypt. All because Yahweh hardened the Pharaoh’s heart (i.e., tampered with the Pharaoh’s free will) so that the Pharaoh would not allow the Hebrews to leave.

Yahweh tortured and killed the people of Egypt like a sick little boy tortures and kills some helpless animal. Why? The book of Exodus gives us a few reasons.

So that the Hebrews would understand that Yahweh is peerless.



9:14 For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; **that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth.**

So that Yahweh could show off his power and be famous throughout the world.

9:16 And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for **to shew in thee my power;** and that **my name may be declared throughout all the earth.**

So that the Pharaoh could witness Yahweh's mass murder.

10:1 And the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh: for **I have hardened his heart,** and the heart of his servants, **that I might shew these my signs** before him:

So that the Hebrews would have a good story for their children, and so that the Hebrews would know their Yahweh is Lord.

10:2 And that thou mayest **tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son,** what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them; that ye **may know how that I am the Lord.**

So that the Hebrews would realize Yahweh has favorites and values them above the Egyptians.

11:7 But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: **that ye may know how that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.**

The Bible tells enormous lies about God.

### [Prophecy: Isaiah 7:14](#)

About the summer of 1977, I was in a college bookstore and noticed "Arsenal for Skeptics" (Edited by Richard W. Hinton, 1934) on the bargain table. I read the book with interest. I wondered what the book had to say against Christianity. I read about some disturbing contradictions and absurdities in the Bible. And then I found something which deeply shocked me.

Believers often claim the Bible contains prophecy. Of all the prophecies in the Bible, perhaps the most famous is Isaiah 7:14: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, **a virgin shall conceive**, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." I had been taught about the prophecy in Catholic school. It bothered me a bit that Jesus wasn't named Immanuel. But it is a prophecy. Matthew 1:22-23 says so: "All this took place **to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet**: 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' (which means 'God with us')."

A prophecy. An impressive prophecy, indeed.

Or is it? Starting on page 67, "Arsenal for Skeptics" claimed that "a **virgin shall** conceive, and bear a son" is an intentional mistranslation of the original Hebrew, which honestly translated reads "a **young woman has** conceived and born a son." I read that Christianity had known "a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son" was a bogus translation at least since the time of St. Jerome, who died in 420 C.E.

The claim shocked me. It made me wonder how much I'd been taught was known to be a lie; indoctrination presented as truth. How could a religion that claims possession of Truth with a capital "T" neglect such a plain and simple truth? How could I believe in such a religion? It's like someone unable to play a C major scale claiming to be a great musician.

I pondered the claim, not knowing whether to believe it or not. I looked up Isaiah 7:14 in my New American Bible. It had "a virgin shall be with child and bear a son and shall call him Immanuel." But there was a footnote.

The church has always followed St. Matthew in seeing the **transcendent fulfillment** of this verse in Christ and his Virgin Mother. **The prophet need not have known the full force latent in his own words**; and some Catholic writers have sought a preliminary and partial fulfillment in the conception and birth of

the future King Hezekiah, whose mother, at the time Isaiah spoke, would have been a young, unmarried woman.

So, the Church has always followed St. Matthew rather than the truth. Isaiah didn't know "the full force latent in his own words" because when he wrote "a young woman has conceived," he didn't realize the Church would later lie and say he wrote "a virgin shall be with child". Today, some Bibles have a footnote acknowledging the Isaiah 7:14 controversy.

Such is the bogus nature of what is arguably Christianity's most celebrated "prophecy." It's easy to wonder about the quality of other Biblical so-called prophecies.

That the Bible would contain an intentional mistranslation shocked me at the time. Years later, my opinion of the Bible had fallen so low that when I learned the four gospels are anonymous and that the church simply gave them the names Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, I merely shrugged.

## Faces of God

The reader may wonder if I'm an atheist and, if not, why. Consider the following facts.

- The list of past gods and goddesses invented by humanity is long. It includes Zeus, Thor, Astarte, Atlas, Dyeus, Freyja, Gaia, Isis, Ixcacao, Izanagi, and hundreds more. Today, we know those gods and goddesses are fictional.
- The number of stars in the universe exceeds the number of grains of sand on all the beaches of Earth. (Literally! Look it up!) Quite possibly, somewhere in the universe there are beings who look like rabbits who worship the "Great Furry Rabbit" who shed his fur for the salvation of all rabbits. Or there may be beings who look like spiders and worship the "Great Mother Spider" who spun the web of the universe from her belly.

The observations suggest some conclusions.

- One, that gods and goddesses worshipped today—including Jesus and Yahweh, alias God the Father (as well as any rabbit-like or spider-like gods)—are fictions.

- Two, that there is **something** motivating the invention of all these gods and goddesses; that there is something to be discovered, something which deserves to be called “God.” (This belief is why I’m not an atheist. My regard for truth is why I’m not a Christian.)
- Three, that the Great Furry Rabbit and the Great Mother Spider and Jesus are **faces of God**. We relate to what is essentially indescribable, to Something that surpasses all understanding, by creating an image we can worship. The advantage is the face allows us to more easily enter into relation with God; God can become an object of love and devotion. But when we mistake the face we create with the Reality, our relationship becomes one of idolatry.

All of today’s major world religions originated hundreds or thousands of years ago; that they contain elements of fantasy and fiction should not surprise. Then, stopping the sun in the sky to help the ancient Hebrews slaughter their enemies (per Joshua chapter 10) might have seemed credible. Today, it’s laughable.

Religions are flawed attempts to relate to God. Flawed in that religions contain silly fairy tales. When someone realizes religion's flaws, they may choose to:

- 1) turn to atheism
  - 2) ignore or rationalize away religions’ flaws and decide to have faith and believe
  - 3) leave religions' nonsense behind and advance towards truth, to where God becomes the teacher.
- 3) is the ideal choice.

### Disconfirming Evidence

Disconfirming evidence is evidence that proves a belief is wrong. It is a natural human tendency to look for evidence that supports our beliefs (confirming evidence) and to downplay or ignore evidence that disproves our beliefs (disconfirming evidence). But it is often wiser to seek disconfirming evidence, as police know.

When police ask for an alibi, they are asking for disconfirming evidence. Suppose police believe Diamond Tom robbed a jewelry store. The robbery fits Diamond Tom's modus operandi. The jewelry store is a short distance from Tom's home. Tom recently spent a lot of money on his daughter's wedding. So, the police arrest Tom, neglect to ask for an alibi, and charge him with theft. In court, the police present their evidence. Then Tom testifies that when the crime occurred, he was 3,000 miles away at his daughter's wedding. As proof, Tom has video tape and 200 witnesses.

The case fails and the police in our scenario look foolish, because they did what no real-world police would do: they failed to ask for disconfirming evidence, i.e., an alibi.

We often look for evidence that supports what we believe, but it's often wiser to look for evidence that refutes what we believe. If our belief prevails against disconfirming evidence, then we can have that much more confidence our belief is true. And isn't it sensible to look for evidence that disconfirms ideas we've been told we *must* believe and not question? Isn't that a red flag that the belief can't stand on its own merits?

Anyone who wants to enjoy the benefits of religion, such as acceptance by society, will look for evidence their religion is true (if they look at all, and do not merely accept). But for the truth-seeker, looking for evidence that disproves a belief is the better choice. Such evidence is called disconfirming evidence. Atheist literature is a great source of disconfirming evidence. It can be a significant milestone on the path to truth.

### The Census of King David

Time for another Bible fairy tale. Once upon a time, King David decided to do a census of Israel. For reasons unexplained, the census angered Yahweh. In 2 Samuel 24, Yahweh gives David a choice of three punishments.

1. Three years of famine
2. Three months of David fleeing from his enemies
3. Three days of plague.

Choices 1 and 3 punish the people of Israel for the great "sin" of doing a census. Choice 2 punishes David alone. A better ruler might have chosen 2

so that he, and not his people, suffered. David chose 3. His reasoning: “Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for **his mercy is great**; but do not let me fall into human hands.” So, the Lord, whose mercy is “great,” sends an angel who kills seventy thousand people. That’s 70,000 people killed by a God who mercy is “great”. Killed because David performed a census.

It gets worse. The first verse of 2 Samuel 24 says: Again the anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and **he incited David against them**, saying, “Go and take a census of Israel and Judah.” So, Yahweh incited David—that is, tampered with David’s free will—so that David would perform a census.

It gets even worse. The story is also told in 1 Chronicles 21, which begins: **Satan** rose up against Israel and **incited David** to take a census of Israel. So, Satan incited David—that is, tampered with David’s free will—so that David would perform a census.

Some Christian apologists claim that both God and Satan incited David. So, God and Satan *cooperate* to tamper with David’s free will so that he conducts a census? Then God kills 70,000 people as punishment for the census? This is the type of nonsense someone is compelled to accept who believes the Bible is the Word of God. One common defense is to say the story isn’t literally true but “deeply symbolic” of something or other. We’ll discuss other defenses later.

### Dishonorable Mention Shortlist

The Bible has a wealth of nonsense and absurdities. Many books and web sites thoroughly describe them, so there’s no need for us to list them all. Truth be known, many Christians acknowledge Old Testament stories are nonsense, if only by claiming they are symbolic and not to be taken literally. They happily disregard much of the Old Testament but insist the New Testament and the teachings of Jesus are different and in a class by themselves. After presenting a short list of Old Testament “Dishonorable Mention” verses, we’ll focus mostly on Jesus and the New Testament.

First, we have Yahweh commanding genocide.

- Thus saith the LORD of hosts ... go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, **infant and suckling**, ox and sheep, camel and ass. 1 Samuel 15:2-3
- But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, **thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth**. Deuteronomy 20:16-17
- So smote all the country ... he left none remaining, but **utterly destroyed all that breathed**, as the LORD God of Israel commanded. Joshua 10:40

Destroy “all that breatheth”? It’s not sufficient to slaughter “man and woman, infant and suckling”? But ox and sheep, camel and ass must be slaughtered, too? And little puppy dogs and kitty cats and furry rabbits? They breathe, too. And people really think God ordered this?

And then there’s Yahweh’s laws about women, as found in Deuteronomy. A rape victim who doesn’t cry out for help must be put to death. A rape victim must marry her rapist. A woman who is not a virgin on her wedding night must be put to death. Lastly, there’s this gem:

If two men . . . have a fight with each other, and the wife of one comes up . . .and she reaches out with her hand and grasps that man’s genitals, then **you shall cut off her hand; you shall not show pity**.

And, of course, there’s slavery. Exodus gives specific commands about how to treat slaves. The command to put a witch to death is also in Exodus.

Jesus’ condemnation of oaths begins with

“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ **But I say to you**, do not swear at all . . .”

If only Jesus had spared just a few words about slavery and witches, for instance,

“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall put the witch to death’ **But I say to you**, . . .”

Or

“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You may keep human beings as slaves’ **But I say to you, . . .**”.

Had Jesus done that, millions of women would not have suffered torture and death for the “crime” of witchcraft and millions of Africans (16 million by one estimate) would not have been sent as slaves to the predominately Christian United States.

Our last dishonorable mention verse concerns children. The teenage years can be difficult. At times, a teen may curse a parent, even if only under their breath. What should be the punishment for a child who curses a parent?

- Whoever curses his father or his mother **shall be put to death.** Exodus 21:17
- For anyone who curses his father or his mother **shall surely be put to death;** he has cursed his father or his mother; his blood is upon him. Leviticus 20:9

Moreover, there is no statute of limitations mentioned. If an 85-year-old man discovers his 60-year-old son cursed him as a teen, what does the Bible say the man should do to his son?

Of course, there is no shortage of preachers who will happily tell you what the verses “really mean,” what God had in mind, what God **meant to say** if only God spoke and wrote as clearly as they. In other words, there is no shortage of preachers who will perform the good old Bible bait-and-switch.

### Features, not Bugs

Scripture’s nonsense stories and evil commands lead to an obvious question: how is it possible such writings are regarded by millions as God’s Word? In some countries, agreement is all but universal. If scripture has such obvious faults, how can believers be blind to them? After all, we are not discussing obscure, unknown stories. What Christian hasn’t heard the story of Adam and Eve, the worldwide flood, or the Hebrews in Egypt? How can a book which tells such silly stories be so widely regarded as the Word of God?



It's a big question and I don't claim to have all the answers. But here's one answer which may (or may not) have some merit.

Suppose someone wished to create a piece of music that was universally regarded as composed by God Himself. How might they proceed? Consider the following as a thought experiment.

Suppose they try to find some budding unknown composer with the talent of a Mozart, have the composer write some music, kill the composer, and then try to have the music accepted as composed by God Himself. The plan has two obvious problems (over and above the murder, but recall this is merely a thought experiment). First, everything Mozart composed was not of the same quality. There's no guarantee the unfortunate composer would produce a masterpiece. Second, some people don't like classical music of any type. A fan of country music or rock and roll, for example, might find nothing particularly attractive about the piece.

So, how could a piece of music be created that everyone acknowledges is composed by God? Answer: by robbing people of confidence that they can recognize good and bad music, so that they obediently acknowledge God's authorship. In short, the plan would be as follows. First, compose a piece with some high-quality parts and some obviously low-quality parts, such as the sound of buzz saws and flatulence. Second, put the power of state behind the piece. Have the state declare the piece as composed by God. Have the state impose penalties of torture and death for anyone who has the audacity to say otherwise. So, if a person thinks parts of the music sounds like buzz saws or flatulence, they had better keep their opinion to themselves. Or, better yet, think again and again and again, until they convince themselves the sounds really are music from God.

The plan may seem outlandish, but it more or less describes the history of the Bible. After the Roman Empire made Christianity its official religion, anyone who dissented risked torture and death. During the height of the Inquisition in the Middle Ages, anyone even suspected of not accepting official dogma risked torture and death. In 1553, John Calvin put Michael Servetus to death for denying not the Bible, but the Trinity, a dogma barely

found in the Bible. While the situation has largely changed in Christian countries today, there still exist Islamic countries where the penalty for publicly renouncing Islam is death.

Thus, scripture's nonsense stories and lies about God can be seen as essential features, rather than flaws. Confront the young child with nonsense presented as God's Word and they may remain convinced throughout their life, especially when the penalty for disbelief is eternal torture.

### Personal Jesus and New Testament Jesus

A man I know once asked a Catholic priest why the priest allowed himself to be addressed as "Father" when Jesus says "And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven." The priest at first denied Jesus ever said that. When the man found the verse in the Bible, the priest denied Jesus meant to say what Jesus in the Bible clearly and plainly says.

Notice how naturally the priest resorted to the standard bait-and-switch practice of "Don't believe what your lying eyes tell you Jesus says; believe what I tell you Jesus meant to say, what Jesus had in mind." But notice, too, **how the priest was unacquainted with the actual words of Jesus.** How could a man who had been educated as a Catholic priest, who had dedicated his life to God and Jesus, not know all that Jesus had said?

The same can be asked of almost any Christian. Chapter 15 of Matthew begins as follows.

Then there come to Jesus from Jerusalem Pharisees and scribes, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. And he answered and said unto them, **Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God** because of your tradition? **For God said,** Honor thy father and thy mother: and, **He that speaketh evil of father or mother, let him die the death.**

The Pharisees criticize the followers of Jesus for not washing their hands before eating. Jesus, in turn, faults them for **not following the command of God to kill the child** who speaks evil of a parent.

What Jesus “really meant” doesn’t concern us at the moment. The point is that most Christians **are completely unaware that Jesus ever spoke those words**. Think about that. Many Christians call Jesus their Lord and Master. I’ve seen a “My boss is a Jewish carpenter” bumper sticker. Cute. But how can someone follow Jesus if they don’t even know what he said? It’s absurd as someone claiming to be a Harry Potter fan but not knowing Hogwarts is a school. As absurd as a Sherlock Holmes fan who doesn’t know who Dr. Watson is.

How is this possible? One answer is that Jesus is a face Christians put on God, as a way of relating to God. It’s fundamentally no different than intelligent rabbits worshipping The Great Furry Rabbit who shed his fur for the sake of all rabbits, or intelligent spiders worshipping The Great Mother Spider who spun the web of the universe. Centuries ago, a Greek philosopher said, “If cattle and horses, or lions, had hands, or were able to draw with their feet and produce the works which men do, horses would draw the forms of gods like horses, and cattle like cattle, and they would make the gods' bodies the same shape as their own.”

This highlights what is for us a fundamental and crucial point: there are (at least) two types of Jesus:

- 1) Personal Jesus, the picture of Jesus a person has, based on what they’ve been told or may have read. A personal Jesus is the face a person puts on God as a way of relating to God.
- 2) Jesus, the character in the New Testament

The two Jesuses often differ as much as night and day.

Anyone is free to imagine Jesus as they wish. Thus, we have liberal Jesus and conservative Jesus; the Jesus who is absolutely against abortion, and the Jesus who realizes sometimes it’s a sad necessity; the Jesus who condemns the homosexual to hell, and the Jesus who loves and forgives the homosexual.

Anyone is free to create their own personal Jesus. And I'm free to ignore anyone's personal Jesus and focus exclusively on the character in the New Testament named Jesus.

### Jesus and Family Values

The Jesus I discuss is the character described in the New Testament. This is not the Jesus of most people. Rather, most people have an idealized version of Jesus based on what they've been told and what they imagine. Fundamentally, they build up their view of Jesus in the same way they once built up their view of Santa Claus: they apply their imagination to what they've been told.

Personal Jesus and New Testament Jesus often differ as much as night and day.

For instance, believers are taught that the Bible and Jesus uphold "family values" and can justly point to the fourth commandment, "Honor thy father and thy mother." Yet, the word "family" occurs only once in the New Testament: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Ephesians 3:14-15.

Not that New Testament Jesus has little to say about family, he has much to say, but believers prefer to ignore what he says. Far from having "family values," Jesus himself says he comes to divide, disrupt and destroy families.

Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? **No, I tell you, but division.** From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law. Luke 12:51-53

Personal Jesus may be a "King of Peace," but New Testament Jesus is not.

**Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.** For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. Matthew 10:34-36

**New Testament Jesus demands his disciples hate their family.**

If any man come to me, and **hate** not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:26.

The Greek word translated "hate" has added meanings of "despise" and "detest."

**New Testament Jesus recommends forsaking family.**

And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. Matthew 19:29

**On one occasion, a would-be disciple asks New Testament Jesus for permission to say farewell to his family before he leaves them to follow Jesus.**

And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God Luke 9:61-62

**On another occasion, a man merely wants to see his deceased father has a proper burial.**

And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead. Matthew 8:21-22

**Lastly, New Testament Jesus recommends self-castration.**

But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. **For there are**

**some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb:** and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." Matthew 19:11-12

A famous ancient believer by the name of Origen followed the advice of New Testament Jesus literally. However, the advice is so silly that even some Bible translators can't accept it. Some Bibles have "celibate" instead of "eunuch." Substituting "celibate" for "eunuch" is nonsense. It says that *some* babies are celibate which were so from their mother's womb. So, some babies are and some not? How could a baby could be born non-celibate? It makes no sense. But this is not the first intentionally mistranslated Biblical verse, as we saw about "a virgin shall conceive."

It's easy to wonder if Jesus practiced what he preached. Was Jesus self-castrated? We can't know for sure, of course. Moreover, an argument against being self-castrated would be that, being God, Jesus had no reason to resort to such drastic means to subdue his sexuality. A response is that, as God, Jesus had no need of praying or fasting either, yet the Bible says he did both.

Even if Jesus himself wasn't self-castrated, wouldn't it be logical to suppose the Apostles were? Was self-castration a condition of being in the inner circle of Jesus? Is this why Jesus told his followers to leave their wives? Or did the Apostles ignore Jesus' suggestion about self-castration just as Christians do today?

And while it may be to a man's advantage to make himself a eunuch "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven," what about women? Is there any sexual self-mutilation they can do "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven"? Or are they already acceptable, just as God designed them?

## Jesus and Mary

Jesus and his mother are at a marriage celebration. Mary tells him the hosts have run out of wine. "Jesus saith unto her, **Woman, what have I**

**to do with thee?** mine hour is not yet come." (John 2:4)  
"Woman, what have I to do with thee?" That's Jesus talking to his mother!

Jesus addresses his mother as "Woman." Does he ever address her as "Mother"? There is no recorded instance of Jesus calling Mary "Mother". But there's another instance where he addresses her as "Woman" when "Mother" would be more natural. "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, **Woman**, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." (John 19:26-27) Why not "Mother, behold thy son"? Isn't that more natural than "Woman, behold thy son"? And why does scripture say "the disciple standing by, who he loved" but not also say "his mother, whom he loved"?

Does Jesus even regard Mary as his mother? In one incident, he says his mother is anyone who does God's will. "While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, **Who is my mother?** And who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, **Behold my mother** and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother. (Matthew 12:46-50) "

## Religions of State

In 312, Roman Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity. In 380 C.E., Roman Emperor Theodosius issued the Edict of Thessalonica, declaring Christianity the Roman Empire's official religion. How much does Christianity owe to Roman civilization rather than to the Bible or Jesus? Here are two clues. One, the Christianity of 380 C.E. had a Sunday Sabbath rather than the Saturday Sabbath of Jesus. Two, it had changed the name of God's only begotten son from the Hebrew "Yeshua" to a Roman name. Like

“Marcus,” “Aurelius,” “Brutus,” and “Augustus,” “Jesus” is a Roman name.

Of course, it’s possible a religion that effectively leads people to God was foremost in the mind of the Roman emperors. But isn’t it more likely that issues of state, such as control of the populace, were the main concern? Would Rome have made a religion its official religion which did not serve its needs?

The early “desert fathers” were ascetics who fled society to live alone or in small monastic communities in the Egyptian desert. Were they fleeing the Roman version of Christianity, because it did not meet their needs, i.e., it did not bring them closer to God? It’s at least conceivable that at a certain stage of spiritual development, a person may leave behind some of religion’s trappings and dogma, as “childish things” they’ve outgrown. For example, they might leave behind a worldwide flood that we know today never occurred.

Since 380 C.E., Christianity has faithfully served the needs of the state. For instance, Saint Augustine’s (354 to 430 C.E.) “Just War” doctrine outlines the conditions which must be met for a Christian to morally participate in a war. Since the time of Saint Augustine, how many wars have any mainstream Christian denomination declared immoral and forbade believers from fighting? I have found exactly zero. Christianity has traditionally given *carte blanche* to the state for its wars. This is exactly what we should expect if the needs of the state are in Christianity’s DNA.

So, we find that morality for the Christian focuses on sexual morality. Condemning natural sexual needs as immoral fills people with guilt. People who feel guilty and inadequate and sinful are easier to control than those who have confidence in themselves. And people who accept their preacher claim that God’s very own Word says “serpent” but *really means* “Satan” are not likely to contradict the state’s authority.

But does God really have the same obsessive concern as do preachers with sexual morality, with contraception, pre-marital sex, and masturbation? The



teachings of Jesus emphasize a different type of morality. Feed the hungry, heal the sick, give to the poor. The teachings emphasize a concern for the well-being of fellow human beings.

Is there a better morality? Perhaps. For example, if Christians were concerned with “supply chain morality”—the morality of concern for the people who work in sweatshops, the child laborers, and the underpaid people who provide our goods and services—the world would be a much different place. But supply chain morality does not serve the needs of rich and powerful heads of state, who benefit from cheap labor and who care little for the needs of the average person.

### The Birth of Jesus

As we’ve observed, not all silly Bible stories are obscure (e.g., the census of King David). Many are well-known and obviously silly unless read through the rose-colored glasses of faith.

Almost everyone has heard the Christmas story of the Three Wise Men, who follow the Star of Bethlehem, to bring gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the infant Jesus. The Wise Men travel from the East to Jerusalem, following the star sent by Yahweh. The star fails near Jerusalem, so they enter the city and ask far and wide if anyone knows where the newborn king is to be born, which brings them to the attention of the evil king Herod.

In other words, Yahweh’s star first leads them not to Jesus, but to Herod. The Magi tell Herod that a great king is being born. Says Herod, “When ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.” Of course, evil Herod, the Roman-appointed king of Israel, has no intention of worshiping anyone. Rather, Herod means to kill any rival king. Shouldn’t “wise” men have suspected as much? Perhaps they should be called the Three No-So-Wise Men?

Once they’ve told Herod of the birth of a rival king, Yahweh’s star reappears and leads them to Jesus. They leave their gifts. Yahweh warns them not to return to Jerusalem. Yahweh warns Joseph and Mary to take Jesus and flee. Yahweh does **not** warn Herod not to massacre little infant

boys, which Herod does once he realizes the No-So-Wise Men aren't returning.

Some kings mark the birth of a son with public feasts. Yahweh marked the birth of his son by arranging a massacre of infants.

### Sons of Jupiter

An early Christian named Justin (100-165 C.E.) died for his beliefs. He is called Saint Justin Martyr by the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. In chapter twenty-one of Justin's *First Apology*, we read the following:

And when we say also that the Word, who is the first-birth of God, was produced without sexual union, and that He, Jesus Christ, our Teacher, was crucified and died, and rose again, and ascended into heaven, we propound nothing different from what you believe regarding those whom you esteem **sons of Jupiter**.

Justin says that Jesus is like all those other God-men, all those other sons of Jupiter, worshipped in the empire. I don't disagree.

### Steps on the Path to God

We may describe some steps on the path to God:

step 1) no belief in God

step 2) belief in God as described by some religion

step 3) seeking experience of God; God becomes the teacher

When religion fulfills its proper purpose, step 2 eventually leads to step 3. But religion, especially religions of state, often keep their followers at step 2.

But there are always a few "step 2)" followers who realize their religion's contradictions and flaws. At this point, there are a few options.

1) Reject religion and retreat to step 1, to no belief in God.

2) Explain away the contradictions and flaws. There is a thriving industry of books and video and teachers which defend the Bible and Christianity. Some writers, no doubt, sincerely believe in what they write, and think they are doing God's work. But the work can be lucrative. There is much money to be made with books that "debunk"

evolution, preach a young Earth (in keeping with a literal reading of Genesis), describe how Noah's Ark has been found, etc.

3) Accept that you've been born into a false religion and try to advance to more accurate knowledge of, and more intimate experience of, God. (In my opinion, the ideal option.)

### Born into a False Religion

Accepting that you've been born into a false religion and trying to advance to more accurate knowledge of, and more intimate experience of, God may seem like a no-brainer. Keep God, but give up the silly talking serpent and the worldwide flood. But there's a powerful force that argues against accepting that. We may label the force "egotism."

To illustrate, imagine Christian Fundamentalist Fred, who believes in the Bible and Jesus. Fred believes anyone who doesn't accept Jesus as their personal savior is doomed to hell. So, Fred believes that Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists are going to hell. And Fred believes that certain Christian denominations aren't sufficiently Biblical and therefore have members who are going to hell.

So, Fred is perfectly fine believing that:

- 1) God exists
- 2) Most of humanity believes in a false religion, a religion that doesn't worship the true God, or doesn't worship the true God correctly.

But if the thought that his own religion is untrue occurs to Fred, he immediately rejects the idea because **that would mean that God doesn't exist**. But why would Fred believe that if his own religion is false, then God doesn't exist? Fred believes most of humanity accepts some false religion. By what logic does Fred say that if *his* religion is false, then God doesn't exist?

There is no logic to Fred's thinking. Rather, it's emotion, based on what I'd call an ego. "All those other people believe in a false religion, but God is still in his heaven and all's right with the world. But if my religion—the religion of the great and glorious Fred—is false, then God cannot exist.

After all, I am special, not like all those other people. God lets them believe a false religion. But God, if he exists, would never let me believe a false religion. Not me. Not grand and glorious Fred. Sure, other religions are false. But my religion can't be false because that would mean there is no God."

"Other religions are false. But my religion can't be false because that would mean there is no God." If this is not egotism, then what is it?

## God and Sex

Christians believe that God once impregnated a woman who was not his wife. The statement may seem sacrilegious in the extreme. It may cause anger, even outrage. But why? What about it is untrue? If a believer cannot bear to hear a core belief expressed frankly, then how bizarre must that belief be?

The cause of the outrage is, I think, the juxtaposition of God and sex. God and sex, in the minds of many believers, are diametrically opposed. Jesus was supposedly truly human, but most believers cannot imagine him having any sexual thoughts or engaging in sexual activity of any kind, even within the bonds of holy matrimony. Mary, his mother, was a virgin at his birth and, according to Catholicism, even remained a virgin throughout her life. Her virginity is so important in Christianity that it is even part of her name, the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Many preachers and believers are very concerned with sex, especially the sexuality of other people. Is God as concerned about human sexual activity as your preacher is? Actually, the case can be made that sex is a way to experience of God. It's possible to see sex as an encounter with God and a path to more intimate union with God. After all, a heartfelt "Oh, God!" is more likely to occur in a bedroom than a church.

Perhaps preachers and believers should stop worrying so much about their neighbor's sexuality and look for a genuine morality, a morality focused on, let's say, social justice and avoiding war. Shouldn't we be concerned with the working and living conditions of workers who produce what we eat and

wear? Shouldn't we be more worried about the children who die because they lack clean drinking water than what our neighbors are doing in their bedroom? And what does more harm to humanity, sexuality gone astray, or war?

### Jesus, the Perfect Son

When Jesus is twelve years old, he travels with his family to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. When the feast is over, Mary and Joseph leave Jerusalem but fail to notice that Jesus isn't with them. Only after traveling a day, do they realize Jesus is missing. So, they return to Jerusalem to look for him. After searching the city for three long days, they find him in the Temple, teaching. "And his mother said to him: Son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold thy father and **I have sought thee sorrowing.**" (Luke 2:48)

Mary's question is understandable. Why did you leave us without warning? Why did you cause us so much worry and grief? We anxiously searched Jerusalem for three days, not knowing what had happened to you. Why did you do this to us?

Jesus ignores Mary's question and asks two questions of his own: "And he said to them: How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my father's business? And they understood not the word that he spoke unto them." (Luke 2:49-50) Why did you look for me, asks Jesus? But were they supposed to go home and hope he'd turn up sooner or later? Don't you know I must be about my father's business? says Jesus. Evidently not, because "they understood not the word that he spoke to them." Why didn't Jesus help them understand before he deserted them?

But even if they understood, how does "I must be about my father's business" translate into "I'm going to abandon you without warning and stay behind in Jerusalem so don't worry, I'll be alright?" It doesn't.

Why didn't Jesus tell his parents he was staying behind? Why did he let them spend two days traveling, and then three anxious days searching the

city for him? Why did he cause his parents such needless worry and grief? Leaving them without warning was cruel. Mary asks: "why hast thou done so to us?" Jesus gives no satisfactory answer.

## The Needs of a State Religion

What would a state want in a religion?

First of all, obedience to state, i.e., obedience to itself, obedience to authority. The Christian learns a slavish obedience to authority at an early age. "Here is the Bible, God's very own Word," says the preacher. "The Bible says 'serpent' but don't believe your eyes because when God wrote 'serpent,' God meant 'Satan.' You must believe me rather than your own eyes."

What better way to teach obedience to authority? Jesus condemns oaths clearly and emphatically. The preacher says oaths are OK with God. Christians follow the preacher; they follow authority rather than the plain teachings of Jesus.

Second, to survive a state must have subjects willing to fight wars. The list of wars fought between two Christian states over the past 2,000 years is a very long list. The list of wars declared unjust, immoral, and not permissible for a Christian to fight is an exceeding short list of length zero.

Lastly, rich and powerful rulers of state are often interested in their own welfare rather than the welfare of the populace in general. A populace worried about and feeling guilty over their sexuality is easier to control than a confident populace who realize their own power. A morality concerned with sexuality does not threaten to upset the state or the status quo. A morality concerned with social justice does. Which is why Liberation Theology, a theology concerned with social justice, has found so little favor in mainstream Christian denominations. A country that gives tax breaks to the rich but provides inadequate medical care for many is a country ruled to benefit the rich and powerful. A better morality would demand a country run for the benefit of the many rather than the benefit of the few.

## Fear of God

Most believers don't follow the Bible and don't even know what it says. Many believers don't even know what Jesus, their "Lord and Master," said. How can this phenomenon be understood? After all, it is not difficult to read the New Testament and look for what Jesus says. Some Bibles even print the words of Jesus in red, making it especially easy to see what he had to say. Yet believers, some of whom devote their entire lives to Christianity, often don't have a rudimentary knowledge of what Jesus actually says. It's a mysterious phenomenon, odd to the n<sup>th</sup> degree. It's as if a Sherlock Holmes fan doesn't recognize the address 221B Baker Street. Or as if a Harry Potter fan doesn't know what Hogwarts is. How can we explain this phenomenon?

Fear.

Yahweh is a god who incited King David to take a census and then killed 70,000 people as punishment. Yahweh was unhappy with what he created, so he drowned it all slowly in a forty-day flood. And in 1 Samuel 15:4, Yahweh says, "Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys." Kill the infants? And the animals, too? Clearly, Yahweh is a god to be feared.

Believers are often told that they *must* believe, that their faith will save them from eternal torture. So, there's little reason for believers to think for themselves and to read the Bible. Little reason but much danger. What if a believer reads what Jesus said about killing cursing children and finds their faith fading? How much safer to accept what the preacher says! Thus, we have the priest who didn't know Jesus said, "Call no man father." Thus, we have believers who aren't familiar with everything the person they call their "Lord and Master" actually said. (How can they follow Jesus if they don't know what he taught? Rather than being followers of Jesus, many believers are **fans** of Jesus. They admire him and think very highly of their personal Jesus, but don't know much about the character in the New Testament.)



In 2005, Hurricane Katrina devastated the city of New Orleans. Some Christian preachers said the hurricane was God's punishment for the New Orleans' gay community. Sadly, almost all the elderly residents of a retirement home drowned in the flood. Was the drowning a nursing home of elderly people part of God's punishment? If your image of God is Yahweh, then it's entirely possible it was.

Today, many believers are very concerned about abortion, gay marriage, and trans people. If I believed in a God like Yahweh, I'd be worried, too, mindful of what Yahweh did to Sodom and Gomorrah. But much of what the Bible says about God is a lie. God wouldn't drown the elderly people in a retirement community because he was angry about some gays. And God wouldn't drown the entire world because he regretted something he had done. And God wouldn't impregnate a woman who was not his wife. Or any woman.

Charles Dodgson (penname Lewis Carroll) wrote *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*. Did he have Christians in mind, even if only subconsciously, when he wrote the following?

"Alice laughed: "There's no use trying," she said; "one can't believe impossible things."

"I daresay you haven't had much practice," said the Queen. "When I was younger, I always did it for half an hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."

—Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*

## The Grandpa Defense

Preachers, and some believers, have no problem telling us what God or Jesus had in mind, what God or Jesus meant. It's an absurd situation. Here is God's very own Holy Word, translated by scholars who have spent their lives learning and who, no doubt, prayed to the Holy Spirit for guidance before translating. But now, says preacher Joe, ignore the scholars and their translations. Let me, preacher Joe, who maybe graduated college and maybe did not, tell you what God meant to say or write, what God would have said or written if only God could explain things as clearly as I. Absurd.



Whenever this happens (and it's not difficult to find preachers doing it, as when they explain why it's OK to take oaths), a certain scenario arises in my mind.

“Grandson, would you please help me find my slippers? I want to take a walk,” said Grandpa.

“Take a walk, Grandpa? Don't you mean help you find your shoes?” said Grandson.

“Yes, of course, Grandson. That's what I mean. My shoes.”

When preachers say that verses in the Bible don't mean what they obviously mean, they are like the little boy correcting grandpa about looking for shoes rather than slippers. It is credible that an elderly man could say “slippers” when he means “shoes.” It is not credible that something can be the Word of God, but not say exactly what God intended to be said.

### Other Defenses

Believers use various defenses to try to resolve Biblical contradictions and absurdities. They say, to “properly” understand the Bible, one must:

1. not read too superficially
2. not read too literally
3. understand the overall context
4. refer to the meaning of the original ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words
5. understand the meaning of the words in their ancient linguistic/grammatical context
6. understand verses in their larger historical and literary context
7. be led by spirit not by mere words (“for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” 2 Corinthians 3:6)

Lastly, if none of the above work, declare the passages deeply symbolic and offer some credible symbolic interpretation as what the verses “really mean.” One might think if God authored a book, we would be able to read and understand what God meant to say, and not need an army of preachers equipped with an arsenal of defenses to explain what God “really means.”

Why are believers so reluctant to admit the Bible's obvious fictions, fairy tales, contradictions, and lies? Fundamentalists believe in a literal six-day creation. More liberal believers accept it as symbolic. Why do so few believers call it an ancient fairy tale? Why do believers go to such extremes to rationalize scripture?

In some countries, past and present, publicly disagreeing with the prevailing religion could cost you your life. This was true in medieval Christianity for centuries and is true today in some Islamic countries where the penalty for renunciation of religion is death. In such environments, denying the prevailing religion could be dangerous, even fatal. So, non-fundamentalist believers go to absurd lengths to find some valid meaning in scripture. Belief must be maintained in any way possible.

Many of those who lose belief become atheists. Which explains why the conversation is so often between believers and atheists, as if the only option to not believing in religion is not believing in God. But there are other options.

Christianity says certain things *must* be believed, for example, that Jesus is God. The penalty for non-belief is eternal torture in hell. But belief is not voluntary; try to believe  $2+2=5$  and you will fail. God would not command us to believe, no more than God would command us to fly. Why, then, is belief demanded?

A command to believe is, I think, a veiled command about behavior. Believe what you wish but behave as if you believe, or, depending on the society, risk ostracism, imprisonment, or death. In other words, commands about belief are injunctions about behavior. God wouldn't condemn anyone for honestly holding a belief. But the state might, if the belief led to behavior the state wished to suppress.

[Euphemia Maclean](#)

Yahweh is a God to be feared. Genesis 3:16 has Yahweh saying, "In pain you shall bring forth children." So, what should a king do to a woman who took a medicine to escape Yahweh's ordained pain of

childbirth? What might a fearful, angry God like Yahweh do to a nation that allows women to use medicines to relieve the pain of childbirth? King James VI of Scotland didn't want to find out.

At the time, pain relievers were thought to be a product of witchcraft. It's not difficult to see why. God ordained the pain of childbirth. The pain reliever eases or eliminates the pain which God has ordained. Therefore, the pain reliever evades God's order and therefore must be "of the devil," i.e., a product of witchcraft. And Yahweh clearly says, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." (Exodus 22:18).

Had people of the time understood that pain and disease are natural phenomena, a woman by the name of Euphemia Maclean might have lived to a ripe old age. Instead, on June 15, 1591, Euphemia Maclean was burned alive on Castle Hill in Edinburgh by order of King James VI of Scotland. Her crimes? Witchcraft; specifically, using a pain reliever during childbirth. (King James VI of Scotland later became King James I of England, when the Scottish and English crowns were united on March 24, 1603. He is the king who created the King James Bible.)

As we can see, **beliefs have consequences**. As another example, the Catholic Church taught for centuries that a Catholic baptism was a requirement for getting into heaven. So, what should be done to a woman having a difficult birth? According to dogma, if the baby dies before being born and being baptized, it cannot go to heaven. I once read that sometimes the mother's belly was cut open so the baby could be baptized. Of course, the mother died. But that was a small price to pay so that the baby could enjoy the eternal bliss of heaven.

### Evil Teaching: Kill the Cursing Child

We are going to discuss an evil teaching of Jesus. Before we do, it's worth pointing out again that the Jesus we are discussing is the character of that name in New Testament stories. New Testament Jesus may have little in common with a personal Jesus a person has created for themselves. Thus, a reader might protest, "You libel Jesus! What you write is untrue; it's evil, slanderous nonsense." And they'd be right—if I was talking about their own

personal Jesus, the Jesus they've created in their imagination, the Jesus that naturally approves of much of what they approve of and condemns much of what they condemn. The Jesus whose thoughts they know for the same reason Arthur Conan Doyle knew the thoughts of Sherlock Holmes.

We've seen two commands in the Old Testament where Yahweh says a child that curses a parent must be put to death. Jesus is as responsible for those commands as his Father because, to quote Jesus, "I and my Father are one." So, when Yahweh was inspiring the commands, Jesus wasn't there saying, "Now wait a minute, Dad. Let's think this over a bit." Rather, Jesus was there agreeing with his Father.

Worse, there are two instances in the New Testament **where Jesus specifically cites the Old Testament commands with approval**. One instance occurs in Matthew 15:1-4.

Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, "Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread." And He answered and said to them, "Why do you yourselves also **break the commandment of God** for the sake of your tradition? 4 **For God said, 'Honor your father and mother,' and, 'The one who speaks evil of father or mother is to be put to death.**

The Pharisees criticize Jesus' followers. In turn, Jesus says **the Pharisees disobey God's command to put the cursing child to death**.

The Bible is said to be the very Word of God. Of course, it wasn't originally written in English, but it's translated by scholars who spend their lives studying the original languages and who, no doubt, pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance before translating. In the Bible, we have prophets who tell us what God said, and we have a few instances of God himself speaking. In Matthew 15:1-4, we have **God himself quoting himself in his very own super-duper book**. We have Jesus **specifically citing with approval the Old Testament commands to kill the cursing child**. We have Jesus labeling those commands as commands of God.

Can it get any more certain than that? No. Will believers, who have been trained from childhood to believe their preacher, not their own eyes and brain, allow themselves to be told the words don't mean what they clearly mean? Yes. "Jesus couldn't possibly mean that!" they'll say. "I know it in my heart." And they are right. Their personal Jesus, the Jesus they've created in their imagination, certainly wouldn't approve of killing the child who curses a parent. But that's not the Jesus I'm speaking about. I'm speaking about New Testament Jesus, whose words I've quoted above.

Believers don't follow what the Bible says. Rather, they follow what their preachers tell them the Bible says. In this case, thank God they do.

### The Basic Problem

Why can't Christians be honest? Why can't they simply admit that Matthew is mistaken, that Isaiah 7:14 is not a prophecy? Christianity and many other religions decide what is true based on what is written in their holy writings. The writings are deemed "holy" because they are believed to describe words and acts of God, prophets (ex., Moses, Mohammed), and, in some cases, God-men (ex., Jesus, Krishna). Thus, believers cannot admit scripture is wrong. Fundamentalist believers insist the Earth is only a few thousand years old and that the worldwide flood actually happened. More liberal believers say some Bible stories contain deep symbolic meaning. Hardly any believers will say the Bible is just flat out wrong.

Believers will offer arguments, however silly, to defend their idol which is scripture. For example, here's an excerpt from the first eight verses of Revelation, the last book of the Bible.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must **shortly** take place. . . Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this **prophecy**, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near. . . . Behold, **He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him**, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

Revelation makes a prophecy of what will **shortly** occur: the Second Coming of Jesus. Two thousand years later there has been no Second Coming. It's an obvious false prophecy. "But wait!" says the Bible idolater to defend their idol. "For God, shortly may mean any number of years. No contradiction!" A Jehovah Witness once made this argument to me, citing 2 Peter 3:8 "With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years is like a day."

We've seen another example of a desperate, far-fetched Bible defense in the case of King David. 2 Samuel 24 says Yahweh incited David to do the census, but 1 Chronicles 21 says Satan incited David. "So, obviously," says the Bible idolater, "both Yahweh **and** Satan tampered with King David's free will and provoked him to do a census. No contradiction!"

But if "shortly" to God doesn't mean what it means to a normal human being, then the entire Bible becomes suspect. How can we know that "virgin" to God doesn't just mean a well-behaved Jewish teenage girl? Maybe "only begotten Son of God" means a man who thinks and talks about God a lot? I have no doubt that if the Bible had "1+1=3," the Bible idolater would find a way to explain it, so that's it not wrong. "Of course, God knows one plus one equals two. But here God is reminding us never to forget the Trinity." Or something equally ridiculous.

It's easy to feel the people who invent such lame explanations either have the mind of a child, or just lack intellectual integrity. But the problem goes deeper. Once a writing is accepted as the Word of God and/or the utterance of some prophet or God-man, then believers are not allowed to say the writing is wrong. Thus, they are forced to find some explanation, any explanation, no matter how silly, to explain away any obvious scriptural defects.

### Ways of Knowing

If **beliefs have consequences**, then how we decide what to believe is important. The method used in deciding what is and isn't true is called a "way of knowing."

Religion's way of knowing is based on the authority of alleged "holy" writings, which contain the teachings of alleged prophets (e.g., Moses, Muhammed) and God-men (e.g., Jesus, Krishna). The teachings cannot be overturned. A believing Jew cannot say Moses is wrong; a believing Christian cannot say Jesus is wrong; a believing Muslim cannot say Muhammed is wrong.

Religion's way of knowing is juvenile in that it's the way a young child decides what is true. To the young child, "Mommy says so" or "Daddy says so" determines what is true and what is not. To the Christian theologian, "Jesus says so" or "The Bible says so" determines what is true and what is not.

Science has discovered a superior way of knowing, based on evidence and reason. As an example, for centuries, Newton's theories unlocked the secrets of the natural world. Scientists could even calculate the motion of the planets with Newtonian mechanics. But when Einstein demonstrated Newton's theories weren't quite right, Einstein wasn't tortured and put to death as a heretic. Rather, his theory was accepted.

Religion's way of knowing is inferior to science's way of knowing. Ask an Italian, Iranian, or Hindu theologian what happens after death and you get different answers. Even in Christianity, different denominations have contradictory teachings, even about such supremely important questions such as how to be saved. If Catholicism is the One True Church necessary for salvation, then Baptists are not saved. If, as some Baptists claim, Catholics "are in need of salvation," then Catholics are not saved. I once heard a radio preacher say, "If you are not baptized by immersion, they you are going to hell," which condemns most Christians—indeed, most people alive or who have passed away—to hell.

Science's way of knowing, on the other hand, leads to agreement and truth. Asked to predict the reaction of two chemicals, an Italian, Iranian, or Hindu chemist will give the same answer, which experiments confirm. Scientists agree. Thus, we speak of physics, chemistry, and biology, not Catholic physics, Islamic chemistry, and Hindu biology.

Our way of knowing is important, because it determines what we believe, and beliefs have consequences. Religion's way of knowing leads to multiple, contradictory views about how to be saved and other important questions. Faith is not a path to truth. If it were, religions wouldn't disagree. Moreover, once a teaching is enshrined in scripture, it's very difficult to change it. Witness how a civil war was needed in the United States before slavery could be overturned.

### Evil Teaching: Disease

Do an Internet search on "child dies parents religious beliefs." You'll find stories like:

- 2-year-old girl dies after faith-healing parents refuse medical treatment
- A 10-month-old dies after her parents refused to get help
- Victims of religion-based medical neglect
- Michigan: baby dies after parents refused medical help

The Bible no longer causes women to be burnt alive for using a pain killer during childbirth, or for the imaginary crime of witchcraft. It does still cause little children to die due to lack of medical care.

How should we treat disease? The answer depends on how we answer another question: What causes disease? If sin and demons cause disease, then antivirals and antibiotics are useless. On the other hand, if viruses and bacteria cause disease, then casting out demons won't help.

The New Testament records Jesus performing miracles; many involving healing. How does Jesus heal? By forgiving sin and casting out demons. By one count, there are 36 miracles of Jesus recorded in the Bible and 23 of them concern healing. Jesus heals by forgiving sin and casting out demons. Based on the New Testament teachings of Jesus, Saint Augustine taught that "All diseases of Christians are to be ascribed to demons, " while Saint Gregory of Tours taught it's sinful to rely on medicine rather than the intercession of saints.



The teachings of New Testament Jesus about disease are wrong. And deadly. Based in the New Testament teachings of Jesus, children denied medical treatment have died in the past, are dying today, and will continue to die, for as long as believers continue to take the Bible's miracle stories seriously.

The Internet has many cases of parents who denied medical treatment to their child and relied on prayer, fasting, and/or casting out demons. The child died. In fact, a child is near death, perhaps at this very moment, because some believer accepts what Jesus says about disease. Worse, in the United States, many states have laws that protect parents from criminal prosecution for the death of a child that modern medicine could easily have saved if the parents denied treatment based on religious belief.

The teachings of New Testament Jesus about disease are wrong, but scriptural idolatry prevents believers from acknowledging the teachings are wrong. So, children die. And will continue to die until believers stop believing in the false teachings of Jesus about disease.

### Disillusionment

There's the man named Santa Claus. "He sees you when you're sleeping. He knows when you're awake. He knows if you've been bad or good. So be good for goodness sake!" says the song *Santa Claus is Coming to Town*. Everyone says he exists. And he has supernatural powers. For instance, he can fly through the air, come down the chimney (even if you live in an apartment that doesn't have a chimney). He rewards right behavior and punishes wrong behavior. He comes each year, on the birthday of Jesus.

Jesus is also a man (and a God), who sees you when you're sleeping, knows when you're awake, knows if you've been bad or good, so be good for goodness sake! Everyone says Jesus exists. And he had supernatural powers. For instance, he can walk on water, heal the sick, and raise the dead. He rewards right behavior and punishes wrong behavior such as missing Sunday Mass or not accepting him as your personal Savior. Jesus and Santa Claus apparently have a lot in common.

Eventually, the child begins to doubt Santa Claus. How can Santa, the child wonders, visit everyone in the world in one night? Flying reindeer? And how does Santa enter a home which lacks a chimney? “Is what I’ve been told about Santa Claus fact or fiction?” the child may wonder. Fiction, the child eventually learns. Everyone said Santa Claus was real, but he isn’t. But the child shouldn’t tell younger children that Santa Claus is fictional. He should let them enjoy the illusion because it’s fun to believe. It would be cruel to take belief in Santa Claus away from them. Apparently, illusions make the world a happier place, so illusions are to be treasured.

So, what should an intelligent child conclude about God? That Jesus is fictional, like Santa Claus? But that it would be cruel to enlighten believers? Disillusionment is defined as “a feeling of disappointment resulting from the discovery that something is not as good as one believed it to be.” If society valued truth, disillusionment might be defined as “the wonderful feeling of discovery, the exhilaration of having moved closer to the truth after discarding an untrue belief.” This book is meant to disillusion.

### [The Sermon on the Mount](#)

The Sermon of the Mount is often quoted and praised as the pinnacle of the teaching of Jesus. It appears in Matthew 5. Let’s examine a few lines.

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

This verse is generally ignored. No denomination I’m aware of says being poor in spirit gives salvation. Besides, what does it mean to be “poor in spirit”? Why not rich in spirit? And suppose a person poor in spirit hasn’t been born again or been born of water and Spirit? Are they saved or not?

*Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.*

We all can recognize a meek person as a person who doesn’t assert themselves. But what exactly does it mean to “inherit the earth”? Do meek people get to inherit huge estates? “Inherit the earth” has a nice poetic ring, but it lacks meaning. Jesus might just as well have said the meek will “shine with the stars” or “gain all the gold of the sun.” The phrase “Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth” sounds nice but is vacuous.

*Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.*

This verse, too, is generally ignored. No denomination I'm aware of says the pure in heart are saved. Worse, the verse doesn't actually say the pure in heart are saved. Conceivably, someone pure in heart might see God when they stand before God in judgment, before they are condemned to hell. Is a pure in heart person saved who hasn't been born again or born of water and Spirit?

*Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.*

You are a peacemaker and have been called a "son of God." So what? Does that mean you're saved? If so, we can discard the need to follow the commandments or the will of the Father or all the other necessary and sufficient conditions for salvation. But if peacemakers are not saved, then this verse, too, is vacuous. And many peacemakers have never been called a son of God.

*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Yet another way to be saved. No need to follow the commandments or do the will of the Father. If people persecute you for righteousness' sake, then you're saved.

The teachings of the sermon on the mount we've discussed are less than impressive and contradict other Biblical passages. It's easy to feel that a God could do better. There were in the Roman empire other God-men who had been fathered by another God and who rose from the dead. Given the lack of coherence in the message of Jesus, **especially his failure to clearly and unambiguously say what is required for salvation**, it's easy to believe that Jesus is merely the Roman God-man who won out over all competing God-men to supply the Roman empire with a unifying religion.

## The Bible and Salvation

If the teachings of Jesus about hell are true, then the most important question for a person is, "How do I avoid hell and get into heaven?" After all, a person might lead a dissolute, disastrous, evil life, but if they

somehow manage to get into heaven, then they've succeeded—for what better success can there be than avoiding hell and spending eternity in the company of God? (Although, if Yahweh is really God, eternity might not be so pleasant.) On the other hand, a person might lead a saintly life entirely devoted to helping the poor and the sick, but if they end up in hell, they have failed in the worse way possible.

If religions took hell seriously (and not merely as a device to frighten), the most important question in the world would be, “How can a person avoid hell and get into heaven?” Yet, religions don't evidence any concern.

Suppose I'm a Baptist and think Catholics aren't saved. So, every day millions of Catholics die and go to hell. Oh, well. That's too bad. Suppose I'm a Catholic and believe Baptists aren't saved. It's a shame, but nothing for me to worry about. After all, am I my brother's keeper?

But, wait! Are the teachings of Jesus about salvation really so unclear? Doesn't the Bible say, “God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” No, the Bible does not say that. Rather, **one verse**, specifically John 3:16, says that. Other verses say other things.

Anyone who thinks John 3:16 conclusively says how to be saved is invited to show the verse to their local Catholic priest. I can't say what will happen. But I can say what will *not* happen. The priest won't say, “Holy Mother of God! How could we have missed that all these centuries? Sister Regina, please get Holy Father the Pope on the phone at once. Holy Father? Would you please open your Bible to John 3:16? Yes, it was there all the time. You'll change Catholic teaching at once? Wonderful, Holy Father. I'm glad to have been of help.”

Rather, the priest will respond with his own Biblical proof texts, verses that supposedly validate Catholic teachings.

## War

The world has seen two world wars. The wars were conducted mostly by nations which were Christian or had been Christian for centuries. World War I included Britain, France, Italy, the United States, and Russia, all predominately Christian. World War II included Britain, France, Italy, the United States, and Russia (in the form of the Soviet Union), Germany, and Japan. Japan wasn't Christian. Germany and Russia had been Christian for centuries but were at the time ruled by Nazis and Communists. No major Christian denomination declared either of the wars unjust and forbade its followers from fighting. In World War II, Catholic Italian-Americans killed and were killed by Italian Catholics. Lutheran German-Americans killed and were killed by German Lutherans. Can a war be just for both sides?

In the wars, Christian countries spent an enormous amount of time and money building weapons to destroy human lives and then employing the weapons for their intended purpose. World War II lasted for approximately 6 years and took an estimated 70 million human lives. The numbers wounded, in body or mind, are unknown.

Albert Einstein said: "I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones." Madness has prevented World War III so far in the form of MAD, i.e., Mutual Assured Destruction.

From Wikipedia: "Mutual assured destruction (MAD) is a doctrine of military strategy and national security policy which posits that a full-scale use of nuclear weapons by an attacker on a nuclear-armed defender with second-strike capabilities would cause the complete annihilation of both the attacker and the defender. It is based on the theory of rational deterrence, which holds that the threat of using strong weapons against the enemy prevents the enemy's use of those same weapons."

The theory of rational deterrence assumes rationality. Are people rational who believe Jesus is coming soon to end the world, given that their belief rests on a book that opens with a talking serpent and later has a speaking donkey? Might some of them believe a nuclear war was a prelude to the Second Coming of Jesus? It's not inconceivable.

There are today people, including children, who do not have access to clean water, to quality foods, to decent housing, to adequate medical care. But providing all that would reduce the income of the wealthy, some of whom are believers more concerned about contraception, pre-marital, and the possibility of two same-sex people kissing. There is today, as there has been for decades, the possibility that a nuclear war will end all human life on Earth. Isn't that more of a danger than pre-marital sex?

The Bible's morality is suited to the needs of state and empire. Its morality is not suited to the present needs of humanity. And, as its contradictions and absurdities demonstrate, the Bible offers a religion tuned to the regressive mentality. But perhaps the age of the regressive is coming to an end. In the future, perhaps the progressive mindset will dominate. (If not, humanity may not have a future.) Even today in war, rationality in the form of science and technology defeats brute strength. Perhaps it is now time for rationality to defeat war and state-centered morality, and create a peaceful, rational world tuned to the needs of humanity.

### Jesus, the Great Savior

It is sometimes said that Jesus saved us. A few believers, called "Christian Universalists," believe that. However, many denominations don't believe we are saved until we do and/or believe something. As to exactly what must be done and/or believed to be saved, denominations disagree.

In other words, many denominations believe that Jesus didn't save us but rather brought us the "means of salvation," i.e., the way to be saved. I take the phrase "means of salvation" from a 2007 Pope Benedict XVI document that says some denominations do not possess "the means of salvation." Obviously, a denomination cannot give its members something that it itself lacks.

Search the Internet for “are Catholics saved?” and you will find denominations that answer “No.” Replace “Catholics” with “Baptists,” “Mormons,” or any other Christian denomination that comes to mind. You will find some denominations that say “No.” This author once heard a radio preacher (denomination unknown) who taught baptism *by immersion* was required for salvation. The teaching says most of the world’s Christians are going to hell, not to mention all the world’s non-Christians. (How do apparently sane people come to accept such enormous lies about God? One answer is that they have a gullible faith in what their preacher says.)

In any event, it is a manifest fact that Christian denominations disagree about how to be saved. Hell, Jesus taught, exists and is quite unpleasant. End up in hell and you’re there forever, suffering indescribable tortures. For anyone who takes the possibility of hell seriously, the most important question in the world is: How do I get saved? Christian denominations which claim to be following Jesus do not agree on the answers.

What do we need to do to be saved? Do I need a Catholic baptism and all mortal sins forgiven to get into heaven and avoid hell? There are Baptists who say “no,” who say that Catholics are not saved. Baptists have their own beliefs about how to be saved. As do Mormons. And Jehovah Witnesses. The list goes on.

Suppose I took the possibility of eternal torture (by a God who loves me) completely seriously. Suppose I desperately wanted to avoid hell and be saved. What should I do? If the Baptists are right, returning to the Catholic Church won’t help. If the Catholics are right, becoming a Baptist won’t help. It’s a ridiculous situation, an impossible situation because if Jesus really is God and really came to give us the “means of salvation,” he would not have failed.

It’s as if the Earth is going to be destroyed, so people go to the Jesus Spaceport to take a spaceship to safety. At the spaceport, there are several ships labeled “Catholic,” “Baptist,” “Presbyterian,” etc. The spokesman at the Catholic spaceship says his ship will take me to safety, but other

spaceships will crash into the sun. The spokesman at the Baptist spaceship says his ship will take me to safety, but other spaceships will crash into the sun.

If hell is real and Jesus came to tell us how to be saved, then he failed. The best we can do is choose some denomination or some set of beliefs and hope to God we choose correctly. If Christian denominations took the idea of hell seriously, wouldn't it be imperative that they get together and determine the *genuine* way, the necessary *and* sufficient conditions, to avoid hell, a way that *all* denominations accept? How can they sit back and allow so many other believers to go to hell every day? Do Christian denomination take the idea of hell seriously? They do not behave as if they do.

You're at the Jesus Spaceport and there is no rational way to select the ship that will take you to safety. It's easy to wonder if the Earth being doomed is merely a fiction, that hell is a bogeyman for the easily frightened.

### How to be Saved, according to Jesus

The claim that Jesus failed to clearly show us the way to salvation is an explosive claim because Jesus is said to have come to Earth expressly for that purpose. So, how can Jesus, if he is truly God, have failed? A believer might attribute the failure of Jesus to human free will, but explaining **why** he failed doesn't change the fact **that** he failed. Whatever the reason, denominations disagree about how to be saved.

But is the situation really that dire? Suppose we turn to the actual words of Jesus. Are they as contradictory and confused as it seems? Let's turn to the actual words of Jesus and see.

For many believers, the words of Jesus in John 3:16 will immediately come to mind. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "There," a believer might say, "the Bible clearly says how to be saved. So, what's the problem?" The problem is that the Bible does not say that. **One verse** of the Bible says that. Other verses describe other, contradictory ways to be saved.



In some verses, we find Jesus saying a person **must actually do something to be saved**. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 7:21)" says Jesus in one verse. In another, "If thou wilt enter into life, **keep the commandments**. (Matthew 19:17)" says Jesus. He that "doeth the will of my Father" will be saved. Apparently, love of God isn't sufficient; you actually need to do something.

Or do you? Says Jesus: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself . . . this do, and thou shalt live. (Luke 10:27-28)" So, maybe, love of God is sufficient for salvation? Maybe, "love is all you need"?

Or maybe belief is sufficient? Says Jesus: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that **believeth on me hath everlasting life**. (John 6:47)" Paul also says belief is sufficient for salvation: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. (Romans 10:9)" In fact, Paul goes further and says that merely calling on the name of Jesus will get a person saved: "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Acts 2:21)"

Obey God's commandments. Love. Believe. Call on the name of the Lord. These conditions are presented as if they are sufficient, as if to be saved, it's enough to do any of them. Fulfill one of these conditions, Jesus seems to say, and you're saved.

Unless you fail to fulfill some necessary conditions, things that *must* be done lest you not be saved. For instance, Jesus says you *must* believe. Otherwise, you'll be damned. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and

is baptized shall be saved; but **he that believeth not shall be damned.** (Mark 16:15-16) "

And don't forget to be born again! Says Jesus: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (John 3:3)" And you had better be born of water and Spirit, too. Says Jesus: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (John 3:5)" Is being born again the same as being born of water and Spirit? Jesus doesn't say. How exactly does someone go about being born again or born of water and Spirit? Jesus doesn't say (although there is no shortage of preachers who will tell you what Jesus had in mind, what he would have said). But you'd better do one or the other or, maybe, both. Otherwise, you cannot enter the kingdom of God, says Jesus.

And you must also become as a child, says Jesus: "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18:3) "

So, there are sufficient conditions: obey God's commandments; love; believe; call on the name of the Lord. Do any of these and you are saved. And there are necessary conditions: believe, be baptized, be born again, be born of water and Spirit, become as a little child.

What happens if you fulfill a sufficient condition (ex., call on the name of the Lord) but do not fulfill a necessary condition (ex., be baptized)? One verse says you're saved; the other says you are not. Taken all together, the conditions form a contradictory mess. And it's also worth noting that nowhere in the Bible do we find that an unforgiven mortal sin at the time of death means eternal hell.

### [Regressive/Progressive](#)

Ancient religions that survive today tend to have teachings, laws, and worldviews that appeal to the uneducated and the superstitious. This should

not surprise because such religions formed when most of humanity was uneducated and superstitious. Had a religion not appealed to the masses then, it might not have survived to today. When such religions came into existence centuries, even millennia ago, humanity was in the main more superstitious, illiterate, and uneducated than it is today. Tales of talking serpents, witches, and miracle workers may have seemed credible. Killing women for the “crime” of witchcraft might have seemed reasonable. Keeping slaves may have seemed righteous.

Thus, religions often appeal to a “regressive” type of person. The regressive type is gullible, superstitious, poorly educated, and has poor reasoning skills. He or she is ruled mostly by emotion, and often jumps to conclusions. The regressive person is likely to believe things on faith, accept conspiracy theories, and possibly believe witches exist. (As a shocking example, Christian Sarah Palin, who was the 2008 Republican candidate for Vice President of the United States, once had herself blessed “against all forms of witchcraft.” Search for YouTube.com for “Sarah Palin witchcraft” to see the video.) The regressive is uncomfortable with uncertainty and seeks spoon-fed answers, especially to ultimate questions such as: Where did it all come from? What happens after death?

The progressive person, on the other hand, is generally skeptical, rational, and well educated. He or she has superior reasoning skills, and is ruled mostly by intellect. The progressive person is likely to believe science’s view of the universe and to demand evidence for beliefs. The progressive can tolerate uncertainty and suspend belief until there’s good evidence one way or the other.

Of course, when discussing types of people, we want to avoid the trap of stereotypical, oversimplified descriptions. Describing types of people is a broad-brush approach. Inevitably, there are people who don’t fit the description. So, we admit our regressive/progressive distinction is an inexact one: some people fit both types at one time or another, some neither. Nonetheless, we’ll find the regressive/progressive distinction makes sense much of the time.

The amygdala is the part of the brain which experiences emotions, in particular, fear. It's responsible for the "fight or flight" response. The cerebral cortex supports higher-level reasoning and intelligence. It has been speculated that the regressive has an overactive amygdala and an underdeveloped cerebral cortex, while the progressive has a better developed cerebral cortex. Relative to their overall size, humans have the largest cerebral cortex of all mammals. So, we can speculate that people with an overdeveloped amygdala and an underdeveloped cerebral cortex are people who are failing to realize their human potential.

Regressive people may be attracted to religion. On the other hand, religion may make people regressive who, with proper nurturing and education, could have been progressive. The world needs a religion which encourages the progressive.

## Hypatia

Hypatia was a prominent woman mathematician, astronomer, and philosopher in Alexandria, then part of the Roman Empire. She was famous, intelligent and non-Christian. In the spring of 415 C.E., she was murdered by a mob of Christians. Her murder shocked the Empire and was a watershed event, followed by a thousand years of what are generally known as "The Dark Ages."

By 1000 C.E., Europe had become home to a generally gullible, ignorant, and unwashed populace. To illustrate, pieces of the true cross—said to be wood from the cross of Jesus—flooded Europe, enough to build several fleets. And Mary's milk was available, too. Baby Jesus, it was claimed, had no need to nurse. So, Mary had relieved her swollen breasts. Somehow, the milk had survived the centuries and found its way to Europe, into the hands of gullible buyers.

In that age of ignorance and superstition, knowledge itself could be dangerous. Even a pope was not above suspicion; the keen mathematical ability of Pope Sylvester II gave rise to rumors he was a sorcerer in league with the devil.

Today, some versions of Christianity grow like weeds around genuine knowledge, i.e., science. Christians dispute evolution, the age of the Earth, and—God help us—whether the Earth is flat or a globe.

### Regressive/Progressive: The Past, Present, and Future

The regressive has a fantasy view of the past, (for example, Garden of Eden, worldwide flood, all languages originating in one place) based on an unchangeable scripture immune to addition or correction. The progressive accepts current best theories, such as the big bang and evolution, as likely true, but will update beliefs anytime good evidence is found.

For the regressive, the present is a degraded version of the past (ex, the Fall and original sin). The ideal earthy epoch has passed. For the progressive, the present is an improved version of the past, at least, from the purely human view: less hunger, better homes, longer life span, cell phones, computers, etc.

For the regressive, the Earth and, indeed, the entire universe may not exist much longer when a "second coming" brings the universe to a close. The progressive expects that the Earth and the universe will continue to exist for billions of years.

For the regressive, the ideal earthy epoch is in the past, when a person could have listened to a sermon of Jesus, walked with Buddha, met Mohammed, etc. For the progressive, we are continually moving towards a better understanding and control of our environment. The ideal earthy epoch for humanity, if it ever occurs, is in the future.

### Morality

The Old Testament idea of morality is warped: sexuality, no; war and genocide, yes. The proof is in plain sight. The Old Testament God Yahweh famously destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and condemned homosexuality: Leviticus 18:22 "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination." And Deuteronomy 23:1 has "He that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off, shall not enter into the congregation of

the Lord.” But he who slaughtered Amalekite infants and cattle is welcome in the congregation of Yahweh.

Deuteronomy 23:2 has another skewed morality: “One of illegitimate birth shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the LORD.” The law is bizarre and ridiculously unenforceable. Even today, with all the genealogical resources freely available on the Internet, who knows if an ancestor eight or nine generations back was illegitimate? (It might be indelicate, but true, to point out there is no record of Mary and Yahweh being married.)

In the New Testament, Jesus condemns divorce in Matthew 5:31-32 “But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.” Yet, Yahweh has no problem with mass murder, as in flooding the entire world; killing 70,000 for the census of David; ordering the massacre of the Amalekites; and other instances too numerous to mention. And Jesus preached hell, i.e., eternal torture, for sin.

One goal of a religion of state is an obedient populace, credulous citizens who accept what they are told. To achieve that, what better way than to show a child “serpent” in what you call God’s Word, and then tell the child the word really means “Satan”? And what better way to undermine self-confidence than to declare a natural human drive—a particularly strong drive for many people—as sinful? In Catholic school, I learned that the “sins” of masturbation, pre-marital sex, and contraception could send me to hell. But dropping bombs which killed a few hundred people, or a few hundred thousand people, was fine as long as I was in my country’s armed forces.

The Roman empire selected a religion that was mostly OK with war and genocide but was very, very picky about a person’s sexual activity. These values are part of the DNA of Christianity and prevail even today. Throughout its history, Christianity has emphasized “sins of the flesh” even

when the “sin” involved love between two individuals (pre-marital sex, homosexuality, remarrying after divorce). But, oddly, a bomb dicing flesh as if in a blender, or an atomic bomb melting flesh, are not considered sins of the flesh.

A genuine morality would have a greater emphasize avoiding war and ensuring social justice rather than sexuality. And it would contain a few words condemning slavery and condemning death for the imaginary crime of witchcraft.

### Regressive/Progressive: Expertise and Knowledge

The regressive is generally gullible, believes peers, famous people, and Internet memes, but distrusts experts and science. The progressive generally trusts science and those whose background, education, and/or expertise merit trust.

The regressive demands absolutely true answers, preferably directly from God, and finds uncertainty uncomfortable. The regressive often refuses to seek or consider disconfirming evidence. The progressive can tolerate uncertainty and not knowing, and is satisfied with the best explanation of the evidence. The progressive is often willing to consider the other side of an argument and will consider disconfirming evidence.

### The Fig Tree

Some stories in the Bible are so nonsensical that to tell them of a man would be a great insult. How much more so to tell them of God.

As an example, consider the fig tree which Jesus cursed and withered for not bearing figs. The story appears in Matthew 21:18-20.

Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, **Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.** And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!

It's a nasty thing to do to the poor tree. After all, it's not as if trees have free will and this fig tree spitefully decided not to bear figs. If there were no figs, maybe it was due to insects or some tree disease.

Or maybe **it wasn't the time of year for fig trees to bear figs!** Here is Mark 11:12-14,20-21.

And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; **for the time of figs was not yet.** And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it. . . . And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.

“For the time of figs was not yet.” God creates fig trees. God ordains the time of year when fig trees shall bear figs and the time of year when fig trees shall not bear figs. Then God incarnates as Jesus and decides to eat a fig during the time of year when God ordained fig trees would not have figs. So. God curses the tree and withers it. Now when the time of figs arrives, other travelers will come to the tree and go away hungry.

We've seen the Grandpa Defense. There's another defense, the Symbolic Defense, which ignores the literal story and takes it as symbolic. Search the Internet for “Sam Harris Recipe Analogy” for a wonderful satire of the Symbolic Defense. Briefly, Mr. Harris selects a book at random in a bookstore. The book is *A Taste of Hawaii, New Cooking from the Crossroads of the Pacific*. He turns at random to a page; it's recipe for wok-seared fish. He interprets the recipe symbolically. Here's an excerpt.

The snapper filet, of course, is the individual himself—you and I—awash in the sea of existence. But here we find it cubed, which is to say that our situation must be remedied in all three



dimensions of body, mind, and spirit. Three teaspoons of chopped scallions further partakes of the cubic symmetry, suggesting that that which we need add to each level of our being by way of antidote comes likewise in equal proportions. The import of the passage is clear: the body, mind, and spirit need to be tended to with the same care.

His entire symbolic interpretation is a well-worth reading, laugh-out-loud article.

But we shouldn't laugh because a symbolic interpretation is certainly better than being put to death. For centuries, anyone who publicly disagreed with the Bible or Christianity risked their life. During the Spanish Inquisition, people merely suspected of harboring unorthodox thoughts might be put to death. So, given the choice between a symbolic interpretation and an honest but disapproving reading of scripture that might lead to execution, it's not surprising so many theologians selected a symbolic interpretation.

Of course, a symbolic interpretation need not be worthless. In fact, it may contain much wisdom. But the wisdom is not taken from the story but added to it.

### Rules of engagement

I expect some readers will dispute some statements in this book. Readers certainly have the right to free speech. A reader can say or write what they wish (within the bounds of slander and libel). And I certainly have the right to ignore what is said or written. This author does not owe a response to anyone, and will probably not waste time responding to the following:

- Preaching. I've probably heard it all before, anyway. Much preaching is little more than a loud regurgitation of dogma. It is belief presented as fact.
- Opinion. Everyone has opinions just as everyone has a nose. This writer's interest in a reader's opinion is equal to this writer's interest in a reader's nose, i.e., zero interest. I am interested in responses **to what I have written** if the response is **well-reasoned**. I don't claim this book is a revelation and I may very possibly change my mind if I

hear a convincing argument. So, I'm interested in hearing what intelligent people who disagree have to say.

- The Label Game. Criticism of this book as Arianism or Socialism or Neo-Platonism or Docetism or Vedanta or Communism or whatever—often by people who haven't read the book.
- Accusations (the genetic fallacy). “You write what you write because you are a member of the Illuminati, or a secret Communist, or a Freemason, or a demon, or a cannibalistic, child-raping Satanist.” Such accusations may make for sensational headlines but are not a ground for serious discussion.

As mentioned earlier, this writer is at an advanced age, i.e., old. Even in my younger days, I would have hesitated wasting breath and time responding to preaching, mere opinion, the label game, and unfounded accusations.

### Regressive/Progressive: Sexuality

The regressive often believes that sex should only be between man and woman, that the main purpose of sex is procreation, and that, ideally, sex should occur only when conception is possible. The females of some animal species only mate when they are in heat; the regressive sees their behavior as a model for human behavior. The progressive generally has a balanced, sane view of sexuality. Sex is primarily for the expression of love and intimacy. Procreation is its secondary purpose, especially in light of overpopulation. Both the regressive and the progressive would acknowledge that sexuality can sometimes lead people astray, into warped, even criminal behavior.

### Regressive/Progressive: Racism and Xenophobia

Because there are so many evil people in the world, the regressive believes that people who differ from us are to be avoided; they are probably evil or inferior to us anyway. Just as God is above the angels, and the angels are above us, we are above people of a certain gender, race, or ethnic group. For the progressive, the world contains a fascinating smorgasbord of cultures, ideas and people. We all have more in common than not.

## Regressive/Progressive: Politics and Leaders

The regressive is generally backward looking and believes things were better in the "good old days" when people "knew their place." The progressive is generally forward looking and believes existing institutions should be improved or replaced to better serve humanity.

The regressive often attributes to their leaders extraordinary, even supernatural, status. The pope is the representative of Christ on Earth. The regressive likes to believe that God has ordained their political leader. In medieval Europe, kings derived their authority from God; kings ruled by "divine right." Opposing leaders are evil, even Satanic. Progressives regard leaders as human beings, no more. Some leaders are good; some not. But none are anything more than a man or woman in a position of leadership. Leaders derive their authority from the people, who can vote someone into office, or out of office.

## Truth Matters

This book aims to find the truth. Truth matters, but it's often inconvenient. How much easier to acquiesce to what state and preachers say. But truth is important; it matters. Without it, we'd still be burning witches and enslaving people.

And true—or at least, truer—religion matters. Religion has enormous power in the world. How different history would have been had a handful of words been added to the Bible, such as "Do not enslave your fellow human being" and "There is no such thing as a witch."

Truth can have earthshaking consequences. Ignoring truth can also have earthshaking consequences, too, although not of the same kind.

As an example, consider the Nazis, who viewed humanity in terms of race, regarded Jews as a different race, and persecuted them. The Aryan race, said the Nazis, were superior to all other races; it was, they preached, the master race. Nazism was a regressive political movement, as evidenced by its racism and xenophobia, and the near worship of a charismatic leader.

Nazi belief led directly to the persecution of Jews, which led directly to the Jewish scientist Albert Einstein leaving Germany in 1933 and coming to the United States. In 1939, Einstein sent a letter to U.S. President Roosevelt which described the possibility of building an atomic bomb. The letter said Germany was working on such a bomb and that the U.S. should begin work, too. The letter led directly to the U.S. Manhattan Project and the atomic bomb.

As it turned out, Germany was defeated before the first atomic bomb was constructed. But suppose the Nazis had respected truth enough to reject their racial doctrines. Suppose they had not driven Einstein to the U.S. Suppose they had built an atomic bomb and used it in the war. Then today we might be speaking of New York and Washington D.C. instead of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And there might be an East German U.S. and a West Japanese U.S.

Truth matters. True religion matters.

For centuries, religion has served the needs of the state and of the regressive mind. The progressive mind, on the other hand, has given us science. It has added decades to the average life span. It has given us heated/air-conditioned homes with indoor plumbing and electricity and all the electronic gadgets we use daily. But it has also given us nuclear weapons with the power to destroy all human life on Earth.

The U.S. once had a president who believed in astrology; it almost had a vice-president who believes in witchcraft. About four-in-ten U.S. adults believe humanity is 'living in the end times' according to the Pew Research Center. An internet search on "Fundamentalist Christians nuclear war" finds much that is worrying. For instance, *Armageddon Theology and the Risk of Global War: The Limits of Religious Tolerance in the Nuclear Age* which appears in the September 15, 2016 *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* has the following.

Millions of Americans, primarily premillennialist fundamentalist Christians, believe that **God has foreordained a global nuclear war as the precursor to the Second Coming of Christ.**

Apocalyptic religious beliefs would be of less consequence were it not for the fact that after being given computer warning of an apparent nuclear attack, **U.S. personnel in the midst of the electronic loop have just a few minutes to decide whether or not to launch missiles in retaliation.** Early warning computer systems have malfunctioned in the past, and **religious convictions about the inevitability of a nuclear war could incline a person to make the disastrous error** of believing an erroneous computer warning to be correct. In the U.S. military, access to nuclear devices and authorization to participate in their "delivery" is controlled by the Personnel Reliability Program (PRP). For the sake of global safety, American psychologists and psychiatrists, under the auspices of the PRP, *should* be engaged in screening out personnel who are convinced that a nuclear attack against Russia would accord with God's will.

Unfortunately, a mere recommendation of what should be done is no guarantee that it is being done.

Of course, Christian fundamentalists are not the only threat. Regressives exist in other religions, as well, and in nations which possess nuclear weapons.

Thomas Jefferson, third President of the United States, wrote the following:

And the day will come, when the mystical generation of Jesus, by the Supreme Being as His Father, in the womb of a virgin, will be classed with the fable of the generation of Minerva, in the brain of Jupiter.—From a letter of Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, second President of the United States, 11 April 1823

If that day ever comes, progressives will control religion and state, and, hopefully, create societies that serve the many, rather than the few. If that day never comes, then we leave increasing powerful weapons under the control of regressives.

### [Jesus, the Great Teacher](#)

There are today literally hundreds of Christian denominations, most of which have serious disagreements with other denominations. If Jesus came

to teach, then what can we say about his teaching ability when most students can't agree on what he said?

Someone might attribute disagreement to human ego and free will. "Jesus," they might say, taught clearly, but his message was so elevated and demanding that people don't want to hear it. So, people distort Jesus' message.

But was the message of Jesus ever clear? Did Jesus even want to make his message clear? Here is Mark 4:10-12.

And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable. And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: **That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.**

"I taught in parables so that people could not understand," says Jesus. He succeeded. Even today, Christian denominations can't agree on what must be done to be saved. But is confusing humanity (when it's already sufficiently confused) worthy behavior of a God?

### [Regressive/Progressive: Education and Economics](#)

The regressive believes education is needed but should not be overdone, especially if it leads to doubt and uncertainty about religious dogma. The progressive generally values education and knowledge are inherently valuable, as well as useful.

Just as God is above the angels and the angels are above us, some people are financially above other people. The regressive may see the world as filled with evil people, who just want to free-load off the rest of us, so they can watch T.V. and do drugs and sex all day. For the progressive, all people are worthy. When people whose creations or invention improve our lives are rewarded, it's a win-win situation. But the economic "floor" should be

high enough so that everyone has decent food, clothing, shelter, and medical services.

### Regressive/Progressive: Punishment

The regressive believes that people are either good or evil. Evil people should be punished. The condition of prisons is of little importance, because it pales next to what they will suffer in hell. The progressive believes people sometimes do good things and sometimes do bad things. As far as possible, prisons should be places that salvage lives, not destroy them.

### How to Make a Mortal Sin

Does the Catholic Church take hell seriously? It's useless to speculate what goes on in the minds of clergy, but suppose we ask instead if the Church acts as if it takes hell seriously. I'd say "no."

The Church believes a pope can make an act a mortal sin, or unmake it. Intentionally missing Sunday Mass is a mortal sin because the Church says it is. Eating meat on Friday was once a mortal sin, but the Church changed its mind, so meat on Friday is no longer sinful. In the mythology of the Catholic Church, an unforgiven, unrepentant mortal sin at the time of death dooms the soul to hell. So, everything that's made a mortal sin serves to populate hell.

Hell for missing Mass? On his way to Mass, little Johnny sees some friends playing and decides to skip Mass, knowing full well it's a mortal sin but intending to go to confession later. Johnny dies unexpectedly and is even now suffering indescribable tortures and shall continue to suffer them for all eternity. Can anyone believe this is not an enormous lie about God?

The more mortal sins there are, the more people end up in hell. The Church has traditionally declared seven acts as mortal sins; the so-called Seven Deadly Sins of envy, gluttony, greed or avarice, lust, pride, sloth, and wrath. These traits are certainly not good traits, but do they really merit eternal torture?

Worse, the Catholic Church has used its supposed power to define what is and is not a mortal sin to declare masturbation, pre-marital sex, and contraception are mortal sins. If we believe the dogma that an unforgiven mortal sin can result in hell, and if we believe that the Church can make an act a mortal sin, then it would seem the Church is doing its best to populate hell. Why would the purported “vicar of Christ,” i.e., Earth’s representative of Christ, do that?

If taken seriously, Church teachings have condemned some adults and children to the eternal tortures of hell for missing Mass on Sunday or some other mortal sin. During the Second World War, some monstrous men condemned children to the horrors of concentration camps. Both deeds are monstrous and horrendous. But of the two, which deed is more monstrous and horrendous? The deed that condemns children to **years** of suffering? Or the deed that condemns them to an **eternity** of suffering?

### Regressive/Progressive: Mental Universe and Anomalies

The mental universe of the regressive is small and comfortable. The Earth is merely thousands of years old. Nothing of real significance occurred which is not in the Bible. For the progressive, the universe is incredibly old and vast and challenging. There is much to be discovered.

For the regressive, contradictions to belief are threatening, and to be ignored. For the progressive, contradictions to belief motivate the search for a revised, improved understanding; for example, mercury’s orbit contradicting Newtonian mechanics led to the theory of relativity.

### Ways of Knowing

A way of knowing is a way of deciding what is and is not true. It’s a way of defining acceptable answers to the question, “How do you know that?”

For instance, suppose my co-worker tells me he has a strong feeling that I should sell my home and invest all the money in the XZY company. He has no evidence, no financial data, merely a feeling. Would it be wise to follow his advice or not? Probably not.



But suppose my father-in-law was a very successful business man, was starting a new venture, and advised me to sell my home and invest all the money in his company. He has financial data and a track record of proving right. Would it be wise to follow his advice? Perhaps yes.

How does religion decide what is true and what is not? By consulting scripture, in many cases a scripture written by people who didn't know where the sun went at night and who thought sin and demons cause disease. This is clearly not the best method of deciding what is or is not true. In the case of Christianity, for instance, it chains the mind to a book that opens with a talking serpent and later has a talking donkey.

In contrast, science has a better way of deciding what is and is not true: evidence and reason. Science's way of knowing is superior to religion's way of knowing, as evidenced by science's continual progress and its ability to arrive at consensus. Religion regularly splits into more and more congregations which cannot, in the case of Christianity, even agree on life's most important question, the question that Jesus supposedly came to answer: how to be saved.

The point is that the way of knowing, the way of deciding which beliefs are true and which are not, may be more important than the initial beliefs we begin with. We'll illustrate this point with the allegorical tale of the Scientific Alchemists and the Religious Newtonians.

Our tale opens in the seventeenth century. The religious Newtonians believe in calculus and the basic laws of Newtonian physics. They worship Newton as a god and venerate his writings as divinely inspired and perfectly true. Following the ideas and theories in his writings, in Newton's "holy scriptures," the religious Newtonians are beginning to understand the natural world. New discoveries in mathematics, mechanics, astronomy, and navigation are being made almost daily.

The beliefs of the religious Newtonians are substantially correct and many centuries of progress await them.

Our other group, the scientific Alchemists, follow not Newton but Aristotle, particularly his theory of the four basic elements: earth, water, fire, and air. According to Aristotle's ideas, it's possible to turn lead into gold. And that's what the scientific Alchemists are trying to do. Into their crucibles, flasks, mortars, and pots, they put eggs, toads, snakes, herbs, urine, entrails, lead, mercury, sulfur, and saltpeter. They grind, mix, filter, hammer, and heat them. They describe their experiments with bizarre symbols such as toads, dragons, birds, stars, crowns, keys, and planets.

The beliefs of the scientific Alchemists are wrong and their quest is doomed to failure.

Notice that we've given the religious Newtonians a lot of correct physical knowledge. We've given them a kind of head start in the race toward more and more truth about the physical world. But we've given them an inferior way of knowing, a way that binds them to a "divine and unchanging" truth.

In contrast, we've given the scientific Alchemists a serious handicap in the form of erroneous physical theories. But we've given them a superior way of knowing, a way that allows revision and progress. Which will prove more important in the long run, the knowledge currently accepted as true, or the method of testing current knowledge and discovering more knowledge? Let's return to our tale.

As time passes, the scientific Alchemists slowly and independently discover some laws of nature that the religious Newtonians believe to be divine and unchangeable truth.

"You've found," say the religious Newtonians, "but a tiny portion of our divine Dogma. Surely, your mortal, imperfect minds will never uncover all of our complete and perfect truth. God gave us our revelation. It's far beyond what we fallible humans can find, alone and unaided. Why then do you not give up your slow, painful search for truth and embrace our Truth?" "Never," reply the scientific Alchemists. "Truth is to be earned, to be understood. You are satisfied to follow blindly, without understanding. We

are not. Even though some of our truths now match your faith, one day we may find other truths of which you are ignorant.

As the decades pass, the scientific Alchemists independently uncover, test, and accept more and more of the truths held by the religious Newtonians.

"For many decades now," say the religious Newtonians, "our sacred scriptures have held the full and complete truth. Ignoring these writings, you have been winning, bit by bit, through much labor and suffering, what was already fully given to the fathers of the fathers of our fathers. Our way to truth, the way of divine revelation, the way of our fathers, is ancient and sure. Why then do you not cease your needless searching and accept our divine revelation?"

"Never," reply the scientific Alchemists. "No book can hold the full and perfect truth. Our way of knowing is a never-ending process of observation, hypothesis, theory, and experiment. Even as knowledge is limitless, the search for knowledge must be unending. This is our way of knowing. One day, our knowledge shall surpass yours."

By the end of the nineteenth century, the scientific Alchemists have independently found and verified all the beliefs of the religious Newtonians.

"For centuries now," say the religious Newtonians, "you have groped in the dark while we, following the divine knowledge given in our holy scriptures by our god, have lived in the light. Now, after much error and effort, you have finally reached the Truth. Will you not now admit the inspired nature of our religion and join us in our worship?"

"Never," respond the scientific Alchemists. "Your way of blind acceptance is not our way. We are pledged to follow the truth; you to follow your holy books and your God. We are free to go wherever the truth leads; you are bound to a fixed, limited knowledge now hundreds of years old. One day, we shall go beyond your knowledge."

So, for centuries, the *religious* Newtonians have gone nowhere. They have stayed bound to their "holy and eternal" truth. But the *scientific* Alchemists have outgrown their initial "knowledge" and have acquired—earned—a truer, more accurate knowledge. One way of knowing has led nowhere; the other has discovered more and more knowledge.

In the early twentieth century, a thinker named Einstein claims the theories now accepted by both religious Newtonians and scientific Alchemists are not actually true, but only a near approximation of the truth. He proposes radically different theories, superior only in that they explain the orbit of the planet Mercury a bit better. The new theories demand, however, a drastic, new view of space and time.

"Blasphemy!" shout the religious Newtonians. "Heretical, perverse, mind-twisting ideas of an iconoclastic rebel. Surely our Holy Faith, the faith of our fathers, will prevail against such diseased drivel!"

"It seems to be the truth!" reply the scientific Alchemists. "We shall test it and, if true, we shall accept it. We are long accustomed to molding ourselves to the truth, not molding the truth to ourselves."

Twenty years later, the two camps welcome the theory of Quantum Mechanics in much the same manner. The religious Newtonians reject Quantum Mechanics as heretical nonsense; the scientific Alchemists test and then accept it. Using the Theory of Relativity and, more significantly, Quantum Mechanics, the scientific Alchemists begin to surpass the religious Newtonians in their understanding and control of the physical world. Using Quantum Mechanics they discover atomic energy, semiconductors, lasers, and computers. The religious Newtonians, bound as they are to a way of knowing that limits what they can know, refuse to accept or use the new discoveries. The world beyond their holy scriptures, the world of computers, lasers, nuclear energy, and space-time, is a world which they, as believers, can never enter.

Our tale attempts to dramatize that a *way* of knowing can be more important than initial beliefs. The scientific Alchemists were given a lot of erroneous

beliefs based on Alchemy. But they were given the scientific way of knowing. Since their method of acquiring and testing knowledge was sound, they eventually corrected their initial misconceptions. The religious Newtonians, on the other hand, were given a lot of accurate physical knowledge based on Newtonian physics. But they were given a religious way of knowing. Since their method of acquiring and testing knowledge was faulty, eventually their beliefs became outmoded, a hindrance to finding more truth.

### The Path Forward

This could be a much longer book. We could continue exposing absurdity after absurdity, contradiction after contradiction, lie after lie. But there's no need; it's already been done. First, there's the somewhat dated *Arsenal for Skeptics* already mentioned. Then there's the 2013 book *The Skeptics' Annotated Bible* and its website **SkepticsAnnotatedBible.com**. Or course, there are many other excellent books and websites.

Some people have advanced towards God far enough, to be secure in their faith (or better yet, their knowledge) that God exists. Such people may find rejecting the contradictions and lies of their religion liberating. They may find it frees them to walk closer to God. They may see there are nuggets of truth in all religions. They may feel free to accept what they sincerely believe to be true, and reject what they sincerely believe to be false, free of the fear that exercising their God-given reason will send them to hell.

Simply put, if your faith in God is strong enough, then acknowledging the fictions, fairy tales, contradictions and lies in scripture may be the next step on the path to God. It's as if belief in a state religion is the scaffolding around a building under construction. When the building is done, the scaffolding can be removed.

The person who accepts that they have been born into a false religion and tries to advance to more accurate knowledge of, and more intimate experience of, God is now on the path where God is the teacher. There is no shortage of human teachers and books that describe the path, some of the

genuine, some bogus, many somewhere in between. It is not an easy path. But it is a path that leads to experience of God.

To the reader who now feels awakened and on the threshold of a new life adventure—the search for God—this book has served its purpose. Some advice: beware of looking for a new scripture and prophet to replace what you've moved beyond. If you're truly on the path, then God is your teacher, not any person or book. A person or book may work for you for a while. But do not hesitate to move on if you feel you must. And do not let any person or book that eventually disappoints, that you eventually become to regard as bogus, persuade you the path itself is bogus.

I'll close with two passages from **The Confessions of Saint Augustine**.

Too late have I loved you, O Beauty so ancient, O Beauty so new. Too late have I loved you! You were within me but I was outside myself, and there I sought you! . . . You were with me, and I was not with you. . . . You have called, you have cried, and you have pierced my deafness. You have radiated forth, you have shined out brightly, and you have dispelled my blindness. You have sent forth your fragrance, and I have breathed it in, and I long for you. I have tasted you, and I hunger and thirst for you. You have touched me, and I ardently desire your peace. (Book 10, Chapter 27)

. . . I entered even into my inward self . . . and beheld with the eye of my soul . . . above my mind, the Light Unchangeable. Not this ordinary light, which all flesh may look upon, nor as it were a greater of the same kind . . . It made me; and . . . I was made by It. He that knows the Truth, knows what that Light is; and he that knows It, knows eternity. . . . Thou art my God . . . (Book. 7, Chapter 10)