



**NAILS IN
THE COFFIN
OF GOD?**

AND OTHER ESSAYS

KYLE BROOKS



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For the Truth,
the Giver of life, the Maker of men, and the Light of the world.

Contents

Introduction 7

Who Are You? 9

You Are a User 13

Inside the Game: The Science Behind the Supernatural 16

The Heart of the Imagination 20

Chill Jesus 23

The Rejection Seat 28

Nails in the Coffin of God? 32

GMO's & Missing Links 36

The Bible: Misleading or Misreading? 42

Skepticism? 48

Dark Crystals: The New Age Deception 53

Sexuality Unbound: The Search for the Infinite 58

Introduction

Whatever belief system you may hold to, I ask that you keep an open mind while reading this book. Only with an open mind can one hope to reach any kind of truth. Put aside what you may have heard from family, friends, teachers, the media, and even what you may have been telling yourself by way of your own observations. Clear your head completely. Once you have done this, then begin to read. Take in what is written in this book, and then test it for soundness. Test it within the real world. We should all be in the habit of doing this with any piece of information that we come across.

We should never be afraid to go after the truth. We should want the whole truth and nothing but the truth. It takes courage to *always* seek it out, because sometimes it goes against our thoughts of preconceived realities. If we fail to seek it, we then have to accept the possibility that we may very well be living a lie. Living this way never leads to fulfillment, and will most certainly lead to a life of waste and decay.

I have written this book with the hope of shedding new light on some old subjects. Throughout the time before, during, and after the writing of these pieces, it has steadily become more and more apparent to me that the world around us is not how it seems. There is a veil that is draped over this world, and it is my objective to give you a glimpse behind that veil.

Therein lies the truth, and it is one that will most certainly expose the world for the truth of the lies therein.

NAILS IN THE COFFIN OF GOD?

Who Are You?

Dear Reader,

I don't know everything about you, and percentage wise there is a high probability that I will never be even close to knowing you in such regard. Though, if we put aside the idea of such a personal connection, I can still ask you the question we often ask of complete strangers, and that of course is: *Who are you?* Give yourself a moment on this one, because I want you to answer it in a way that fully encapsulates yourself. Okay, now that you've had that moment, can you answer this question for me? I'm sure there are many different ways to give a response, but can you think of one general way to answer satisfactorily? If you think about it, you may find that the question is far deeper than you might have first realized. So, take another moment and repeat this question in your mind: *Who am I?*

In normal conversation, you might start out by listing what you think is your greatest accomplishment. I have asked this question of people before, although not in such a direct approach, and I have heard many answers such as: *I'm a dancer, or I'm a doctor, or I'm a teacher, or I'm an artist.* Many times, people feel that their identity will be best defined by giving an answer like this. For the person giving the answer, they probably assume that the person asking will immediately put together that they must have some dedication, strong work ethic, creativity, and many other adjectives that will paint a full picture of said accomplishment. I'm sure you have given this type of answer to people yourself, at one point or another. Now, though, I want you to think about this answer and ask yourself another question: *Is this who I really am?*

Let's create a scenario to test this out. Say that you are a very noteworthy doctor in the community. Then let's also say that one day you get framed for murdering one of your patients. In fact, whoever does the framing does such a good job that you find that you have really no case in which to defend yourself. This leads to life imprisonment, with no hope of parole, and a great deal of solitary confinement. This last part is due to the brutality of the murder you were framed with. This is a broad scenario, but let's see where it leads. Remember, you were a noteworthy doctor at one point, and now you have completely been removed from that role. So now, who are you? I have presented this scenario to people before, and I always hear one response above all. That is: *well...even though I'm imprisoned, no one can truly take away the fact that I'm a doctor.* My

response is always the same: *They just did*. “Doctor” is only a title. You can think that the title is somehow so high on the scale of titles that it magically sticks with you, but it doesn’t. In fact, I’d venture to say that at one stage of your life, way before becoming a doctor, you sold lemonade as a kid. Well, are you still a lemonade salesman? Where do we get the idea that these titles magically give us our identity? It seems obvious to me that they are not able to do any such thing.

The next argument is that a person is best defined by terms such as *creative*, *helpful*, *good*, and we can even throw *bad* in there while we’re at it. Are these adjectives really any different? Let’s change the scenario again, and this time put you in the bottom of a deep empty cave. In this scenario you are for certain going to die, completely alone, I might add. If these are the circumstances, are you still creative, or helpful, good, or even bad? It seems to me that all you could really say is that you *were* all those things; but what are you now? If you are removed from the things that facilitate these descriptions, then doesn’t it follow that these descriptions also disappear? Again, it seems that this way of thinking really isn’t able to encapsulate oneself either.

Perhaps you will say that you are a human being, thinking this to be the definitive answer. However, what is a human being? I remember hearing the famous astronomer Carl Sagan (whom I really enjoyed listening to in the videos played during my college astronomy lectures) describe the human race as being made out of “star stuff”. Hearing him use this flowery rhetoric to describe humanity seemed to almost achieve that meaning behind who we really are. Yet, the more I thought about it, the more I realized that this couldn’t possibly be the case. You see, grass is also made out of *star stuff*, and so are tiny gnats. I’m sure we have all stomped on the grass while running through a field, and have probably killed, or maimed, gnats by the hundreds when we swatted them away from our face on a hot summer day. Where is the *star stuff* reverence for the pummeled grass or the dead gnats? Aren’t they also made of the same particles of *star stuff* that we are? Why do humans get some special gold star handed down to us from the deceased stars that exploded so long ago? Is there any real difference in killing hundreds of people rather than hundreds of gnats? How do we make the distinction?

It seems to me that if *star stuff* is all we are, then *star stuff* is all we will ever be. This means that we are nothing more than a grouping of arbitrary elements, which have come about within a random occurrence in time. We can try to think that there is something special about ourselves, but that will simply fall into the category of subjective opinion. The next step, of course, is to try to make the case that since we are beings of a complex structure, we then somehow automatically get the distinct title of greatness; but, again, this seems to be another subjective opinion. In fact, I’m sure there is some anti technological

nature lover out there that when given the choice between a rock or a super computer, would choose to admire the rock in a heartbeat. Given this little scenario, there goes the idea of greatness equals complexity.

So, *who are you?* I bet by now you are slowly waking up to the fact that this question is far more difficult than you might have originally thought. You may also have come to the realization that, when you stick with the cold hard scientific facts, we really are a whole lot of nothing. Given the current theories of science, this would, in fact, make perfect sense. The Big Bang Theory says that the universe itself exploded out of nothing, and so it is only logical that this instilled us with pure nothingness. Seems rather bleak doesn't it? Well, I'm sorry to break this to you, but this really is the only way you can encapsulate yourself in a purely natural reality. Can you think of any other way out of this?

For a moment, let's try to envision another general description to answer the question. What if you were to answer the very first question with: *I am a creation made in the image of the eternal God.* Would this statement be different than any of the other supposed answers? Now, before you start jumping around and ranting to yourself about how you've been tricked into another essay by some "religious freak", sit down and really think this out. Let's gather some evidence before we jump to conclusions. If there really were an eternal God, and you were, in fact, a created being that bears that image, wouldn't that immediately give you the most fulfilling sense of worth and identity? In this scenario, you would basically be a walking work of art that was made by *The* ultimate artist. I mean, really, imagine that you painted a picture of something, and then that something jumped up and started walking and talking and creating paintings of it's own. I think, given this situation, we all would have no trouble recognizing that there would be a great value attached to that piece. Well, this is the exact scene being painted when you put a Creator into the equation. I've thought about this myself for a long time now, and it has become obvious that the only way something can have true value, meaning, purpose, and identity, is if there *is* such a thing as "truth". It also follows that the only way there can be such a thing as truth is if there *is* a standard that dictates what is true. Only then can there be such terms as *true, false, right, and wrong.* Only then can there be objective value, meaning, purpose, and identity. If no standard exists, then we are left with only pure subjectivity, and what follows is that these aforementioned titles do not exist either. Is this what you think?

I believe that we all should dedicate a portion of our time to do some deep thinking every once in a while. You can start with the question I asked in the beginning. If you don't search deep for the answer yourself, you will never know if who you are, or what you are doing, has any real meaning. I think that this is something that deserves great attention, because if what you are doing has no real meaning, then why are you doing it? Why do you do anything? Why should you

be treated any different than any other chunk of matter floating aimlessly about the universe? On the other hand, if you feel that there really are such terms as truth, false, right, or wrong, then you may want to invest your time into searching for that eternal Being, because Its existence is the only way that those things are possible. You don't have to be some "religious freak" to figure that out, you just have to simply use deductive reasoning. I mean, maybe the current scientific view is wrong. You know, it has been wrong many times before. Maybe it really *is* the truth that it is *impossible* for *things* to come straight out of *no-thing*?

Some scientists make the distracting claim that they don't want anything to do with faith, but the fact of the matter is that we all look at the evidence before us and take our leaps of faith on a daily basis. We have no definitive proof that we will never be framed for murder, or that our next step won't result in a sudden disappearance through a dark cave. We take all of these things on faith. The belief in God, whether you want to realize it or not, falls into the same category. By the way, what is wrong with finding a belief in God? It may just happen that, if you search, you might find that you actually *have* an objective meaning. You may find that you actually *are* valuable. The more I look at the world, the more I realize that we all need to search for this more desperately than ever. Maybe the problem the world is always facing is that we keep trying to get rid of our foundation? I think that you will find that no matter how strong the walls are, if you keep eroding the foundation, a collapse is always imminent. How can you even hope to build a life without a foundation? All you could possibly hope to do is to start building your own little foundationless "field of dreams," all the while pushing away the whisper that your subconscious will now be yelling at you: *If you build it, it will crum...ble*. So, why not look for that foundation? For you, it may just be the case that finding God not only will bring meaning to your *self*, but may also allow you realize that certain things, that you once thought to be so very important, turn out to be the things that are so truly meaningless. Maybe it really is true that if you seek, you *will* find? Maybe it is true that there is such a thing as "true". So, for the cheap seats in your head, let me ask you one last time: *Who are you?*

Sincerely,

Kyle

You Are a User

The soul is a very enigmatic idea that exists in the minds of many religious, and secular, people. It is very interesting to think that some immaterial substance exists inside the body; and, if you sit back and mull it over, this hypothesis seems to be very puzzling. Yet, is the soul really that mysterious? Better still, could it actually be the case that the mind itself is an intricate part of the *necessary* soul? There are many people that are fervently opposed to this idea. For some of these people, it might come down to the fact that it is impossible to see an immaterial substance, and so it is quite likely that the soul does not actually exist. Maybe this is true? On the other hand, maybe we shouldn't be concerned with what we *can't* see when trying to prove, or disprove, the soul. Maybe instead, we should be trying to focus our attention on what we *can* see?

If I were to come up to you and then reach out and shake your hand, what would I be doing? It isn't a tough answer. I *obviously* would be shaking your hand. Now, repeat that last sentence, focusing on the word "your". Did you notice anything interesting? I would be shaking *your* hand. If this was actually happening, where are *you* in this situation? If I were to cut off your hand (a hypothetical scenario by the way), and then throw it ten feet across the room, would *you* then be ten feet across the room? No. You would still be standing right where you were, and probably bleeding quite profusely I might add. So, if you can have your hand removed, then *you* can't be part of *your* body. If you peel back the layers, you will find that you arrive at two possibilities: Either *you* are a brain, or *you* are a soul. Either one is an intriguing conclusion no doubt; though, is this where one has to draw the line? Maybe it is possible to go beyond this conclusion, and then narrow things down even further?

Instead of focusing immediately on the soul, let's focus on that which is possible to see: The brain. Many people have compared the brain to a computer. It processes information, requires memory, runs on energy; but can *you* really be your brain? It seems that there are stark differences to be found in what we think of the brain, and what we think of any computer. First off, haven't you ever wondered why your memory never seems reach your brains maximum capacity? We have no delete button, and so we are constantly downloading mass quantities of information without losing a bit of it. This seems very odd. You see, every material container has a limit, and yet the brain is *somehow* uniquely different. A balloon can hold only so much air without bursting, and a memory card can hold only so much information before it stops working. Yet, no human being

has *ever* gone catatonic because they reached their memory capacity. How is this possible if we are just material brains? There *should* be a definite limit.

If we delve a little deeper, we clearly see that the brain processes information, but where does this information come from? In the case of a computer, someone *always* writes the software, and someone *always* types in new documents or downloads new files. How is the brain able to do all of this? This seems very troubling, especially given that many people think that the brain came about by an evolutionary process, which is completely random and unguided? The fact that the brain can actually do things, which seem to be beyond natural science, is very telling. It is telling because my beliefs coincide with natural science, and I believe that the brain *cannot* go beyond its borders. Yet, it is in this belief that allows one to speculate even deeper.

You see, never in recorded history has a hammer jumped up and nailed two boards together by itself. Never has there been a house that lives *in* itself. There has never been a car that drives the open highways all by its lonesome. Likewise, there has never been a computer that uses itself without a *user*. In every case, someone always has to *use* the equipment, the matter. Again, the case for the soul is not about trying to prove what we can't see, but that we *can* see. *We* can do lots of things. We can run and jump and sing and dance, we can climb a tree and put on pants. We can even rhyme. Yet, the body cannot accomplish any of this by itself. It is absolutely *necessary* that there be a *user* that tells the body what to do. As a computer, the brain is no different. Neither are the cellular computers that make up our bodies. There always has to be a *user* that *uses* the computers. If there isn't a user, then it is not possible for the computer to do anything. Yet, our brains, and our bodies, *do* things. A user is extremely necessary to facilitate these actions. Doesn't this make perfect sense? Wouldn't this also put to rest the mystery behind our seemingly unlimited memory? It seems that if capacity can be reached in any material container, maybe our memories are located in something that is actually immaterial. Maybe the memory is stored in the user, and the *user* is just another name for the soul?

It is intriguing that people seem to find it hard to believe in anything that lies beyond their five senses. For these people, the point I made in the above paragraph might still be hard to accept. Yet, isn't it interesting that you can neither see the brain, or the soul, of another person, and yet you always believe you are actually talking to the people you meet? You can't use your senses to recognize a brain, without a drastic medical procedure, so how do you know the person sitting across from you is not some kind of robotic android? The answer is: you don't. We *constantly* believe without seeing. In fact, it is actually the case that, at any given time, there is more evidence to argue for the existence of God or the soul than there is for proving that you are really talking to a "person" that you have just met. At the very least, there are some well-known historical

records that might indicate that God exists, but when you meet a stranger on the street, you don't even have that. Yet, we *always* believe that we are talking to someone.

We seem to have drastically overcomplicated things in this area, which is sadly the case for the entirety of mankind's recorded history. When it comes to the soul, though, we have gone way overboard. Somehow, we have been driven into the idea that we cannot even believe in our *selves*. What a terrible belief. Luckily, it really isn't all that complicated to think your way through this mess. I believe the verification of the soul lies simply in the action of opening up one's hand. *You* have to open up *your* hand. *You* are a *user*, and *user* is just another name for the soul.

The mystery does not lie in the reality of the soul, but in the reality of its future. Whether you compare the body to a vehicle, a computer, or both, at some point it will stop working completely. At this point, *you* will walk away from *your* machine. This is where the mystery lies, and one day we will be forced to venture into that mystery. Maybe we should all turn back to that recorded history of God to find out where *we* will end up in that inevitable great beyond?

Inside the Game: The Science Behind the Supernatural

In today's time, the concept of miracles is sort of an antiquated notion. In a world where scientism is abundant, and atheism is, for some reason, the default position, many people think that miracles are nothing more than happy coincidences. Various scientists will say that the miracles of centuries ago are simply events that could not be explained by the science of that particular time. Many have adopted this explanation, and even theists have been pushed to the point of saying that, *well...miracles did happen, but they stopped happening about 2000 years ago*. Maybe this is the truth? Perhaps miracles have stopped? Perhaps they never happened at all? Although, maybe the problem is that the people of today have trapped themselves in a naturalistic box? You might think that science has disproved miracles; but the reality is that the regularities of science, properly understood, establish that not only is the supernatural possible, but it is actually a necessity.

In order to understand what is being said, I am going to have to start pushing you towards the outside of the box. To do this, let's start by using a bit of science. If one looks at the definition of DNA, one will find that there appears to be an anomaly. DNA, or Deoxyribonucleic Acid, defined is: *a molecule that contains the instructions an organism needs to develop, live and reproduce*. Did you notice anything strange there? Well, how about this: How is it possible for the body to produce its own instructions? Logic would indicate that it would first need instructions in order to write its own instructions. Perhaps you think this can be explained in a purely naturalistic manner? Well, if you spin the clock backwards through time, you will find that, at the beginning of life on this planet, an instruction code must have been floating in the air, and then, somehow, materials began to wrap around it; this then set in motion the production of the abundance of life on this planet. This scenario is what you would be driven to believe within the restraints of a naturalistic mindset. This, of course, is nonsensical.

Do you know what is necessary to make this sensible? Well, if not, how about we look at the definition of software. One might define software as: *any set of machine-readable instructions that directs a computer's processor to perform specific operations*. If you look closely, you will find that the definitions of DNA and software are pretty much the same. What is even more interesting is that if you spin the clock back on *any* software program, everyone on this planet will know what was necessary in the beginning to make this software possible: *In the beginning, there was a programmer*.

Yes, there *needs* to be a programmer to write those instructions. Are you out of the box now, Jack? Well, if you can at least glimpse just outside the edge, you will find that many attributes will begin to form for this programmer. By comparing the analogy of a software programmer to DNA, you will see that certain aspects of said programmer become very apparent. First of all, the programmer needs to be outside of the program. If someone designs a computer game, they don't design it from *inside* the game. They create it from outside that virtual reality. In terms of DNA, it would seem that the said programmer needs to be outside of the natural reality; and so, by definition, they are supernatural. By further comparing software and DNA, you will also find that DNA far exceeds any software program on the face of the earth in terms of complexity. Each person's unique DNA code seems to also manifest itself rather quickly at conception, whereas advanced software, of any type, requires a whole lot of time to complete. This seems to indicate that the programmer is extremely intelligent and overly abundant in resources. We might call those attributes: omniscience and omnipotence. In realizing this, let's give this programmer a name from now on. Let's call Him: God.

I hope by now you have found that you can begin to contemplate the supernatural. If so, you will find that if you take the above analogy even further, you will see *how* and *why* miracles are possible. All you have to do is think of this reality as a virtual reality. As if the universe were as the inside of a computer game. By taking the different aspects of any computer game into account, it is easy to see how miracles can happen. You might think that walking on water, or turning water to wine, cannot happen; but so would the people inside of a computer game. There are regularities in many virtual games that say that characters cannot walk on water; and, if they attempt to do so, they sink and die. This, though, doesn't mean that those characters *cannot* walk on water. The reason being is that if the gamer presses *up down x x y* on their controller, a "cheat" code can be entered to give that character the ability to walk on water. If you are a parent reading this, your child will be able to easily explain this whole "cheat code" notion to you; but, basically, the player of the game has the ability to bend the rules that are set in place on the inside of the game. They can do this at will if they so wanted. Likewise, God can do the same thing within the natural reality that He created. If He wants to put in an invincibility code to let his characters live inside a burning fire, or hit the reset button to start the game over like at the flood of Noah, that is *His* prerogative.

Let's take the biggest miracle in the Christian doctrine to further illustrate this point. The resurrection of Jesus is something that is widely debated among different religions, and some scientists who are in opposition to miraculous events. History claims that Jesus was killed by crucifixion, and Christianity further claims that he was raised from the dead. Historically speaking, the best

explanation of the events that followed *is* that the early disciples *did* see the risen Jesus. I can already hear the angry voices on the other end shouting: *What a bunch of nonsense! That's impossible!* Well, before you have an aneurysm, reread the above paragraphs. It seems to me that this event can easily be explained by simply thinking about any game at an arcade. Think about it: you begin to play, and then suddenly opposing forces begin to beat up your character, and soon your character dies. I'm sure most of us have played an arcade game before? Well, what is the next thing that pops up on the screen after your character dies? That's right, it's going to say: "Continue?" The regularity of the game says that once a character is dead, they stay dead. This is the same as the regularity of the world. Yet, this can all easily change when at the countdown of 3...2...1...the *player* puts in another coin. This is exactly the same with Jesus. It doesn't matter if the regularity of the world says that dead people stay dead. God, as the ultimate programmer, has the ability to change that program regularity *whenever* He sees fit. Keeping this in mind, do you now see how the resurrection of Jesus Christ is possible?

Having created the structure and the regularities of the game, we can also infer that God has placed "meaning" within the boundaries of this reality. If you think about any video game: there are regularities, boundaries, and there is also a point to the game. There are trials to get through, reasons to get through them, and goals that are spread throughout each different level; culminating in the ability for the players to be able to win the game. If you consider the Bible, and I hope you have read it, you will see that this is exactly how God's plan is laid out. Players grow, by means of various tests and trials, before the eyes of the Creator; with the first goal of coming to realize that there is more to this world than meets the eye. The next goal is to realize exactly who the Creator is, and what He has done for you. By accepting what is being offered, your character is reborn into a stronger player, who grows faster in the knowledge that is reviled by the world. By partnering with the outside Creator, you then begin to guide other people towards the same outcome, gaining points with each and every attempt. Finally, everything culminates in the winning of the game, which takes place when you meet that Creator in person, and He rewards the efforts that you made in your first reality.

In contemplating all of this, you should also begin to realize why the Bible speaks of prayer as being so important. Think about it like this: If you are playing a video game, and then a glitch happens in the game, how is it possible for the characters *in* the game to fix the problem? The answer is: it's not. If we think about the world in the same way, we should realize that the day-to-day problems that we face might easily be remedied if we simply *talked* with the outside programmer. He should be able to see every single problem that comes up; and whether you want to think of it as inputting a "cheat" code, or smacking

the outside of the console, He is the only person that knows how to truly fix the problem you are having. This seems perfectly logical to me. You might think that this sounds a little too easy, but is it? Are you currently taking all of your problems to God? If not, why don't you try doing that? If you do, don't be surprised to find that they quickly begin to smooth out much faster than normal. It's never taken me very long to input a code into a video game. If it so happens, though, that your problem doesn't begin to work itself out immediately, don't be discouraged. The Creator of the game might know a better route that will lead you to a more satisfying victory than you might have thought possible. Whatever arises, always lean on the reality that He knows *exactly* what is best.

In closing, let's just wrap up what we learned. We should all now know that DNA is an instruction code. We should also know that an instruction code requires programmer, and, in the case of the advanced nature of the code, a programmer who is extremely intelligent and resourceful. Logic also indicates that the programmer must be *outside* of the reality of the code, just like a software engineer is outside of the software virtual reality. This, by the way, also disproves the whole "alien" creation theory, so be on your guard if any aliens ever show up on this planet claiming to be our "creators". Finally, we should realize that we should begin to take all of our problems to the true Creator. It's obvious from the advanced nature of our DNA that He took great care in creating us, so it seems more than obvious that He would be just as willing to help us get through the difficult spots in our daily lives. You know, He encoded himself into humanity about 2000 years ago, so I think He cares about it *just* a little. We should take the time to think about this every chance we get. The fact is: we won't *always* stay inside the game. Eventually we will be translated out of it, and then we will meet our maker. At that point it will be win or lose. Are you ready?

The Heart of the Imagination

The imagination is a wonderful thing. Yet, we often take this phenomenon for granted. Thinking something up, and then constructing that image so as to place it within the real world, is an amazing ability on all creative levels. Why do we possess this power? Some people explain it away with purely naturalistic science, but I find that this leaves nothing to the imagination. As we clearly have this creative gift, it seems that there must also be a supernatural component needed in order to guide us to the truth. I have found that if you wish to get a clear grasp on the power of the imagination, one only has to look down into the deepest ocean waters to see the great power of the “Imaginator”.

For some, the answer to the existence of the imagination comes in a purely natural evolutionary form. Although, doesn't this put oneself in a box? Let's take the orca whale as a starting point. The orca whale recently sparked my own imagination after I saw an online video of a pod of orca whales chasing a speedboat. Seeing those immense black and white figures jumping through the waves sent my own mind leaping. I immediately started to think about the evolution of the whale. Within evolutionary science, the beginnings of the whale supposedly started millions of years ago. This is the amount of time needed to turn a land dwelling creature into the modern seagoing whale, as this is the scenario that evolutionary biologists have firmly established. This progression brought a lot of questions to my mind, and it seems that the more research I do, the more I find that my own questions on this sequence are never really asked by others.

My own questions are simple: What led to the creation of the land dwelling creature? Why did this land dwelling creature change into a whale? How was any form of the species able to survive by procreation while moving through a complete species transformation? How do we explain a complete reformation of the outside structure, while taking into account the complicated matter of a complete modification of the inner systems, such as the digestive system and nervous system, and explain how any transitional creature was able to survive such a massive restructuring? How many changes do we think this took to happen? Why do we only see a handful of fossils in the records to try to explain these mutations, when we should most likely see thousands upon thousands of transitional fossils? Doesn't the changing of one creature affect the entire ecosystem, the entire food chain, and so wouldn't every other creature need to be rapidly changing to prevent the entire ecosystem from collapsing on itself? Besides a few select people in the academic realm, such as Dr. David Berlinski, I never hear these rational questions being asked. By never asking these questions,

I think that one automatically puts oneself in a box, and by doing so it becomes very difficult to imagine anything outside of it. When I put these questions into perspective, it quickly became clear to me that a bigger picture must be out there. It was at this point that my own imagination went to work, and I suddenly began to pull in new thoughts as if I was putting together a puzzle in my mind. Only when I began to think of the supernatural, did I finally catch a glimpse of that bigger picture forming on the horizon.

The supernatural component, to which I am referring, is what the human race has referred to as God. Now, the evolutionist need not worry about their theory if one supposes God exists. If one thinks of God as the ultimate designer, God would be perfectly capable of indulging His creativity by creating a mechanism like evolution to aid in the creation. I think that we can all see this clearly when we think about the fact that *every* factory mechanism has had a factory designer. The problem for an evolutionist does not lie with God, but strictly in the line of questions that I previously laid out. Despite what some may think, supposing the existence of God actually intensifies the wonder within the mind. To hold a belief in a divine Creator should not be thought of as an unthinking position. In fact, if you try to grasp the power of this Being, your mind will immediately be exposed to a whole other world of ideas.

Again, one only has to take a single orca whale in order to get an idea of this infinite power. If you take the questions about the evolutionary theory that I deposited in the third paragraph, you should easily begin to see the supreme authority it takes in order to create an orca whale. To start, every single outer and inner component of the whale's body needs to be completely modified for this creature's specific environment. The entire environment around the whale also needs to be modified to allow the whale to thrive, and to allow every other creature *around* the whale to thrive. From the breathing capabilities of the whale, to the depths of the water, to the food that the whale eats, to the food that the whale's food eats, everything needs to be in perfect order. Imagine the incalculable precision it would require in order to undertake a project like this. Yet, like the ocean, the deeper you go the more you find that what's really amazing still lays waiting.

You see, at one point there was no such thing as a whale. Then, suddenly, a whale is gliding within the ocean waters. Do you recognize the power that is working between those sentences? Well, if not, try to put yourself in the "supernatural shoes" of this Creator. At the heart of this whale creation scenario, something material is being made out of an unprecedented immaterial idea. This means that this Creator is making something exist out of an idea that was once never seen in any way, shape, or form. We are not capable of that same power of imagination. Sure, we can take some clay and shape that into a bowl to eat out of; and the bowl, at one time, also never existed. Yet, the ocean has always existed

from the time man first walked on this earth. We got the idea for creating the bowl out of seeing the waters around us that are cradled by the earth around them. A whale is different. Bringing something into being that came from *no* previous example is an entirely different level of creativity. The sleek black and white skin on the outside of the orca paints a clear black and white picture of the immeasurable omnipotence that this Creator must possess. The whale is just one example, and there are millions upon millions of other examples to be found in this world. In fact, we can count ourselves among those examples. We should take more time in our lives to think about this, as it seems that a lot of thought was put into each one of us.

Luckily, we are all blessed with our own unique imaginations. Some religious texts have explained this ability by saying that we have been made in image of God. The more I think about this, the more adequate this statement becomes. I only have to gaze into the blue waters of the deep in order to spark my own imagination, while still satisfying my questioning mind. Will I ever have the answers to every question: No. Not in this life. I was not created to *be* God. I was created to be me, and when I reflect on the starfish, the corral reef, the orca whale, and every molecule of water that envelops each of them, I realize that something with much more understanding than I must be in control of everything. With such an unrivaled knowledge, and vast imagination, I myself imagine that this Being will take great care to guide those that use their own imagination, to its greatest potential, towards a future that will be something good. As it was written long ago: *“And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good.”*

Chill Jesus

In the midst of the peace signs and band logos, horned skulls and dragons, reaching out to the god Zeus who is hurling a lightning bolt down beside the Buddha enthroned on a lotus flower, all stretched out across the cornucopia of eclectic skin canvases in some alternative bar, you might randomly hear about how someone superimposed the face of Jesus on the iconic poster image of Che Guevara. Yes, that's right, that old Jesus of Nazareth. Cool as an ice cube on the sun. I mean, really, there are a lot of cool things in this world, but I think it's obvious that Jesus really isn't too high on the list. Have you ever sat back and wondered why that is? I have been pondering this myself for some time now. Why is Jesus so uncool? Are there some specific reasons for this? I really have to wonder. Why does the very mention of his name cause so much discomfort? I'm guessing you've never really put much effort into thinking about this. Maybe the thought has never really jumped out at you? Maybe you just don't care? I think, though, that, given the level of derision towards this figure, this deserves a little dissection. What really is the deal with all of this uncool cred?

There is a comedian named Jim Gaffigan who does a funny stand up bit about this very subject. In one of his specials he quipped to the audience, "I do want everyone to feel comfortable, and that's why I'd like to talk to you about Jesus." After eliciting a little laughter, he gave an immediate response in the audience's point of view by saying, "He better not!" This, of course, generated even more laughter. The reason why this strikes an instant funny bone is because we all know that this is one of those "it's funny because it's true" jokes. The fact of the matter is that this particular name *does* make people feel uncomfortable. I really have to wonder why this is? Let's quickly run down the story of Jesus to get at least a broad view of him. Jesus was born a few thousand years ago. He grew up and started his ministry at about age 30. He supposedly went around healing the sick through miracles, while talking about the philosophy of truth, peace, and love; and then, at about age 33, He was beaten and crucified (for unjust reasons) and supposedly died for the sins of the world so that we could have a chance at everlasting life. This is the story history seems to paint anyhow. Looking at this little timeline, I have to question where the point of disturbance is. As a story, it looks like a pretty great one to me. Whether true or untrue, I don't understand why people would get so upset about all of this?

If you thought the story of Jesus to be pure mythology, even though the story seems to be fairly well established amongst historians, where does the discomfort come in? We all love hearing about the mythologies of the ancient Greeks, even though the gods of the Greeks aren't depicted to be anywhere near

as peaceful as Jesus. Actually, they are often depicted as cruel and unjust with humanity, as well as constantly bickering and fighting amongst themselves. Yet, you might have an interesting conversation on your hands if you bring them up for discussion. Why not the same for Jesus? Isn't it at least a little interesting that this story does have some historical reliability? Though, putting this aside, even if this story is only mythology, it still seems to be the ultimate model for complete selflessness and love. Is this uncool to us? Do we require corruption and destruction? If this is the case, isn't it intriguing that the figure of Jesus is depicted as having come into the world to redeem us for constantly getting ourselves drawn into corruption and self-destruction? Yet, even a poignant fact like this is not able to peak our curiosity towards engaging in a conversation about this person.

Even during the holidays, that are specifically set-aside for Jesus, we invariably end up pushing him to the side. We open gifts during the Christmas holiday, which is supposed to represent the birth of humanity's ultimate gift, and we hunt for chocolate and eggs on the day that the gift was seen in totality at the day of the resurrection. To be fair, these traditions developed out of a blending of pagan holidays to try to keep the peace back then, but still, Jesus seems to get the short end of the stick during these joyful times. Should we focus on the wonder of the Easter Bunny and Santa Claus when we introduce our kids into these holidays? During Christmas, the focus is always on Santa Claus. He is sort of like Jesus, I suppose, even though he doesn't really offer redemption for the "naughty". Also, he's not always depicted in such a great light. Remember that claymation movie of Rudolph growing up? In this movie Santa Claus actually shuns the little reindeer because of his unfortunate red nose handicap. Wow. I don't know if that's really a good role model for young children. Yet, we all still send our kids to the mall to sit on the knee of some random guy playing Santa Claus.

Of course, for kids, it is easy to get caught up in the magic and wonder of Santa. It is especially easy when all the advertising is focused in that direction. The parents show no objection, and go right along for the commercial ride. They willingly feed this story to their own kids, knowing full well that the reality of the story creates an unfortunate ending to wonders in the mind of every child. It can be a devastating thing for a child to find out that Santa Claus isn't real. Where do we get the empirical data that says lying to a kid, and then devastating them when they find out they've been lied to, is somehow good for their psychological development? Have there been any conclusive studies on this? At least the miracles of Jesus, the story of Jesus, are things actually rooted in history. Wouldn't this be the better figure to focus on? Between Santa Claus and Jesus, which one do you think would cause more psychological harm?

Believe it or not, there are those who say that Jesus loses His credibility because *He* has actually been the cause of a lot of harm. Many people seem to lump him in with the despicable actions of certain church figures, the Crusades, the Inquisition, and other lusts for power that come from those that have proclaimed the name of Jesus. The idea that Christianity has been responsible for a massive amount of damage is the go-to point in any secular debate. People really believe that corruption happens when you follow Jesus. They really believe that Christianity is completely corrupt, and Jesus is the ringleader of the corruption. The problem I have when people make this claim is that, in looking at what Christianity teaches, I don't think that Christianity has ever done *any* harm in this world. That might sound like a shocking statement, but take a step back and think about it. What is Christianity basically? I would say that what it essentially means is that you follow Jesus Christ. Now, here's the rub: in order to pin all the atrocities done in the name of Jesus, onto Jesus, you would have to go about proving that Jesus also committed those same atrocities. If you try to do this, I think that your investigation will end very quickly. In fact, you will most likely find that history shows Jesus forbidding *all* that mayhem; and, from this, one could only conclude that the people committing those crimes were not following Jesus. So, if this is true, how do we throw the blame at Christianity? From my viewpoint, I don't really think it's possible, and to try to pin these atrocities on Jesus, I think, is a little unfair.

Look at the other figures in history that have similar attributes to Jesus. For some, people like Ghandi and Martin Luther King Jr might come to mind. It might be surprising to hear that both of these men actually held a high regard for Jesus. In fact, when someone comes up to me and says that they find the Bible to be a horrid genocidal book, I always tell them that they might be completely misinterpreting it. When they call BS on that, I just say: *well, if this is the case, how did someone like Dr. King gather a message of peace and love from that same book?* Puzzling isn't it? Getting back to the point, though, both of the men I mentioned had characteristics that are similar to Jesus; specifically in how they delivered their messages, and the fact that they both died because of those messages. Yet, even with these similarities, I think it's easily recognizable that there are stark differences. Let's create a little scenario to test this out. Let's say that you are driving to the bank, and suddenly you witness a masked man running out of the bank with guns a blazing, mowing down people left and right. You then see the man abruptly stop, and shout at the top of his lungs: *I am taking this money in the name of Martin Luther King!* I guess then, upon witnessing this, it would be perfectly fine for you to equate Dr. King with murder and bank robbery. Oh, but you think this sounds ridiculous? Well, this is *exactly* what we do with Jesus. Why should it be different with other historical figures? Why does Jesus get the bad rap when certain politicians use his name to lead people into war?

Let's think about that: "Christian politicians" who lead nations into war because they've been given this direction from God? Let's see...if you take this idea, and then take what you know about big time politicians, and then add in what you know about Jesus of Nazareth, have you ever considered the possibility that, oh, I don't know, they may be lying! From what I know of Jesus, I'm sure if *He* were in a position of political power, He would just be dropping bombs left and right. I sincerely hope you picked up on the sarcasm there.

When I look at the reactions people have to the name of Jesus, as well as the debates he inspires, I really have to wonder if there isn't something deeper here that we are failing to notice? There is just too much focus on belittling this man. In fact, many other religions direct *specific* attention on Jesus in order to accomplish this very thing. Many belief systems seem to take it as doctrine that Jesus was not as much as history paints him to be. Islam directly denies aspects of the historical Jesus, Mormonism and Jehovah's Witness's reduce the divinity of Jesus, and even Catholicism succeeds in doing something similar. I don't recall reading in the Bible that you have to kiss some "third party's" ring in order to talk to God. I'm pretty sure the disciples spoke *directly* to Jesus. That aside, why are many religions in the business of trying to take away the deity status of a specific historical figure? Are there sole religions dedicated to doing the same to Buddha, or Mohammad? I'm pretty sure this isn't the case.

It's also interesting to note that the recent "New Age" ideas are to say that Jesus was one of many powerful "aliens" that visited earth, or that our entire reality is some sort of virtual matrix. I find it funny that Jesus is mentioned in these New Age alien views because, again, it specifically seems to denigrate His divinity. Why even mention Him at all? The matrix scenario is even more interesting. I don't know if people are in the habit of thinking this deep now a days, but try this on for size: If the matrix scenario is true, that doesn't get rid of God, because someone still has to *create* the matrix; but do you know who it does get rid of...Jesus Christ! That's right, it gets rid of the whole notion that God came into this world to save it. Wow, maybe there is something at work here that might warrant some deep investigation?

Maybe there isn't anything wrong with Jesus? Have you ever considered that? Maybe there is something wrong with us? We all seem to hate the murderous corruption of the world, and yet, we all keep buying the tickets to see that new horror movie where the demons fly straight out of hell and rip humanity to shreds. Luckily, with today's technology, we can see it in 3D! We can also fill our minds with skulls and grim reapers, vampires, and other things associated with death. We just don't have any desire to hear about someone who is depicted as bringing life...we want death! Yet, the next sentence out of our mouths seems to be...*we are tired of this war, stop killing us!* I guess we just can't make up our minds. So, I suppose, we will continue to flash those devil horns at every concert,

and write our songs about how Satan is just misunderstood. We do realize this character is part of the same belief system as Jesus, right? But I guess it's only funny and cool to talk about the devil, or Lucifer, or Satan; but mention the name Jesus and it's: *Hey! Take it easy buddy. There are children present.* Does anyone else notice anything odd about all of this? I find it remarkable that Jesus himself touches on this subject in the Bible. In fact, He is quoted in saying:

“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.” As well as, *“And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.”* And finally, *“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.”*

This, of course, has been taken to mean that the very mention of Jesus' name would be so disruptive that it would create great division, even within families. I find it very intriguing that this division seems to be what is happening in today's time. I also find it very fascinating that Jesus would have such a prophetic outlook about how He would be viewed in the future. It's almost as if...He knew what the future would bring. Then again, how could that be? Jesus is just an uncool relic, and anyone who mentions Him is just one of His freaks. I mean, that's what you think...isn't it?

The Rejection Seat

For centuries there has been a debate raging. From the grand stages of auditoriums, to the inner battles within our very minds, we all have struggled with one specific question: *Does God exist?* A lot has been said on both sides of the argument; and each side has put forth their strongest points to prove their case. The Western academic culture seems to have made some defiant statements *against* the existence of God, and to-date mainstream atheism has made their stand firm and clear. Following closely behind each of their leaders is an online band of vitriolic headhunters, looking to bash any form of belief at the drop of a hat. Are they correct in their assumptions, or are they guilty of something? Perhaps it's the "believers" who are guilty of something? Is there any way to judge this? Could it be that the problem lies within the fact that, within the Western world, we've been flying so high for so long that we didn't want anything weighing us down? Maybe we desired complete freedom to zoom around in our own personal realities, and to do that God needed to be pushed out of our plane of existence. Is it possible that we all are guilty of putting God in the rejection seat?

There have been quite a few atheists who have made their presence well known within today's culture. A few of the more recognizable names would be Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens, and Richard Dawkins. Only a few years ago, these men were known as the "Four Horsemen of the New Atheism", although, with the untimely death of Hitchens, they are now down to three. These men have been unabashed in their critiques of God, especially concerning the Christian God, and they have made their points quite clear at every opportunity. Among those points are the theory of evolution, and the problem of evil. The former seems to be their game changer, simply because it is believed that this theory brought about life on our planet, and simply renders God null and void. The problem of evil seems to be their capper, as the world is so rampant with evil that it is not feasible that God, in any form, could possibly allow such immorality to take place; also rendering God nonexistent. Maybe it is quite easy to revoke the need for God on these points? On the other hand, perhaps this rejection is a little rash?

There have also been a few religious apologists who have taken these atheists to task concerning the aforementioned arguments. Names like Norman Geisler, William Lane Craig, John Lennox, and Ravi Zacharias may be familiar to a few of you out there. These men have taken issue with each of the points that are listed above. In terms of the theory of evolution, the problem that is raised, in regard to it, is that mechanisms that produce complex structures, in every other

case, *always* require a designer. This is easily recognizable when one thinks about the fact that every factory that produces *something*, whether it be automobiles or cell phones, *always* requires someone to design both the product *and* the factory. If evolution is an actuality, why does this evolutionary mechanism, which produces living beings, not require a designer? The questions against the problem of evil seem to muddy the atheistic waters even further. You see, if no God exists, then who is dictating what is right from what is wrong? If it truly is the case that no standard bearer exists, then morality is merely a subjective illusion. The laws of our country do exist, but there certainly are no cultural laws on an undiscovered desert island; so, what set of rules exist for someone who washes up there? In all reality, the fact of the matter is that evil simply *cannot* exist in an atheistic framework. For an atheist to rebuke that, and instead say that evil *does* exist, is to actually add more to the belief of a supernatural “lawgiver”. If we take a look at these objections, and then take a step back and think the matter over, what if it’s the case that there *is* a God that we are outright rejecting?

When it comes right down to it, there are not any *truly* rational atheists. The reason I can say this is because it is not actually possible to use the natural world to prove or disprove something that is by definition supernatural. All that one could possibly say is that God *might* not exist. Might, though, is quite a long way from *does*. At best, an intellectually sound person can only cling on to a state of agnosticism. Yet, even in an ambiguous state such as this, the fierce attacks against God are relentless. In his book *The God Delusion*, Richard Dawkins is quoted in saying of God, “The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.” Pretty harsh words to be spoken concerning God, especially one that is supposedly fictional. I wonder if Richard Dawkins uses such fervent language to attack any other fictional characters? Is it even a good use of time for a true atheist to write such things? It is, I think, possible to go through the Old Testament and show that Dawkins’ opinion might be completely indefensible; but that, of course, would take quite a long time. The quicker way would be to simply reference the above paragraph, and suggest that: If God does not exist, then evil cannot exist; and if evil cannot exist, then how is it possible to pin evil actions to any specific character? I think this is quite reasonable logic. Yet, if you follow anything dealing with belief online, whether it be a blog or a YouTube video, you will always come across a happy group of people ready and willing to slander the character of this “fictional” God, along with any of His followers. In an atheistic framework this is no surprise, seeing as how no set of rules exist within this ideology to chastise any such unfounded actions.

These types of rejections, though, are not limited to just those within the atheistic camp. It is rather easy to fall into agnosticism, especially in the Western World. Who has time to think about God when you have a cell phone, or a flat screen TV, or an investment portfolio to manage? Even those who come to believe in God have, at some point in their lives, most likely said some negative things in their own youthful defiance. If you are currently a believer, I bet there has been a time in your life where you said things like: *God doesn't really exist*, or maybe *I'll look into the whole God thing when I feel like it*, or *God? Who cares?* I myself once wrote a song about how God was dead, a theme that has been in the heads of famous philosophers, and in the headlines of famous periodicals. Perhaps, in your case, you have been under some duress in your life, and have rejected God because of your troubles? Maybe you have dismissed God completely because you didn't get something you prayed for? Are any of these actions truly justifiable? Is it *ever* the case that the artist actually *owes* something to the art that *they* create?

You know, there are, in fact, other passages in the Bible that paint a completely different picture than the one that people like Richard Dawkins would have you believe. One of the more famous examples is John 3:16 which says, "*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.*" For the sake of argument, let's imagine for a second that God *does* exist, and that He truly cares about you. Now, putting that aside, think about a time in your life in which you met someone that *you* really cared about. Imagine now that the person that you truly cared about started saying nasty things about you behind your back. Imagine if that person told everyone around them that *you* didn't even exist to them, and, even if they admitted to knowing you, they only planned to come to you when *they* felt like it, or when *they* needed something for themselves; basically rendering you a last resort. If we incorporate these ideas into the possibility of God's existence, you will now be able to get a glimpse into the reality of God. If God exists, there has *never* been a point in the time of humanity where someone wasn't accusing him of being a second rate malicious backstabber, who probably doesn't even really exist. Every one of us would be guilty of saying something in the spirit of this. Can you imagine your existence if every single person you ever came into contact with degraded you, and there wasn't even a single point in time where you weren't being ridiculed in some way? I can't begin to fathom such an agonizing reality. If God exists, He would need to be pretty strong to bear such constant torment. Maybe we truly have some things to be sorry about?

When I think about all of these possibilities, it seems ever more likely that there is an underlying reality that we are just not appreciating. You know, if I were to pick up a rock, and then draw a face on the rock, I would be willing to bet

that *everyone* I presented it to would know, assuredly, that it was designed; without the need of a massive debate. Yet, isn't it funny that the debate still rages concerning the *people* who can freely design faces on inanimate rocks? Somehow it is far *less* likely that they are also designed. What if evil is also a certainty, and, because of it, there is something that we *all* are guilty of? Could it be the case that God really does exist? When I think about this possibility, and then look at all of our hate, and our violence, and the constant rejection that we have each displayed at some point in our lives, I cannot help but be amazed at how any one of us could be loved. Shouldn't *we* be the ones to be outright rejected by God? Maybe God is not the monster that some of us have made him out to be? Maybe we are the monsters? Perhaps we should take a moment, and turn the focus off of spewing our flagrant rejections, and instead consider the possibility that our own wickedness is in desperate need of redemption? God help us.

Nails in the Coffin of God?

In recent decades, a rather astonishing aspect seems to have emerged within the so-called “intellectual” society of Western culture. It seems that atheism has become the default position within the world of academia. Has science pushed out all of the room making it impossible for God to exist? Is the theory of God completely overruled by the competing theory of atheism? If this is thought to be the case, there must be some overwhelmingly hard evidence if the default position among “intellectuals” is atheism, but the question still remains: What is the overpowering evidence? It seems that the more research we do, the more we find out that there is still so much more that we do not understand. Yet, two major objections to theism seem to make the case for atheists. For one, the theory of evolution has given an account of how life could have shaped itself into what we see around us today. Random mutation and natural selection are possible; and, within the fossil record we can see, within some lineages at least, that these evolutionary aspects seem to have possibly played a part in shaping living organisms. We also see that our world is rampant with evil, which is very troubling to both religious and secular people. Yet, are these really the final nails in the coffin of God?

For many atheists, the theory of evolution is the missing link for their own atheistic theory. One of the more publicized atheists is Richard Dawkins. He is quoted in saying of atheism, “I can’t help feeling that such a position, though logically sound, would have left one feeling pretty unsatisfied, and that although atheism might have been logically tenable before Darwin, Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist.” Is this really the case? Isn’t that a little presumptuous, especially since evolution seems to have some rather large holes. There are, of course, large gaps in the fossil records that any layman can notice when taking into account the transformation sequence of a land dwelling cow-like creature into a sea-going whale. People like Dr. David Berlinski have spoken critically on this subject in great detail. It seems like we should see more than a handful of fossils to account for the necessary changes in this sequence, but we have yet to find them. How about the fact that we have never really seen evolution take place throughout recorded history? How about the fact that all of our successful evolutionary computer simulations seem to require forward thinking memory, and a fixed goal, which are components that evolution does not have? How about the fact that the advancement of DNA research has led us to the conclusion that living beings actually have a DNA software which instructs their hardware systems, which adds even more stupefying complexity to organisms

rather than decreasing complexity? These questions are oftentimes written off as “silly creationist” questions, but should they be that easily dismissed?

Let’s use an example of one simple human being to pose a scenario here. The consensus is that an unguided process, using random mutation and natural selection, has somehow created a supercomputer, that is made up of cellular supercomputers, that possesses a seemingly unlimited memory capacity, and is in fact self-healing, self-replicating, self-sufficient; and, to top it off, able to design its own self-updating software? Does this make any sense? How many software engineers out there do you think would tell us that inanimate computer hardware components can somehow design their own software? You might find that the answer is most likely: None. Doesn’t this pose a problem for the evolutionary theory? One might make that assumption, and it shouldn’t be something that academic scientists should just dismiss.

For the sake of argument, let’s let the preceding observations slide, and instead say that evolution is 100% correct. In this case, does evolution actually disprove God? Let’s employ another scenario to test this question out. Say that you come upon an eraser and some screws in a desert. Having made this discovery, you then go to the drawing board and, after much deliberation, conclude that there was strong evidence for an eraser factory that was used to produce erasers. This factory mechanism surely attests to the existence of the screws and the eraser that you found, and this is the same in regard to the evolutionary mechanism. The problem is, however, that the discovery of this mechanism in no way eliminates from the equation the possibility that the factory itself may have had a designer. In fact, most rational people would probably conclude that the factory *did* have a designer. So, how does evolution, even if proven true, erase the possibility of a designer? Answer: It doesn’t. So, where are atheists getting the much-needed weight for their theory? Well, for one thing, it surely can’t be from the rather bumpy road that is evolution.

Maybe it all comes down to the aspect of evil? It seems that this is the other area in which atheists derive substantial weight for their argument. Is there a problem of evil? To the thinking person, one would have to ask the question: Where does evil come from in an atheistic theory? Well, let’s put together another scenario. Let’s say that we take the law that prohibits jaywalking. This is against the law in our culture, so it is technically wrong. Let’s suppose, though, that no one ever put that law into our legal system. If so, would anyone cross the street, in a manner that would have been considered jaywalking, and feel that they were doing something wrong? It seems obvious that the answer would be: Of course not. Now, if this is true of jaywalking, then this must also be true of illegalities such as child molestation, rape, or even murder. Without the existence of an objective standard to improve toward, or fall away from, everything must be subjective and dictated only by our cultural laws. So, in this scenario, if a man

murders someone within our culture, he is wrong in so far as our own current legal standards. Although, if two men wash up on an undiscovered deserted island, and one man kills the other, then the man that is left standing is in no way right or wrong because those descriptions don't really exist. So, what problem of evil do atheists believe they are looking at? There shouldn't be any problem in an atheistic theory, and the belief that there *is* a problem seems to not only dismiss atheism, but actually adds weight to the theory that there might be a supernatural Being who sets the standard and places those innate feelings inside us.

Now, let's pose some questions that might get us thinking even deeper. Can atheism really just explain away thousands of years of empirical data concerning millions of experiences of the supernatural that include malevolent and benevolent spirits, out of body experiences, near death experiences, and divine intervention? Can every single one of these cases really be dismissed as nonsense? Can we explain away the historicity of all religious figures? What about Jesus of Nazareth, who seems to be accredited across the board of ancient historians, both religious and secular, when it comes to his life, death, and possible resurrection? Can we explain away the historicity of religious documents, even when certain documents seem to give cogent explanations, that are very congruent to philosophy and science, for the beginning of the universe, the fine tuning of the universe, the rise of complex organisms, the creativity these complex organisms possess, the free will they seem to possess, the consciousness, the appearances of supernatural phenomena, the problem of evil, the innate sense of right and wrong, the reason basically all civilizations have reached out for the divine, the decay of society, the past present and future of society, and the end of the world as we know it? Should we feel fine just dismissing all of this as nonsense, especially when science seems to have no definitive answer to object with? Doesn't the rejection of all this data seem to be a little, shall we say, anti-scientific?

To draw things to a close, let's make a quick recap. Are there holes in evolution: Yes. Is it at least possible that evolution could be true: Yes. If evolution is true, then does this disprove the existence of God: No. Now, when it comes to the problem of evil, do atheists seem to acknowledge the existence of evil: Yes. Does the existence of evil trouble religious and secular alike: Yes. Does the existence of evil provide more evidence for the atheistic argument, while removing the credibility of the theistic argument: Not at all. So, how is atheism the intellectual default position? If one was actually honest, it seems that the default intellectual position would have to be one of a theistic position. We should be thinking about it in the same way we think about the theory of gravity. Just because we don't have definitive proof, or know precisely how gravity works, does not allow us to dismiss the evidence that we do have, which seems to provide a great foundation for the theory. We are also not going to place our total

belief in lacking speculations that object to the current theory, especially when they haven't worked themselves out yet. We may hypothesize different theories, but we should not outright reject a strong theory just because a new one is put forth. So, it appears that, until science comes up with some more definitive answers, the belief in God is just as intellectually fulfilling as the belief in gravity, and should really be looked upon as the default intellectual position.

The problem that atheists are going to face, though, is that the ability to use science presupposes freedom. Now, if we are all just large groupings of irrational atoms in motion, then the idea of irrational atoms in motion actually making a rational choice is self-refuting. If it is self-refuting, then it follows that we also lose the ability to freely choose a theory based upon rationality. If this is true, then we also lose the ability to use science, and could not possibly utilize science to disprove the existence of God. So, why again is atheism the intellectual default position? Better yet, should we be worried that atheism is being used politically to drive nails into God and science alike? Maybe these problems can best be spelled out in this ancient quote:

“Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.”

GMO's & Missing Links

Has anyone else noticed that there is a lot of manipulation going on within the natural order of the world? I'm sure you have witnessed this in one form or another, even though, at first glance, you might not have realized what you are looking at. For example, there are some people who seem desperate to control the weather via different means of scientific innovation. This, they say, might be necessary to combat the looming "climate change." Others are trying to control things politically by regulating the freedoms within America so as to add a stronger layer of "protection" to the masses. Then, of course, there are those that are trying to use scientific innovation, matched with political prowess, in order to push the idea that we need to start meddling *within* the creatures that live upon this very planet. From Genetically Modified Organisms, to the hopeful prospects of manipulating DNA, there are those that seem hell bent on creating a new world from the inside out. Some say that all of this applied science will not only allow for a new world, but a better world. Yet, one might have cause to wonder, who is to say what is "better"?

If you read the daily papers, or scroll the Internet headlines, you are likely to come across many articles about genetic modification. At the very least, I'm sure you have seen the big bold letters of **GMO** plastered somewhere, if not everywhere. This is the marker for this particular field of interest, and it stands for Genetically Modified Organism. Many people likely equate this specifically to GMO foods, although it actually covers a lot more ground than this specific category. Nonetheless, food really is the headline area when it comes to GMO's. In regard to this issue, there are those that praise this research, saying that GMO foods are good for the world because they grow bigger, faster, and easier than the competing foods *because* of their internal genetic modifications. Scattered within some of these praising minds, there are individuals that think this will be the scientific answer to many problems, including world hunger. This all sounds good, but, if you ponder this a little deeper, it seems that there are some big problems within this theory.

These problems can be heard from some of the voices on the other side of the spectrum. These people resist this ideology because they say that the issue isn't in the fact that these organisms grow bigger, faster, or easier, but rather there is a profound issue in the use of the word "foods". To give an illustration, scientists have recently been able to create a new type of salmon that some are calling "Frankenfish". They are calling the fish by this nickname because, in fact, it is not actually a true salmon. Truth be told, it is a crossbreed of things that have resulted in something entirely different. Funny thing is, that old saying about if it

looks like a duck, swims like a duck, and quacks like a duck...well, it seems that we might have to soon render that old adage as useless. This particular organism looks like a salmon, and swims like a salmon, but who knows; maybe it's closer to being a duck? What makes this situation even more interesting is that this particular salmon is so unique that it is actually feasible to put a patent on this creature. Seems odd doesn't it? Well, if we can just get past these oddities for a second, we can get to the much deeper issue. You see, how do we know that these things will work with the human digestive system? I mean, lots of kids swallow pennies accidentally, but that doesn't mean that we can just decide to become walking change dispensers. The digestive system is a very complex entity, and it requires specific things in order to fuel each *being* that it is working for. In regard to any of these "frankenfoods," we really have no firm data to know that we are proceeding carefully. The reality is that there have been no long-term studies performed on these GMO's, obviously because we have not studied the entire lifetime of any strict GMO consumer; and yet we are already putting these items right on the market. GMO corn is probably the largest modified crop, and, so far, the long-term studies on it have yielded results that are far less than stellar. In fact, some studies done with lab rats have observed that, after 90 days, the rats spontaneously sprouted enormous tumors. Seems like there might be a problem there, and I believe that the problem is not that hard to grasp.

I'm sure most people have heard of a "food chain" at some point in their lives. Well, let's pose a little scenario here to make this issue very easy to understand. Let's say that you have a normal metal chain, and, suddenly, you take out the middle link of the metal chain, and then replace that link with a similar looking link that is made out of metallic painted clay. How do you think this chain will hold up in the long run after a little wear and tear? My guess would be: *not too good*. Well, this is exactly what is happening with GMO foods. A link is being put into the food chain where the salmon is supposed to go, but it's not really a "salmon link". The corn is being put in where the "corn link" should go, but it's not really corn. Where do we get the *needed* foresight to see that these replacements won't have the same drastic results as the metal chain scenario? The answer is: *we don't even have a clue*.

Spawning off of this, the next area of discussion concerns the manipulation that is going on within the *human* species itself. Many scientists seem to be looking into the possibilities of being able to "fix" DNA in order to help with humanity's future. Some are doing this by performing experiments that seek to "positively modify" humans. In fact, in 2011, British scientists were caught creating more than 150 human/animal hybrid embryos. It was later reported that these embryos were destroyed, but who knows when initially someone has to get *caught* in order for corrective action to take place. Should these things be allowed to take place under a cloud of secrecy, without input from

the public? Should we really be experimenting with such things, even if full disclosure is given? It seems to me that the same idea that was applied in the last paragraph can easily be applied here. If it walks like a human, and talks like a human, does that mean that one of these potential *things* could really be human? Would the same judicial laws apply to these “modified humans”? Could patents be put on them? Is it possible that these “inserted links” could mimic the last scenario, and cause the downfall of the entire chain of humanity, which we might also know as the human race? Shouldn’t we get a grasp on some of these questions before we start overhauling humanity?

Branching off from this, there are others that are taking a slightly different approach in their research, and are instead trying to head off the so-called “downfalls” that occur within humanity’s chemistry. If we get to the point where we can actually manipulate DNA in order to stop all genetic ailments, would this really be a good thing? I am reminded of a recent documentary that I saw on a mathematical genius named Daniel Tammet. This man, also touted as possibly the world’s greatest math prodigy, had very harsh seizures as a child, resulting from Epilepsy, and was also diagnosed with Aspergers. What is interesting about these trying circumstances is that the scientists, who have studied Mr. Tammet, are strongly inclined to think that these afflictions are what lead to his astounding mathematical aptitudes. The hypothesis is that these combined ailments somehow kick started a specific part of Mr. Tammet’s brain, and his amazing mathematical abilities were the result. If this is true, it seems to me that “fixing” Mr. Tammet’s DNA before birth would have had a very damaging result for the rest of world. Do we really want less math prodigies walking around? Some might say that this is just a one case scenario, but, even if such a weak speculation is true, where does one draw the line in determining the criteria for “fixing” something?

This actually leads to another point. You see, most likely we would come to a stage that allowed us to *see* “bad strands” of DNA before we ever got to the stage that allowed us to “fix” those same strands. If this were the case, in Mr. Tammet’s situation, would it have been better if his parents had aborted him? Many people are already having abortions because of economic circumstances, so wouldn’t this ability to read DNA drastically up that number? I am reminded of another recent case of a young boy named Kelvin Doe, who was brought up in the impoverished region of Sierra Leone. Kelvin is the youngest of five children, and was raised by a single mother. Not to long ago, MIT discovered that this young man was blessed with amazing abilities, and they are now hailing him as an engineering genius. Mr. Doe has used his gifts to greatly help his community in many ways, including creating homemade batteries out of garbage in order to power the lights in local houses. This prodigy will most likely be able to use his talents to continually help his struggling community in the future, if not the rest of the world. Yet, based on the imperfections of his upbringing, should this child

have been an abortion? As Kelvin himself has said, “Creativity is universal, and can be found in places where one does not expect to find it.” If we take this to heart, where are we getting the idea that we can “improve” things by picking and choosing which links we want to mess around with? In fact, if you look throughout mankind’s history, many of our great historical figures have suffered horrible upbringings and debilitating ailments. Names like Stephen Hawking and Helen Keller might spring to mind. I suppose the world would have *obviously* been better if neither one of these people ever existed?

Perhaps we are being a little hasty in trying to “fix” all these problems so quickly? You know, they say that if you traveled back in history with a time machine, and landed on a butterfly, you could set off a chain reaction that could very well have devastating results for what was *your* future. If this is true, think about what we are doing right now! It seems to me that we really have no foreknowledge that tells us that some truly positive results will come from meddling with the natural world. In fact, logic strongly indicates that the opposite is true. I mean, just take a look at what’s been laid out here. We are creating organisms for consumption that could have toxic affects on our DNA, which can lead to genetic ailments, and, simultaneously, we are trying to “fix” DNA, or at least head off the genetic ailments by possibly resorting to very drastic measures such as abortion. If we combine the two paths together, doesn’t this seem to indicate a massive global depopulation for the future? It almost appears as if genocide is on the horizon.

I suppose, for the majority of these “fixer uppers”, it’s the humanity inside them that desperately wants to create a future in which no child suffers. For these people, participating in these experiments, or taking part in something as drastic as an abortion, are for, what they consider to be, good reasons. Yet, as I look around at the world, I can honestly say that I’ve never come across anyone who hasn’t suffered in some way. Can you yourself be honest in saying that you’ve actually met somebody that has never suffered? What if it’s the suffering that allows for our growth as people? I think you will find that you can’t really grow if there is nothing to overcome. Maybe some people are meant to overcome certain things?

One can make this case just by pointing out some of the nuances in the language that arise when speaking on these issues. It seems to me that when people throw out the word “better,” when talking about creating a better world, this implies that there is a specific way that things are *supposed* to be. They think things should be better rather than worse; but who is deciding what results in something better or worse, or rather what *is* “better” or “worse”? If there really is such a thing as “better”, then it follows that there must be a way that things are *supposed* to be. This, in turn, implies that someone must have set the objective standard for the way that things are *supposed* to be. The name that has

traditionally been given to this figure is what humanity refers to as God; and, if you look at how the natural world works, it really does seem that things have been set up to allow it *to* work. This can be seen clearly when one notices how quickly things seem to fall to pieces when we internally intervene in ways that *we* think are best. If this is the truth, and this objective standard exists, then we really have no place in messing with the way things are *supposed* to be. We do not have the ability to see past, present, and future simultaneously, and so we should not be so brazen as to think that we could possibly *know* that the things we do will actually make things “better”.

In fact, this train of thought allows one to take one step further, and realize the possibility that “better” could actually result *from* the suffering of an individual. Easy examples of this can be found within one’s own childhood. For instance, if a child burns their hand on a boiling pot, it is actually possible for something good to come from this. I’m sure that child is better off with the knowledge of the difference between cold and hot. Not only that, I’m sure they are also better off when they make the connection that other people probably have the same sensations, and will likely assume that burning can cause other people pain. Maybe with a little parental instruction, they might quickly realize that they should not seek to cause other people pain. Perhaps a quick look at the Golden Rule might be in order for them, which might also get them to eventually look into a bit of humanity’s recorded history. It appears to me that a lot of growing can happen with just a pinch of suffering. Now, of course, we obviously should not take the opportunity to meddle, once again, by purposely causing *more* suffering; but should instead take our lessons that we are currently learning about meddling, and try to avoid inflicting unnecessary pain by doing so. Things must happen naturally, and, with clear insight, we might be able to actually *learn* from the suffering within the history of our own race. We might be able to see that the time has come to take broader stances when dealing with the multitude of other issues that are currently on the table, instead of jumping off the deep end and resorting to micro-managing everything, including our very genetic makeup.

You know, the truth is that every seed has to push through a lot of dirt in order to break out into the light. Maybe this simple trait has been placed within nature to allow us to see the way things are truly *supposed* to be? Maybe we should take a lesson from this? Maybe we should take a hard look at the recorded history of mankind and realize that we really have no idea about what we are doing? Maybe we need to reach out for something greater than ourselves once in a while in order to “fix” our problems? It seems very evident that the more we try to manipulate things, the more we degrade the nature around us, and the very nature within *ourselves*. When I look at all that is happening within this global investigation into genetic modification, a distinct picture forms in my mind, and I am reminded of an ancient prophetic quote:

“The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth.

Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen; howl, O ye vinedressers, for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished.

The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men.”

In my opinion, I think there is something to be learned from an ancient prophecy like this. What if it's the case that this text is even more relevant today than when it was first written so long ago? Like the little child, we may be burning our own hand at this very moment, and we should be paying careful attention in such a delicate situation. I think we should take this opportunity to *finally* grow a little, and just leave the fields, and the seed of humanity, alone. The time has come to stop playing God.

The Bible: Misleading or Misreading?

There are several ways in which the Christian Holy Bible has been characterized. Some would say that it is a divinely inspired book, written by the hand of men, but only by means of the Holy Spirit of God. There are others that say that it is a work of historical fiction, a blending of some true events with a good dose of mythology. Then, of course, there are those that say that the book is a *complete* work of fiction, which tells the imaginary story of a kind of supernatural dictator. Are any of these interpretations correct? How can we possibly know? Upon interrogation of some of the “readers” of this book, it has intrigued me to discern how people come up with their own personal understanding. To start, I must admit that I am not immediately concerned about putting the finger on any of the above categories; I believe there is a deeper issue here. What really fascinates me is the possibility that some of these conclusions might be based completely on faulty methods of analysis. If we each take into consideration the proper way to read a book, perhaps we can easily discover how much solidity might be behind our own personal interpretation?

In order to test this out, let’s put this specific book aside for a moment and instead place our focus on *any* other book. In fact, I want you to think about a favorite book that you read when you were a kid. If that is too hard, just think about the book that you have read most recently. Now, be honest, when you read that book, you started reading at chapter five, right? Or, maybe you read the first chapter, but then you went to chapter five, and then you read the end? Maybe you just skipped all that nonsense and just went straight to the end? Am I close, or am I sounding ridiculous? I would place a solid wager on you thinking that what I’m saying is sounding quite ridiculous because, as we know, *nobody* reads a book like that! This might not seem like anything new, but, astonishingly, what I have found is that this is the way that many people have read the Bible. This doesn’t just go for atheists or agnostics, because I have found that *even* Christians have read the Bible this way. From all of these groups I have heard similar complaints about how they don’t understand what is going on within the text, in some form or fashion. It seems likely that the biggest factor to explain this *isn’t* because of the old English verbiage of the King James version, but rather in the fact that it is not possible to understand *any* book when it is read out of order, *especially* in the very first reading. I guarantee that you did not read your favorite children’s book that way, or even your most recent book, unless, of course, you were cramming for some college exam. When you skip around, you lose any possibility of summarizing the entire structure, while most likely skipping past very important points that will tie the story together. If you can be honest with yourself and

admit that this is how you read the Bible, then perhaps you might also have to admit to the possibility that your current interpretation might be completely upside down.

Skipping around also leads to another unfortunate trend that seems to permeate Biblical study, and that is in the trend of taking things out of context. As an example, what if I were to give you a random passage like this:

“Down, and up, and head foremost on the steps of the building; now, on his knees; now, on his feet; now, on his back; dragged, and struck at, and stifled by the bunches of grass and straw that were thrust into his face by hundreds of hands; torn, bruised, panting, bleeding, yet always entreating and beseeching for mercy; now, full of vehement agony of action, with a small clear space about him as the people drew one another back that they might see; now, a log of dead wood drawn through a forest of legs; he was hauled to the nearest street corner where one of the fatal lamps swung, and there Madame Defarge let him go – as a cat might have done to a mouse – and silently and composedly looked at him while they made ready, and while he besought her: the women passionately screeching at him all the time, and the men sternly calling out to have him killed with grass in his mouth. Once, he went aloft, and the rope broke, and they caught him shrieking; twice, he went aloft, and the rope broke, and they caught him shrieking; then, the rope was merciful and held him, and his head was soon upon a pike, with grass enough in the mouth for all Saint Antoine to dance at the sight of.”

Seems pretty terrible, doesn't it? I mean, based upon the unmerciful actions of a crowd screaming for blood, this *must* be a clear picture of what the entirety of this book is about; and *obviously* it's about bloodthirsty murderers. Yet, is that really what *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens is about? I would be, again, willing to place a bet and say that someone else, who read the entire book, is very likely to come up with a completely different encapsulation of this work. This seems reasonable doesn't it? Well, why aren't we taking this into consideration when we speak about the Bible?

For the people that lean heavily toward the Bible being either “horrific” or “completely made up”, I usually find that the readings they have taken from the Bible are based upon quotations that are only a couple of lines long. For example, I have heard people say that the Bible is nothing but a sadistic book that promotes slavery. When pressed on the information that lead them to that conclusion, some might be able to produce a line or two that might lead one to also make that assumption. Yet, if this is really true, how did someone like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. pull a completely different interpretation out of the book? How did he pull out a message of peace and equality from these pages, instead of a guideline on how to enslave people? It seems to me that for every quote that might lead one to think negatively about this subject, there are those that seem to put things in a

completely different light. An example of this can be found in Exodus 21:16 where it says:

“And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death.”

Seems that the slavery that took place in the early history of the United States might have been prevented if they had simply read the Bible in full context. Could it even be the case that, in order to understand certain things, you also have to look into the historical context of those ancient cultures at the time? Perhaps many people have never taken the time to do this? In fact, maybe certain influential people have taken things out of context ever since the book was first compiled?

To make matters even more difficult, I have found that people have a tendency to glaze over certain details rather easily when “trying” to read this book. Now, I know this is a very long piece of work, but, when you don’t pay careful attention, it is very easy to miss some extremely important points. A clear example of this is the story of Sodom and Gomorra. When I get people to recap this narrative, I sometimes hear the argument about how this story proves that God is a vicious tyrant, killing everyone in sight because of a *few* “bad apples”. I also hear about how this story teaches that women are to be treated as less than dirt within our society. The reason that people have a tendency to say things like this is because of a passage that begins with a depiction of two angels, who are God’s destroyers, going into the city and taking refuge in the house of a “righteous” man named Lot. As you begin to read, you see that the people of the town are gathering outside Lot’s house, and the text goes on to say:

“But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter: And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? Bring them out unto us, that we may know them. And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him, And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly. Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing. For therefore came they under the shadow of my roof.”

It is very soon after this passage that God utterly destroys the city. At a brief glance, this text might easily garner the harsh descriptions that I deposited earlier. Yet, if you look closer, one might be able to see some nuances that seem to shed new light on the story. First off, you absolutely *have* to read what happens *before* the angels ever went into the city. If you did, you might have noticed the part about how a man named Abraham actually pleads with God to spare the entire city if even *ten* righteous people are found within it. The text then says that God agrees to this. Yet, the city is still destroyed. Doesn’t this indicate

that there weren't even *ten* "good apples" amongst all the others? Going on from here, look at how Lot, who is the so-called "righteous man" that the angels have come to save from the city, is being characterized. This man, instead of picking up a sword and taking a defensive position for his household, decides to go a different route and instead offers to give up his *own* daughters to be raped by the dwellers outside. This is the *best* solution in his eyes. Now, doesn't this show how merciful God must be if He has actually sent his angels to save a wretched man like this? Doesn't it also show how despicable the rest of the people must be if *this* man is one of the only righteous people that God could see within the *entire* city? Now, of course, this doesn't prove that the story is true, but, you have to admit, these small details do place an entirely different perspective on the narrative itself.

Examples of misreading can also be found in the New Testament section of the Bible. One of the most common ones *has* to be Matthew 10:34 where Jesus says, "*Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not so send peace, but a sword.*" Now, I have heard this quote recited by a multitude of people ranging from Islamic apologists to devote atheists. To these people, this quotation proves that Jesus was not the peaceful messiah that it is claimed He was. Is this really the case, or is it possible that more substance can be found in the words if we simply employ the methods that were implemented in the story of Sodom and Gomorra? First off, okay, Jesus says that He is bringing a sword. Well, what kind of sword? What does this sword look like? Is it double bladed? Gold handled? Where are the descriptions of this sword? Well, truth be told, you will never find a place in the text that indicates that Jesus *ever* is walking around with a sword. What then could this possibly mean? Is it possible that this sword symbolizes something else? Let's take a glimpse at a bigger portion of this passage to investigate further. What Jesus actually says is this:

"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."

Even with just a few additional lines, it now seems that the sword is symbolizing the "variance" or the "division" that will take place, even within families, because of the very mention of Jesus' name. If you read the New Testament in its entirety, there are other passages that actually add to that hypothesis. Passages such as:

"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." As well as, "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved."

Now, you can make the claim that this is just reading way too far into the text, but is it? I don't see any other passages that could even *infer* that Jesus preaches violence; so maybe this should be an indicator that this "sword" is symbolizing something else? I think we should take the present day into consideration in order to solidify this conclusion further. These are supposed to be prophetic words that are being spoken by Jesus Christ. If this is the case, isn't it interesting that, in today's time, thousands of years later, the very mention of the name of Jesus *does* put a man at variance with his family and those around him. How could He possibly have foreseen such a thing? Maybe there is a lot more to this text than we might think?

Finally, I would like to add an interesting side note about the Bible to this essay, because I think it is important. Many religions in today's time make the claim that the Bible has been corrupted in some major way. Religions that tend to make this claim include: Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Islam, Roman Catholicism, Judaism, and New Age religions. People might be surprised to see Judaism and Roman Catholicism on this list, so let me explain. Judaism says that there should be no New Testament, and so the scripture has been corrupted. In similar fashion, Roman Catholicism says that seven extra books were wrongfully removed from the Bible during the Protestant Reformation, and so the scripture has been corrupted. Interestingly enough, these religions also make the claim that God is "all-powerful" and "all good". In doing so, each one of the above religions falls into a major contradiction. Think about it like this: the "corrupted" Protestant version of the Bible is the most widespread scripture in the entire world; if this is the case, why would God allow such a thing? To say that God could *not* stop the widespread distribution of corrupted scripture would imply that God is *not* "all powerful", because He couldn't even prevent His own *Word* from becoming corrupted. To say that God *allowed* this to happen implies that He is *not* "all good", because, in doing so, He has deceived the majority of people who have believed this widespread scripture. So, if these religions *insist* that God is "all-powerful" and "all good", then the only conclusion to be reached is that the above religions themselves are false belief systems. A slight exception would be Judaism, because Christianity is actually *complete* Judaism; the difference being that Christianity accepts both halves of the Jewish book. In absorbing this information, one can see that the above argument is a logical one, and it is also not theistic dependent. In this instance, you don't even have to believe in God in order to narrow down the religious field.

To draw things to a close, I have to make it clear that I'm not writing this essay in order to prove that the Holy Bible is the inspired Word of God. All I *am* saying is that it seems that people, whether they be believers or non-believers, seem to share some unfortunate characteristics when it comes to reading this book. If you want to get the full meaning, of *any* text, you *have* to read the entire

thing cover to cover. If you skip around, you won't get it. If you pull things out of context, and just look at a list of random quotations, you won't get it. If you rely on other people to tell you what *they* think about the book, and then base your opinion on what *they* say, then you are also on very dangerous ground. I don't know if you've noticed this yourself, but it seems to me that people often have a tendency to lie; as well as to only tell you about the things that *they* want you to hear. You never know, I could be doing the exact same thing right now! The only way to figure out who is telling the truth, and who isn't, is to buckle down with the earliest version of the text, read every bit of it, and then reread it so that you don't miss important subtle details. This is how you should read any book, and this is how you *must* read this one. In doing so, I guarantee that it will become so much easier to get a better understanding of this scripture, which, most likely, will also give you great discernment in recognizing both textual believers and deceivers. So, remember, if you want the truth, if want to significantly reduce any confusion you might have, start at the first chapter, and read all the way until you see the words "The End". Or, as in the case of the book in question, read until you see: "*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*"

Skepticism?

Are you really reading this essay? Is the world just a figment of your own imagination? Are you someone else's imaginary friend? This style of questioning is what I seem to hear regularly from "skeptical" people when discussing topics of a supernatural nature. It is remarkable to me that whenever I bring up topics like the existence of the soul, or the existence of God, many "thinking" people seem to go immediately down the hyper skeptical highway. The motto here appears to be: *whatever you may believe, there must be some other explanation; and whatever evidence you think you have, is really no evidence at all.* This attitude is very puzzling. What brings on this extreme skeptical behavior? Are these agitated skeptical views really self-defeating? I must admit, when it comes to self-proclaimed "religious skeptics" I myself am a bit skeptical.

Classical philosophical skepticism implies that you draw no conclusions when you pose a question. I think that this is useful, to a degree. We *should* examine all angles of many questions, and we *should* look for inconsistencies. We should even be in the habit of doing this with majority views. I think this is clearly demonstrated when looking into modern medicine. At one point, it was the majority view that cholesterol was completely bad. More recently, the view seems to be shifting to a more positive viewpoint. This change is based upon recently released studies, which point to *inflammation* as being the actual enemy to the body, and not the cholesterol. Cholesterol, in fact, is actually an *aid* to the body. If there were more skeptical inquiries in the beginning, then maybe this view would not have held sway for so long. It also might have prevented many people from taking cholesterol-lowering drugs, which some have suggested are the root cause of many modern day brain dysfunctions. *Clearly* skepticism is very important, and, again, I regularly include myself among the skeptical.

This kind of skepticism, though, is not what I am referring to in this discussion. I am talking about something more radical; something that is, perhaps, disguised as skepticism. In all truthfulness, many atheists today are really agnostic. From a scientific standpoint, one is only able to say that: *maybe God exists or maybe He doesn't*; the reason being that natural science itself *cannot* disprove the supernatural. Supernatural, by definition, is *beyond* nature. This is the logical viewpoint to hold, and this is what atheists should privately be thinking to themselves. Out in public, that's a different story. In public many of these people will defiantly say that God *definitely* does not exist. They do so in order to be firm within their proclaimed public atheism, and firm they are. They are very, very firm. You see, many atheists claim to be skeptical, but they don't

truly act like it. A truly skeptical person would attack both sides of the argument. Yet, there seems to only be a firm attack of theism. This is troubling if one makes the skeptics claim; because once one leans heavily to one side of the argument, that person really is no longer skeptical. Skepticism is not a continuous position. In reality, it is a position that people hold until they come to a point where the arguments have been exhausted, and a conclusion is drawn. An atheist who claims to be a skeptic of God's existence cannot logically hold that position because of the title of "atheist". The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy states that atheism is the "denial of the existence of God." To deny something means to draw a conclusion, and to draw a conclusion means that one is no longer skeptical. So, be on the lookout if anyone describes themselves as a *skeptical agnostic atheist*.

There are a few well-known people who might fall under the above category. Perhaps names like Sam Harris or Richard Dawkins might ring a bell? These are two of the "New Atheists" that you may have heard about on either the Internet or television. Both of these men seem to be very skeptical about the existence of God. In fact, they are adamant in their attack against theists. Richard Dawkins has publicly stated that religious believers should be "mocked" and "ridiculed" while Sam Harris has issued the statement that, "Science must destroy religion." It seems odd that Harris should issue such a statement, especially since it is really quite illogical to think that science must *do* anything. Scientists *do* things, whereas science simply allows for the explanation of certain things. For these men to issue such statements begs the question: Where is the agnosticism? These are not skeptical statements, but rather ones of people that have drawn conclusions.

How is it possible that they have disproved the supernatural when they believe they can only rely on the natural world? It has already been shown that this is *impossible* to do using natural science. One also has to wonder why their skepticism has nothing to say concerning certain natural scientific hypotheses? Why is the skepticism limited to the existence of God? The modern Big Bang Theory states that everything exploded out of nothing, but where is the skeptical idea that asks: how can *things* come out of *no-thing*? How can one not be skeptical of such an assertion? What about the fact that human beings are basically walking supercomputers, composed of individual cells that are themselves supercomputers? The scientific theory for this is that an unguided process, using random mutation and natural selection, has somehow created a supercomputer, that is made up of cellular supercomputers, that possesses a seemingly unlimited memory capacity, and is in fact self-healing, self-replicating, self-sufficient; and, to top it off, able to design its own self-updating DNA software? Where is the skepticism for such a claim? Is the intelligent design hypothesis really that illogical when considering such a complex structure? They

might choose to ignore these things by saying that they don't want anything to do with supernatural ideas, but what about numbers? Numbers are not natural physical *things*, and yet scientists deal with numbers every day!

Other people, such as the well known physicist Dr. Lawrence Krauss, have gone to other more extreme lengths of skepticism so as to push themselves into a completely different world of their own making. Regarding the ideas surrounding the Big Bang, Dr. Krauss has affirmed that we must *redefine* "nothing" in order to understand how the universe came from nothing. I really have to wonder why we must do this? Doesn't reaching to this level make *all* questions unanswerable? It doesn't make it easy when you ask someone: *Hey, what do you think of that tree*, and they answer with, *well, I don't know, I think we first have to redefine what we mean by "tree"*. To make things even more problematic, Dr. Krauss has also been quoted in saying that we can no longer truly rely on our "cave man common sense" when thinking about the origins of the universe. This assertion makes the claim that we have not evolved correctly in order to use our common sense to help explain the universe around us. How convenient. Yet, if this is the case, and we truly *cannot* rely on our own common sense, doesn't it become problematic that we cannot even answer the common sense question: *Is this experiment complete?*

Perhaps there are other reasons why these aforementioned figures are going to such extreme lengths to battle against the supernatural. Given the above quotations, it seems more likely that Dawkins and Harris are making their statements out of pure emotion. It is not rational to be an agnostic atheist, and a pure agnostic is not rational in limiting their skepticism only to God, especially when other logical objections to current scientific beliefs are never raised. Krauss is in a similar boat as a self labeled "antitheist." Krauss has also said of the *wonderfulness* of science that, "it expands our minds, because it forces us to accept possibilities that, in advance, we may never have thought were possible." If this is the case, how is it that, given millions of empirical testimonies of spiritual and divine encounters that span thousands of years, scientists cannot accept the possibility of the divine? It seems to me that people like Dawkins, Harris, and Krauss must have either not yet expanded their minds to the next level, or they are simply crafting their arguments for purely emotional reasons. Maybe there are people that just don't want God to exist?

I would say that many people avoid any possible evidence for God for a number of reasons. It is probably the case that even some "believers" avoid the evidence because they do not want to risk proving their own belief false. This is a sort of emotional reason as well, and I would stress to these people that, given my own search, the existence of God is something that one should not be afraid to explore. Remember: "Seek, and ye shall find." I personally have managed to look into the evidence thoroughly enough to allow myself to be called a Christian

without any embarrassment. At one point, though, I myself was an atheist; and, looking back, I see that it was for emotional reasons. I am not the only one who has been through such a journey. The great Christian apologist, author, and former atheist C.S. Lewis is quoted in saying that at one time he was “very angry with God for not existing.” He was, of course, recalling this after becoming a theist, and this quote illustrates how easy it is for even the most brilliant of minds to get stuck in contradictions. People make the claim that Christianity is a *non-thinking position*, but I think that claim fits better around atheism. After becoming a theist, I find that my mind grows stronger as I delve into all the possibilities that come when one supposes that God exists. This also does not diminish my skepticism in the least. I still am skeptical at times concerning different subjects, even concerning certain parts of organized religion; although I do not allow my skepticism to take my logic over, which seems to be the case for many atheists. When it comes to matters of philosophy, science, or religion I still go through the skeptical process of: asking a lot of questions, narrowing down the focus, and then drawing my conclusion. Once I reach that last point, I am no longer skeptical.

By pointing out the flaws in the logic of many “atheists”, it is not my goal to win the argument. The goal is to help people live more fulfilling lives. It is tough to do this when one lives in a vicious circle of contradiction; and so the best thing to do, in order to help someone out of that state of mind, is to guide them towards recognizing their own mental block. For those people who might fall into the category of “rampant denier”, I would ask them to ask themselves: *Is my skepticism based in logic or emotion?* I would say that, most of the time, the true objection is going to be based on emotion. Perhaps they have experienced an unanswered prayer, loss of a loved one, or abuse by a “religious figure”. If you the reader realize that this fits a description of your own past, I would ask you to question if it is logical to completely avoid *all* of the religious evidence because of events such as the ones listed above. What could this possibly gain? Better still, how can you gain *anything* when you ignore *everything*?

Perhaps it would help to realize that all of the aforementioned “emotional triggers” could only be pulled in a world in which free will exists. If God has granted us free will, then we must be able to perform evil without certain divine intervention. In addition, if prayers seem to go unanswered and we’re forced to go through painful times, this does not mean that God does not exist, or that He is evil. I think any parent can get a glimpse of God’s point of view in this matter when contemplating one of their kids getting in a terrible accident. Think about this for a moment: *the doctor enters the waiting room and tells you that a limb must be removed in order to prevent your child’s death, while also affirming that the child will go through certain agony with the amputation, and if this isn’t done the child will certainly die.* Now, given the choice, what do you do? I believe

most parents would say that they would make the choice to put the child through the agony in order to see them live. Why couldn't the same reasoning be given to terrible events within your own life? Maybe you just can't see the positive outcome that exists down the line? You know, it is written that Jesus also went through much agony, and the end result of that agony was something good.

Maybe it's time to put aside rampant skepticism in order to flesh out the truth? By trying this, it might be much easier to accept the first part of John's Gospel, which says that *The Truth* came to this world in the flesh. You can choose to be so skeptical as to say that this world is some sort of matrix, or possibly a figment of your own imagination; but, in reality, nobody is truly this skeptical. It is always the case that when stepping off the curb, and finding a bus bearing down on you, *nobody* wonders if this world is an illusion. *Everyone* steps back up on the curb. Those that remain awash in skepticism, well... they are never able to *later* recount thinking about the possibility of that bus not existing; at least not within any physical form. If you happen to be this type of person, I think the best question that you need to ask yourself is: *Why am I asking so many questions?*

Dark Crystals: The New Age Deception

In today's time, many people are developing keen interests in the New Age religions. These religions are very inviting in that they seem to be an eclectic mixture of different parts of many religions, sprinkled with unexplained phenomena, and void of all the seemingly "harsh" realities that other religions impose. It's kind of a spiritual free for all that welcomes anyone and everyone to the party. Within my own spiritual journey, I was, for a time, sincerely interested in many "New Age" ideas. Coming out of atheism, I was becoming more aware of the spiritual world around me, and I was looking for explanations for the things that I was noticing. Ghosts, demons, angels, UFO's, all of these phenomena will come to mind when one begins to explore the alternative airwaves. It is quite easy to get caught up within this worldview, and therein lays the danger. The New Age calls out like a siren from the shores, beckoning the unaware towards its grasp. When you explore these religions long enough, you come to find that the "New Age" is really just a bag full of the Devil's old tricks.

I vividly remember one of my first experiences within the world of the New Age. A New Age convention had come to town, and a couple of my friends had asked if I'd like to join them there. At the time, the convention seemed like an interesting experience to be had. Upon arriving, we all found that it was just that. There were booths lined up in a large circle around the convention floor. People were selling a kaleidoscope of colorful pendants, feathers, crystals, and rings, each for a specific purpose. There were also many psychics and mediums lined up to allow any particular customer to see their future or contact their dearly departed loved ones. Upon seeing this array of fortunetellers and palm readers, my interest was indeed perked. I had not come to the convention to sample any of this, but I have always been the type that would try anything once. That being the case, I decided to get in line in order to see how real all this stuff actually was. I know now that if it wasn't for my determined quest for the truth, along with a little guidance from above, I may have gotten very lost after that first reading.

When my turn came, I handed over my money for the ten-minute reading that I had selected. Payment varied upon the time requested, and I think it was something like \$30 for a ten-minute reading. I had guessed that the cost was increased for this particular woman because she was the organizer of the entire convention. If I was going to do it, then I wanted the best; and the best is what I got. After rubbing oil on her hands, and placing my hands in hers, this psychic immediately dove into my reading. She called upon the "great spirit" to tell me all that I needed to know. Within the first few minutes, I was wide eyed. The description that she was painting of me was strikingly accurate. This was

significant in my mind because I knew full well that the descriptions she was producing did not at all match my outward appearance. With my long hair, leather jacket, and ripped jeans, most probably would have thought that I was a heavy metal drummer of some sort. They definitely wouldn't have thought me to be someone who went to college for creative writing; but, somehow, she pointed this out. The details that she gave went against every outward feature, and they were all dead on accurate. Besides the writing part, I'm going to keep most of what she said private, as I am not one to reveal *all* that there is to know about myself to random people. Although, I will say that this was something that she mentioned to me, about me, as well.

After some time, she then went into detail about what my future might hold. This was just as captivating because the details exactly matched things that, at the time, I was thinking about pursuing. This went on and on, until she finally ended the session. When this moment arrived, she gladly handed me a recorded CD of the session, and I could see that she too had been stimulated in some way by what had transpired. I then looked at the time and found that thirty minutes had passed, even though I had only paid for ten. For some reason, she had decided to overlook the fact that I should have been paying about two hundred dollars for that length of time, which is something that she hadn't done with *any* of her other customers. Looking back now, it seems clear that the reason I was allowed such leeway was because, at that point in time, I was heading towards a spiritual crossroads, and would soon be deciding the way in which I would choose to go.

Interestingly enough, around the same period of time a few of my other acquaintances had similar experiences, each account being very comparable to mine. In each retelling, the psychic or medium generated very specific details about each person, while pairing that to a future outlook that seemed very possible given each person's current place within their own lives. These experiences, combined with the interest of other unexplained phenomena, are what catapulted me into further exploring these New Age practices. At the same time, though, I also began to explore Christianity. One of the reasons for this is because it seemed that these New Age religions all spoke about Jesus in some form or fashion. They all seemed to mention Him as a very powerful being, calling Him one of the great "ascended masters" or "extra terrestrials". I found it odd that Jesus was even included in these religions at all. Upon delving into the Christian Bible to compare the two, I found that it was written that God strictly forbade anyone from dealing with any of these New Age types. Fortune telling was forbidden. Contacting the dead was forbidden. I must admit that it was hard to reconcile the strictness of God's commandments with the pleasant attitudes I experienced at that New Age convention. *Why was the God of the Bible so harsh against these practices?*

Branching off of this, I also began to research accounts of demonic possession in the Bible, as well as modern accounts of demonic possession. As Jesus was at least called a “very powerful being”, I saw that it was written that He cast demons out of people on several occasions. Within the modern anecdotal tales of demonic possession, I also began to notice similar accounts of a strange trend. In the modern testimonies that I have observed, it seems that many “possessed” people are able to accuse one or more of the “exorcists” with embarrassing details that have happened within their past; details that nobody knew anything about, except of course for themselves. All this research spanned about a year, and at the end of it two things happened: First, I found that my interest in Jesus was growing stronger and stronger; and, secondly, I became very aware that each of the immanent fortunes given to my acquaintances, and myself, failed to materialize.

In the convergence of all of these events, a puzzle began to come together in my mind. I began to see that what the God of the Bible called “sin” was not just something put in place to spoil everyone’s fun. These were commands purposely placed in the world to protect the people therein from themselves and other malicious entities. New Age spirituality, at times, does work; but work to what advantage is the question. It was true that the magicians of Pharaoh could turn their staffs into serpents, but the serpent from the staff of Moses was stronger. This showed me that the New Age *could* do something, but that something was in an attempt towards something negative. Pulling from my own journey and research, I started to see that New Age spirituality allows doors to be opened, but not the door to God. It allows you to see truth, but not *The Truth*. It allows spiritual encounters to happen, but these encounters seem to always lead to deception or possession. It is irrational to discount the millions of experiences of malevolent spiritual encounters that have happened for thousands of years. To push aside this data is extremely antiscientific; and it seems to me that these experiences are growing stronger every day because more and more doors are being opened. There truly is a veil between two worlds, and, without the guidance of God, we have no business sticking our heads into that other world.

Let me explain how this process works: If you wanted to invite someone into your house, how would you do that? It isn’t a hard answer; you would simply open the door and invite them in. Well, it is for this exact reason that fortunetellers and mediums are forbidden in the Bible. These people act as conductors of spiritual energy. If you go to a medium wanting to get in touch with your dead Uncle Bob, rest assured that they *will* get in touch with someone that *says* they are your Uncle Bob. The problem is that the Bible is very clear that when people die they do *not* just roam the earth. They also don’t stick around to give us guidance, nor do they need our help in directing their paths to the next spiritual reality. Both of these aforementioned abilities are strictly under God’s

control. So, the conclusion one draws from this is that whatever is on the other end of the line is something that is simply *saying* it is your Uncle Bob. Why would this happen, you ask? This would happen so that this immaterial impostor could make its way into your body. Then, before you know what's happening, you're possessed.

The other realization that arises from supposing another world beyond the veil is that these "entities" are constantly watching us. If this is the case, wouldn't this explain the supernatural abilities of these fortunetellers, or lack thereof. Like my own experience, when these people begin to channel the "great spirit" it seems clear that this spirit is not so great. If it *were* so great then it would know *exactly* what is going to happen, not just what *might* happen. It seems to me that the reason the readings of each person's *person* are so accurate, and the future so often inaccurate, is because the information that is being received is from a strict observer; not someone "all knowing". If *I* watched someone constantly I would be able to tell a third party all about that person, and would even be able to give a probability tract to what might happen to them in the future based upon the things I noticed they were interested in. This would also explain why different accounts of demonically possessed people are able to accuse their exorcist with accurate personal events that have take place within the exorcist's life. If someone can accuse another of an event, and they're dead accurate, then it is logical to assume that they must have observed the event as well.

In delving into the philosophies of the New Age, I have found that they are just as damning. If you listen to alternative radio stations, you will often hear things like: *in the afterlife we will be judging ourselves*. Now, to a random person interested in spirituality, this does sound great. Upon careful analysis, though, this sounds like a big fat lie. If you were going to judge yourself in the afterlife, why would you judge yourself harshly? Better still, by what standard are you judging yourself? If God does not exist, things like "right" and "wrong" become subjective; so, in order to have a standard for right and wrong, you have to have a standard for moral judgment. If that moral judge exists, why are *you* then judging yourself?

New Age spirituality also wants to make the claim that many different paths lead to heaven. Again, on the outside, this does sound well and good. Yet, what if this is not true? If it is not true, then perhaps one belief system has the total package, and so allows for a better existence in both the now and later? If this is the case, then following this New Age belief could actually prevent you from leading the most fulfilling life. As anyone can see, the world contains many types of structures, from physical bodies to scientific laws; and one would have to infer, then, that there is also a structure of rules to be followed. The New Age, though, says the opposite, and instead preaches a sort of free for all. What's worse is that the whole idea of "different paths" is contradictory with truth itself.

Truth is exclusive. It is black and white. In order for truth to exist, then a standard for the truth has to exist. This standard is God; and one God by the way, not multiple. Multiple Gods would lead to subjective truth, meaning non-existent truth. So, be wary if someone tells you that Jesus is one of many “ascended masters” or “aliens”, because this only leads to complete subjectivity. Complete subjectivity then leads to the complete absence of truth, and so how could it be true that Jesus is one of these entities when “true” does not even exist? Now do you see the danger? Side note: they also teach that beings like Lucifer are actually the “good guys”.

It might surprise some of you out there, but for me the New Age religion is the most dangerous religion in the world. It seeks to destroy truth and, in its place, put in a giant deception. It wants to give you what you want in order to ruin you in the end; like giving an alcoholic a bottle of liquor. Sure, the New Age can do many things, but to what end is another story. It wants to draw you in by talking to the dead, but this just incurs more spiritual deadness. It wants to entice you with aliens and UFO’s, but these are just the fallen demonic entities of old; “abducting” and “implanting” instead what was traditionally known as “possessing”. Best of all, it utilizes your pride in order to get the best of you. It’s all about *you* in this worldview, and never about anyone else. You’ll never hear a palm reader tell you that you should donate your paycheck to the homeless. They will most assuredly tell you something quite the opposite, and how does selfishness help the world? It allows you to think that *you* know what’s best for you, when in reality you don’t. You are not able to know your own future, so how could you possibly know what’s best for you? If you want to know what’s best, you need to turn to someone who *does* see the future, not someone who guesses at it. You need God, and this is what the New Age tells you that you really don’t need. It does this any way it can. Yes, there are many signs and wonders, but if I were you I would take more time to look at the signs that the New Age gives and wonder how, and why, all of this is being done? If you reflect back on classic children’s literature, you will be able to illustrate these New Age tactics with ease. The sight of a house made completely of gingerbread might be exciting and wonderful; but, as the story goes, the door to that house leads only to the evil entity waiting to devour your very soul.

Sexuality Unbound: The Search for the Infinite

There seems to be a firestorm raining down on the culture today when it comes to sexuality and religious faith, more specifically, Christian religious faith. Are there any rules when it comes to this subject, or do we make up our own as we go? Is there a God who has placed an umbrella of regulations over this world; and, if so, should we even follow His laws? Maybe we should just do as we please? What about homosexuality? ...And there it is, that one key word that sets everyone ablaze. This topic, perhaps more than any other, seems to burn in the hearts of many on both sides of the spectrum. Like a lot people I'm sure, I have taken my time to think this matter over carefully before reacting in any way. Personally, when I think about this intense area of cultural interest, my thoughts always go to a few key people within my own life. Perhaps this is the same in your case? These people, to me, represent those with the best of intentions when it comes to dealing with this sensitive issue. There are technically two different camps that separate each of them, but they share the commonality of thinking with their hearts. Unfortunately, these people are never in the lead of each of their respective camps. As it is with many organized groups, the leaders seem to come out of the fringe; and on the fringe of each respective side the mottos seem to be relatively the same: *To hell with those people!* Viewing such a disturbing sight day after day is quite disheartening, and it seems that the more the days pass the hotter this inferno gets. By adding this issue into the picture, other important questions immediately spring to mind: Who is right and who is wrong? Do "right" and "wrong" even exist in this world? Are there underlying consequences for certain sexual actions and, if so, are there any remedies? When one juggles all of these questions in one's head, it gives cause to wonder: *can anyone put out this raging fire?*

To start, I want you to think about where we get our rules and regulations. I'm sure it's obvious to you that we can see laws written on paper for each town, city, state, and country; but is this the only way we can know right from wrong? If God does not exist, then do right and wrong exist absent the cultural rulebooks? It seems to me that if someone murders someone in the United States he is *definitely* wrong, and is subject to punishment based upon our country's laws. Let's suppose, though, that two men wash up on an undiscovered deserted island, and then one man kills the other. In this scenario, is the man that is left standing in any way wrong? In my mind, I don't see how he could *possibly* be wrong. There are no laws on the island to convict him by, and there is no one else around to be a witness of this murder. Does this man's blood cry out to anybody? From my viewpoint, the only way that "wrong" can even truly exist in the world is if

there is an objective standard like God who shows the world what is “right”. There are some in the anarchist crowd that may want to do away with the whole notion of God because of this very point. It’s quite easy to be right all the time when you make up your own morality. Yet, if we make up our own morality, isn’t it a little hypocritical to be shouting at each other about how it is so very “wrong” to do *this* or *that*? How can someone be truly “wrong” about anything if that description doesn’t really exist? When it comes right down to it, all we could really say is that one person’s actions are “different” than another person. If you truly believe that God does not exist, then this is the position you are forced to come to. At first, this might seem fine and dandy, especially when things are going just the way you want them to; although, you should beware, you might feel a little sick to your stomach when you witness a lunatic caving in your baby’s head with a bat. In such a case, wouldn’t it be something to realize that all you can reasonably utter is: *that’s different!*

What if God does exist? If He does, is He *really* the intolerant one? To many, this seems to be the case. One of the main reasons this is so clear to people stems from those signs that have been made up and spread about the media for the world to see: *God hates gays!* I’m sure that every one of us has seen a sign like this at some point in our lives. Is this really the truth? As the focus seems to always be upon the Christian religion, it seems clear to me, having read the Bible, that portions of each respective camp drastically misconstrue this slogan. This is one of the most publicized focal points in this debate, and yet it really is the easiest remedied. If one were to truly *read* the Bible, it seems that a clear answer is given repeatedly: *God does not hate any human being!* There is no place in the Bible, Old Testament or New, where it states that God hates a person. In fact, this point is made clearest in probably the most famous passage of John 3:16 where it says, “*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.*” You might note that it doesn’t say one quarter of the world, one eighth of the world, or even one sixteenth; God loves the whole world, and that includes *every* person in it. So, the next time you see a sign that says that God hates a certain group of people, feel free to rebuke the person holding the sign; because, as any true Christian *should* tell you, God loves every human being equally.

Beyond this point, though, there *is* something that God really does hate with a passion. This focus of hatred is what the Bible refers to as “sin”. When I talk to people about this, there seems to be a lot of confusion when it comes to this sin business, and I am more than happy to clear this matter up. In reading the Bible, it seems that God hates sin for a couple of distinct reasons. For starters, sin is something that God *cannot* do. It clearly states throughout the Bible that *only* God is good, and, because of this, when a person sins they actually push themselves away from a relationship with God by doing things that God cannot

join in on. This is actually one of the main reasons why Jesus is depicted as having come into the world. His sacrifice is what bridged the gap so that, even though we are all sinners, we could be allowed back into a relationship with God. Now, there is another reason why Jesus had to go through such brutality in order to do this, and I will explain *exactly* what that reason is a little later on.

Getting back to the issue at hand, if we grant a homosexual orientation, it should also be clear that God does not condemn a person for having an attraction towards the same sex. The sin aspect enters when we begin talking about the “actions” that come into play when trying to satisfy those fleshly desires. In order to understand the text clearly, you have to go back to the earliest version, which would be the King James Bible for English, and read what the true translations are. In the text, you will see it stated that man should not lie with another man; but *any* man can lie with another man. A heterosexual can have sex with a person of the same gender, just the same as a homosexual person can. It’s not the orientation that is deemed sinful. It’s the actions that are sinful, and there are specific reasons for why this is so.

This brings us to the other reason that God hates sin. God hates sin because He knows it *will* have a negative impact on us. As a parent, you want the very best for your children, and, God being the ultimate parent, His image is what the rest of the parents are made in. It isn’t that God is trying to spoil everyone’s fun when he says that we should not perform certain things that He has deemed “sin”. He tells people not to do these things *clearly* knowing that some people won’t listen. Think of it like this: you can tell a child not to run with the scissors, but that doesn’t mean that the child will listen. Yet, you repeatedly tell the child this in order to lessen the possibility that the child will hurt itself. It’s not because you’re some sort of fun spoiling dictator, it’s because you truly care about the child’s future; and God is no different. If, for a moment, we grant that the God of the Bible exists, it is stated plainly that He has put a certain order in place. If we break this order, then consequences will follow, and no caring parent wants their child to suffer any injury, self inflicted or otherwise. It is a very clear point of the Bible that says that homosexual actions, like all sins, have a strong possibility of leading oneself to some sort of mental or physical damage, and this is not what God wants.

The go-to point against this statement is to say that no one should decide whom you can and cannot love. On this point I am in total agreement. If a man loves another man or a woman another woman, then I think that’s great. The God of the Bible is all about love. Yet, it should be stated firmly that love has absolutely *nothing* to do with sex. In fact, I guarantee that there are going to be a lot of one-night stands happening in the world at the time you read this essay, and not *one* of them is going to have anything to do with love. If you have to have sex with someone in order to love them, then that’s like saying that a man who is

completely paralyzed with the debilitating disease of ALS can no longer love the wife at his bedside. Within this vein of thought, we should also consider that if God does not exist, then it quickly follows that love does not exist in any true form either. Without an objective standard for love, then, like morality, we just make it up in our heads. So, a wife that sits by the bedside of her dying husband can say that she “loves” her husband, but, with equal breath, a man that throws some money at a prostitute he’s just had sex with can say the exact same thing about her. Without God there is *literally* no standard to distinguish which situation the word “love” is more appropriately suited for. This mindset also nullifies the go-to point in the beginning of this paragraph, rendering the argument useless. Is this how we must live, in a world where love has no meaning?

What if you believe that love *does* exist, and that God is a loving God? If this were the case, why then does He frown on homosexual relations? If we invoke the second reason for God hating sin, which is listed above, I think we can get a better grasp on this question. To clarify things even further, there are two books that we can then turn to: *The Book of God’s Word*, and *The Book of God’s Works*. The first book we have covered briefly already. When it comes to the second book, this work is speaking specifically about the regularities that are set within nature, and the natural systems therein. Now, if sin is something that can cause harmful wounds in the here and now, then perhaps certain homosexual actions can do just that? If we put aside the supernatural for a moment, and just concentrate on the natural, I think it is possible to create a logical scenario to deal with this very question.

First, we *have* to stop comparing ourselves to other creatures. A human being is vastly different than a rat or a sheep, so comparing sexual aspects between the humans and other organisms must be taken with a grain of salt. The mind of a human being is *significantly* different than any other creature on this planet. Yet, even though this is true, there *is* a commonality that all creatures do share, including humans; and that is the regularity that says that no matter what homosexual act the creatures perform, the process *never* is completed like nature intended it. What I mean by that is this: A female cannot get another female pregnant, and, likewise, a male cannot get pregnant by another male, and also cannot give birth (at least not without the help of a drastic medical procedure). This means that the system that is performing the action is being *forced* to do something that it was never supposed to do. If we take this into consideration, while thinking about how any other system works, where do we get the logic that says that performing such actions will not have dire consequences for the entire system? It seems possible that committing such acts may be as hazardous as trying to fuel your car with water, or trying to drive it *under* water. Basically, it’s like throwing the proverbial monkey wrench into the machine. It seems quite

sensible to ask: if the actions cannot work within the reproductive system, then how are they going to work within the system of the human mind? At the very least, doesn't it sound reasonable to say that, over time, these acts might wear down one's own psyche? Try to think of an example where a complex system, that is being forced to do something that it is not designed to do, isn't quickly brought to ruin from such duress. Shouldn't this be considered if we truly want to be helpful and compassionate to our fellow human beings?

Perhaps this is the reason that numerous studies, which are affirmed by homosexual people, cite that many homosexual individuals, especially males, often engage in sexual relations with a large quantity of people in their lifetimes. In their book, *After The Ball: How America Will Conquer It's Fear and Hatred of Gays in the '90s*, Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen Ph.D., both admittedly homosexual, have this to say, "At first, the increasingly jaded gay man seeks novelty in partners, rather than practices, and becomes massively promiscuous; eventually, all bodies become boring, and only new practices will thrill. Two major avenues diverge in this yellow wood, two nerves upon which to press: that of raunch, and that of aggression." It should be noted this is a pro-gay manifesto designed by two accredited Harvard graduates, who share these open admissions throughout this book. They go on to say of homosexual relationships, "Many gay lovers, bowing to the inevitable, agree to an 'open relationship,' for which there are as many sets of ground rules as there are couples. Admittedly, this can work; a restless lover gets it out of his system, and returns to the man he really cares about more than any other. But it doesn't always work."

If this is an accurate depiction, why are the partners "restless" in the first place, especially if they really *care* about one another? Why isn't a sexual relationship with one person enough, and where does the "love" enter into this picture? Perhaps the people that fall into this way of life are desperately searching for something that they cannot find? Could it be that, within their minds, they are trying to complete a system process that cannot possibly be completed by means of this lifestyle? Isn't it plausible that such an insatiable thirst, which cannot be quenched through the flesh, can only lead to the swift breakdown of the entire system? Kirk himself died at only 47 years of age.

To be fair, I have known more than a few heterosexual guys and girls who have led extremely promiscuous lives. Yet, in considering these people, I have to admit that my opinion is basically the same: *something is going on beneath the surface*. If you hear someone say things to you like *I just love sex*, or *I'm just a sexual person*, when trying to legitimize their lifestyle, don't buy into it. In getting to know these people, it is almost always the case that each person is either trying to fill a direct void from their childhood, or trying to fill a currently developing void that, many times, stems from something that happened *during*

their childhood. To deal with this subconscious need, a lust then ensues; but the lust is *never* satisfied, and so the abyss remains.

If we go a step further, perhaps there is a correlation between the insatiable actions of some homosexuals, and the developing emptiness inside those that are heterosexual? One can make this case by simply looking through the psychological studies of both victims of childhood sexual abuse, and current homosexual people. Here is a short list of the traits that they unfortunately seem to share: *major depression, anxiety disorders, personality disorders, poor self image, paranoia, anger, aggressive behavior, promiscuity, sexual dysfunction, substance abuse, self harm, and suicide*. This list can be easily verified by going through the medical literature, and, when you compare them side-by-side, the similarities are quite shocking. What if it's the case that these specific characteristics of many homosexual people are not mainly caused by the harassment and victimization of an uncaring society? Is it possible that the homosexual orientations of many people in the world are linked to childhood sexual abuse?

Within America today, childhood sexual abuse is at an all time high. In order to get a solid grasp on this, there is a well-known organization that one can look into called *Lin6* that deals with sexual abuse, specifically male. The name stems from very detailed research, which indicates, within the United States at least, that one in six boys are sexually abused at some point during childhood; although, even after listing this statistic on their website, it is readily admitted that this figure is most likely to be *heavily* underestimated. Interesting side note pertaining to this: in 2013 the *American Psychiatric Association* released their updated manual, which actually listed Pedophilia as a "sexual orientation". To be fair-minded, it should be mentioned that this was later said to be an error, at least after they were *made* aware of the flaw. It seems funny to me that they didn't see that error right from the start, or at least in the proofread before the initial printing, especially since the manual took more than a *decade* to revise and edit? Putting aside any dark undertones, it nevertheless seems that child sexual abuse is on the rise, and it can be found within homes, schools, and even some religious factions.

Perhaps this trend is more than a mere possibility to consider when we think about a homosexual orientation? In the 1998 peer reviewed study *Sexual Abuse of Boys*, by William C. Holmes, M.D. and Gail B. Slap, M.D., it was clearly stated that, "Abused adolescents, particularly those victimized by males, were up to *7 times* more likely to self-identify as gay or bisexual than peers who had not been abused." In addition to these results, a more recent 2012 study, entitled *Does Maltreatment in Childhood Affect Sexual Orientation in Adulthood*, by Andrea L. Roberts, M. Maria Glymour, and Karestan C. Koenen, stated this, "Our findings indicated that sexual abuse may increase the likelihood of the three

dimensions of same-sex sexuality for both sexes, and that non-sexual maltreatment may affect sexual orientation identity and women's same-sex sexual partnering." I have personally researched a number of additional studies showing a possible correlation between abuse and homosexual orientation. In fact, the authors of the aforementioned study agree to this when they indicate that, "Numerous studies document an association between childhood physical and sexual abuse, neglect, and witnessing violence in childhood and same-sex sexuality." A statement like this is significant because, with the release of recent studies on identical twins, the genetic correlation in regards to homosexual orientation may be waning, given that identical twins, having *identical* DNA, can show different sexual orientations between them. Personally, I do not rule out the possibility that some homosexual people may have a genetic reason behind their orientation, but what if it's the case that a far *greater* number are linked to early childhood influences like the ones stated above? Perhaps this is the reason why those previously mentioned characteristics, pertaining to sexually abused children and homosexual people, are so very similar?

If this is the case, then another possibility that we need to carefully consider is that certain sexual activities may not be occurring between two truly "consenting" adults. In thinking about this, let's start with some population statistics. According to the *Williams Institute* at the UCLA School of Law, a sexual orientation law and public policy think tank, they estimate that 9 million (about 3.8%) of Americans identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender (2011). In a more recent survey conducted by the *Center for Disease Control*, the results were narrowed down even further as they found that only 1.6% of Americans identify as homosexual (2014). I'm sure these statistics are quite startling, and it might startle you even further to realize that the percentages outside the US are similar, if not fewer. Moving past this realization, what if we then compare those percentages with, for example, the *Lin6* organization's percentage of at least 17% when it comes to sexual abuse. Even with this one comparison, isn't it logical to think that a sizeable number of the 1.6% could have developed their sexual orientation by means of some childhood trauma?

If this is true, and momentarily granting that certain people *may* have a genetic link to homosexual orientation, doesn't it follow that many people might be, sort of, *forced* into certain mindsets because of unfortunate childhood events? If so, are they really "consenting" in the biggest sense of the word? Branching off of this, what if it's also a reality that engaging in future homosexual actions will have a damaging effect on one or both of the people engaging in the sexual activity? One can infer this by looking into *RAINN*, the Rape Abuse and Incest National Network. On their website they state this, "Many survivors re-experience the sexual abuse as if it were occurring at that moment, usually accompanied by visual images of the abuse. These flashes of images are often

triggered by an event, action, or even a smell that is reminiscent of the sexual abuse of the abuser." If we take this into consideration, especially when considering that males are most linked to sexual abuse, and then add in male on male homosexual relations, doesn't it follow that engaging in said relations might have a devastating effect on the subconscious mindset of one or both individuals? In this scenario, it seems likely that a male coming out of a history of childhood sexual abuse, which was forced upon them by another male, is going to *drastically* increase the likelihood of mental trauma if serious therapy is not sought *before* taking part in homosexual activities. Now, this will of course bring to mind "gay conversion therapy", but, putting that aside, it does seem possible that through *normal* therapy pertaining to sexual abuse, an individual might revert out of a homosexual orientation that they were never set to develop, just as an individual who has developed a personality disorder can be freed of that disorder. I don't see how any of this is really that far fetched, and I believe that all sexual partners who *truly* care about one another should consider these matters carefully *before* engaging in sexual activity.

In thinking about all this data, matters such as gay adoption also seem to be made quite troubling. If abuse is rather prevalent within a group of people that identify with a homosexual orientation, this may very well indicate the possibility that the home environment of two adult homosexuals might be something far less than secure for any child. Consider the following data that was recently gathered in a 2013 NISVS study by the *National Center for Injury Prevention and Control of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*:

"Lesbian women and gay men reported levels of intimate partner violence and sexual violence equal to or higher than those of heterosexuals."

"Approximately 4 out of 10 gay men (40.2%), half of bisexual men (47.4%), and 1 in 5 heterosexual men (20.8%) in the United States have experienced sexual violence other than rape at some point in their lives."

"Nearly 1 in 3 lesbian women (29.4%), 1 in 2 bisexual women (49.3%), and 1 in 4 heterosexual women (23.6%) has experienced at least one form of severe physical violence by an intimate partner in her lifetime."

"More than 6 in 10 lesbian women (63.0%), 7 in 10 bisexual women (76.2%), and nearly one-half of heterosexual women (47.5%) experienced psychological aggression by an intimate partner at some point in their lives."

“Nearly half of gay men (44.5%), one-quarter of bisexual men (24.4%), and one-third of heterosexual men (32.4%) experienced expressive aggression by an intimate partner during their lifetime.”

“These nationally representative findings are consistent with findings from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), which found a higher prevalence of dating violence and unwanted forced sexual intercourse among lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth compared to heterosexual youth.”

They conclude the study saying this, “These findings underscore the broad range of violence experienced by LGB individuals in the United States and reiterate the important need for immediate, but thoughtful, actions to prevent and respond to the violence occurring within LGB populations. A more comprehensive plan for violence prevention that includes LGB individuals is needed to address issues that include effective prevention efforts focused on intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and stalking.” If this data is accurate, doesn’t this indicate a strong possibility for an unstable home environment for homosexual people? It also occurs to me, in thinking back on that natural framework mentioned earlier, that we may not have the conclusive data that says that two same sex people can properly nurture a child the way two people of an opposite sex can. Now, when I say this, I’m not speaking of heterosexual people being ethically better, because there are a lot of terrible heterosexual people out there; rather, I am suggesting that the presence of both the male and female sex is very necessary. I can easily gather this hypothesis from within my own life experience. I don’t know about you, but I have personally found it to be almost *always* the case that when a girl grows up without a father, it takes a very negative toll on their state of mind, which manifests immediately, or at least later on down the road. Perhaps well-rounded men and women absolutely *need* the foundational nurturing of both men *and* women? I must state clearly that I don’t mean to be hurtful to any individual when speaking of this subject, but we do need to weigh out all the facts before we jump to any conclusions in this matter.

Following the adoption issue, it is impossible to then avoid speaking on gay rights and gay marriage. This might seem like a large topic, but funny enough, I think that the perplexity to this part can be quickly made so much simpler. What I mean by that is this: why should marriage, no matter what form, have “rights” attached to it? I personally believe that the only “right” you should get is the right to call your spouse *your* spouse. To tack on things like tax credits to a marriage are, I think, quite unnecessary. Why are we getting taxed so much in the first place? Maybe this is a better question? What if we got rid of the rights on both sides of the argument and found a way to figure them out separately? Perhaps then this marriage debate would be over? If it’s the case that

many people on both sides of the coin cannot be satisfied with *only* their partner, then maybe taking the rights out of marriage would stop a lot of people from going through with an unnecessary union? Biblically speaking, a main reason for marriage *is* to establish a firm union. It clearly speaks of two people coming together to become *one* flesh, one foundational unit. The reason being: if you don't have a solid foundation, then you're doomed to experience an imminent collapse. You wouldn't try to build a house before laying a foundation, would you? Why then would you try to build a life that way?

Speaking of that foundation, it also surprises me that so many homosexual groups are calling Christian churches intolerant for not accepting gay marriage. It is true that there are people that are supposedly "Christian" that shout obscenities and hold up terrible signs, and I spoke on those in the beginning; but what does this have to do with the Christian faith being intolerant? Think about it this way: let's compare just the *marriage* aspect of the Christian faith to an all girls' school; now, stay with me here. If some boys were to try to enter an all girls' school, do you think they would be let into the classroom? Well, seeing as it's an *all* girls' school, I'm sure you realize that the answer is going to be: no. We must also realize that the school is not being intolerant of the boys, they are simply going by their doctrine; and this is exactly the same when it comes to the Christian church. It's not that the church is intolerant, it's that the doctrine clearly says that they *cannot* perform a gay marriage. Keep in mind that I'm only speaking about the marriage aspect, because it's also doctrine that *anybody* can seek and be saved by God. Now, the next step that certain homosexual activists take is to claim that the Bible is incoherent, and that it says *this* and *that*, and is probably completely made up anyway, so why can't the church just tack on gay marriage to their doctrine? This is actually a legitimate point. Maybe the Bible is made up, and Christianity is just a sham? The problem is, though, if these groups want to believe that Christianity is a complete charade, then why would a homosexual couple, looking to solidify their marriage, base the foundation of their union within a fake religion? This seems totally nonsensical to me. Perhaps there is some other more sinister agenda underneath the surface here?

I believe it would be greatly beneficial for everybody to do a bit more soul searching before jumping into any group, side, or conclusion. We keep complaining about people being wrong but, as I have already stated, without God it's not possible that there be *any* objective right or wrong. Maybe this is the true state of affairs? Yet, I'd like you to think back to where the subject of child abuse was mentioned. Why would sexual child abuse have so much of an affect on an individual later in life? I'm sure most of those kids were far too young to go through any sort of sexual "stranger danger" class, so where did the knowledge come from that something negative was being done to them? From my viewpoint, I think that the affects of child abuse on an individual actually *prove*

that an objective set of rights and wrongs exist inside us; because a young child should have no moral rationale that early on for anything like that to immediately affect them so negatively. If you can wrap your mind around this, then also realize that the next step that one has to take is to infer a moral lawgiver, which is what Christianity refers to as God.

Maybe we should all pay a little closer attention to what the Bible has to say when it speaks about the state of the world? You know, my purpose for writing this essay is not to condemn any person. This writing comes out of a deep concern of mine that many people might be running away from true love, and this relates to people on *both* sides of the debate. I don't agree with any sign that says that God hates a certain individual, especially when it's in the hands of someone that speaks with a scornful heart. Likewise, I don't agree with many of the ideas of the LGBT group, and I don't see how pride enters into a demonstration when the members are made to don fishnet t-shirts and ridiculous costumes. It's almost as if both sides of the fringe are making a mockery of these people. If you happen to be someone with a homosexual orientation, and you have a feeling like something inside you is missing, what if it's the case that the Bible was written to help *you* with your suffering? What if it's possible that you're unknowingly hurting *yourself* by rebelling against a firmly set reality? I have seen a number of testimonies from people, that I believe to be perfectly sincere, which say that this was exactly the case for them. One example I can think of comes from a man named Sy Rogers. I usually list him as one of the first Internet testimonies available for people to research when delving into this subject. Sadly, within all of these accounts, it seems that a recurring factor for each individual is that of great suffering. When I look around the world today, it seems that suffering is more prevalent now than it has ever been. How does one explain this? Well, it might seem far-fetched but, for me, the Bible is the *only* way that I can make sense out of any of it.

You know, I mentioned much earlier that there was a specific reason that Jesus had to die so brutally to forgive the sins of the world. Many people can't understand why this is, and, in fact, there are countless people who think this is a completely *ridiculous* way for God to forgive sins. The reality, however, is that this is the *only* way that the God of the *Christian* Bible could forgive sins. You see, in this life, we all suffer, albeit some greater than others. That is the price you pay when you are given free will. You are free to hurt or help, and many readily choose to do the former. In knowing this from the beginning, the reason that Jesus had to be ridiculed, falsely convicted, savagely beaten, and crucified is simple: *If you are going to suffer, then I'm going to suffer worse*. This is the mindset of God. You see, it's very true that an all powerful God could choose to forgive sins in a different manner, but, within the framework of this world, only an all powerful *loving* God could choose to forgive sins in such a way. To love

someone means to put yourself *second* for another's sake, and there is no better example of this than at the cross of Jesus Christ. He is the standard from which we pull the meaning of love, and that feeling of love that exists deep down inside us is a beacon to guide us back to Him. Within His death and resurrection, He showed us that the end of this life is not the end, and the suffering will only last but a short time. He is waiting with open arms for *anyone* who chooses to seek Him out, and, if you do so, don't be surprised if some burning pain you have inside you slowly begins to wane. So, always remember, above anything else that I have mentioned here: throughout your past, present, and future, there is only one way to describe the love that God has, and will always have for you: *Infinite*.

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