

Accuracy of the Bible and Questioning God

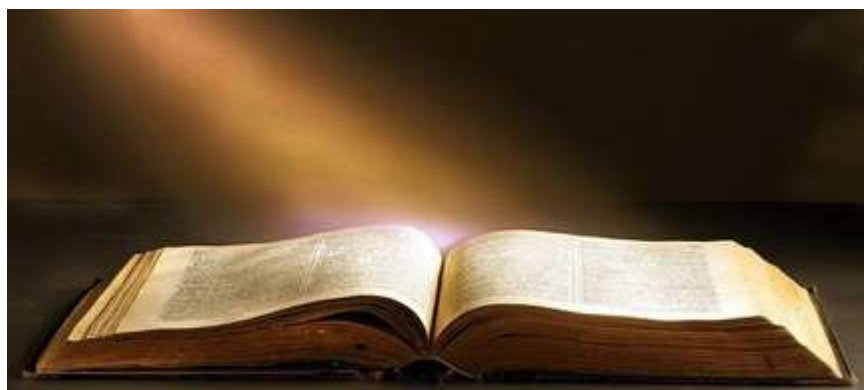
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The grass withers and the flower fades when the breath of the Lord blows upon it. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of our God shall stand forever.

~ Isaiah 40:7-8

In this paper the following issues will be considered:

- Is the text of the Bible reliable?
- Is the Bible myth, and why do some archaeologists think so?
- Is the Bible compatible with science?
- If God is good, why do evil and suffering exist?
- Why would a good God order the killing of people?
- Is Jesus the only way to God, and if so, what will be the fate of non-believers?
- Why would God allow us to be confused with many religions and denominations?
- Are the four Gospels accurate in their depiction of Jesus?
- Was Jesus just a “good man” or was he actually divine and a member of the Godhead?
- If one becomes a Christian, can he or she be rejected by God?
- Is Christianity a cult?
- How is Judaism different from Christianity?
- Why doesn't prayer work?
- What should we make of the many reported psychic and near-death experiences?
- Was Jesus married to Mary Magdalene or some other woman?
- Did Jesus give Mary Magdalene authority over the church?
- Were the Gnostic “gospels” suppressed by church leaders?
- Were church leaders threatened by women, and so sought to destroy the “sacred feminine”?

For a long time, it has been fashionable to question God and trash the Bible, treating it as nothing more than a collection of folk tales that have no basis in history or reality. The impetus for this came originally from “higher critics” – liberal scholars who rejected the Bible’s authenticity, such as the rejected JEDP theory of Wellhausen,¹ and more recently from others with their own axe to grind. This was done despite the fact that the Bible is the most accurate and comprehensive literary work from antiquity in existence, supported by hundreds of geographical place names and archaeological discoveries.

“Archaeology has not produced anything that is unequivocally a contradiction to the Bible. On the contrary... there have been many opinions of skeptical scholars that have become codified into ‘fact’ over the years, but that archaeology has shown to be wrong.”

Dr. Paul McRay, leading archaeologist from the University of Chicago

Few if any historians question the authenticity of Julius Caesar’s *Commentaries on the Gallic Wars*, written around 50 BC despite the fact that the earliest known manuscript is from one thousand years later (around AD 900), and even from that date there are only a few copies in existence. The writings of Plato and Aristotle (400 – 300 BC) are even more tenuous, with the earliest known copies being from the middle ages, around 1,500 years later. In contrast, the Dead Sea scrolls, dated from 200 – 50 BC, contain portions of almost every Old Testament book. The New Testament is much better supported, with fragments dating from around AD 130, within eighty years or so of when they were written, and there are thousands of early copies. Several papyrus scraps from the book of Matthew that date from the middle of the first century and may well be either fragments of the original writing or a second copy.² Support for the Bible is therefore orders of magnitude better than any other ancient work. Given this level of credibility, it would seem that critics should approach it with humility rather than hubris. So why is it trashed and treated as myth?

People can believe whatever they wish to believe, but if, for example, the stories of Moses leading the children of Israel out of Israel are treated as factual (and there is much evidence that they were), then one is compelled to accept that the God of Israel is also real and factual, and that is unacceptable to many critics. Ideological opponents of the God of the Bible therefore seek to disparage it.

The main virtue of our era is “toleration,” and like all words that are used in the context of power, its meaning or connotation has been altered to suit the purpose of those in power. Whereas the word originally meant “live and let live,” and “agree to disagree,” the word has now come to mean that “all views are equally valid.” Therefore, it is no longer politically correct to think that your view is right, and others are wrong – you must instead acknowledge that your way of thinking is simply one way among many. Furthermore, there are no longer such things as “right ways” and “wrong ways”; all systems of philosophy and ethics compete for attention at the same level, at least theoretically.

At first blush, this can seem like a good idea – history is filled with people who had their own ideas about truth and led many astray. If truth is relative, then we will not have to put up with endless arguments about which way is right, because they are all potentially right (or wrong). If there is no overarching “truth” then truth is whatever you want it to be. That may seem like a cool way to think and live, but the problems with the relativity of truth quickly become apparent:

¹ For a serious criticism of Wellhausen, Thomson, Van Seter, Pardee, Finkelstein, Dever, Kenyon, and others, see, for example, Gerard Gertoux,

https://www.academia.edu/30200722/The_Pharaoh_of_the_Exodus_Fairy_tale_or_real_history_Outcome_of_the_investigation

² <https://www.theologos.net/NTpapyrus.html>

1. The arguments about which way is right are not stopped – they are simply moved to another level. Truth is then defined and manipulated by those with the most power and influence. This is illustrated by appeals to “bipartisanship,” which sounds so kind and generous, but typically means: “be reasonable – do it my way”. As Alan Bloom indicates, “Openness, as currently conceived, is a way of making surrender to whatever is most powerful, or the worship of vulgar success, look principled... this seeming openness is actually a great closing – the closing of the American Mind.”³
2. Toleration is typically applied by the liberal elite as meaning, “be reasonable – do it my way”, and they are completely intolerant of anyone else. Human nature has not changed – people have always and will always attempt to bring others in line with their way of thinking. Politics has always been and will continue to be a battleground.
3. Relativity is a concept championed by the romantic movement which places feelings above logic, and American thinking is heavily steeped in “romanticism,” an essential element of our post-modern culture. Logic is not abandoned, but it is subordinated below feelings when the two come into conflict (post-modernism by nature is consistently inconsistent). Nevertheless, logic rears its ugly head above feelings because all ways cannot simultaneously be valid. For example, God cannot be fundamentally personal and impersonal at the same time. Furthermore, all ways are not equally beneficial, and do not lead to positive outcomes, even though such thinking is politically incorrect. So the relativity of truth is ultimately nonsensical and can only be accepted by a suppression of logic and a suspension of disbelief.
4. The relativity of truth leaves us completely at sea, with no grounding for ethics and theology beyond how we feel. The only objective rationale that we have is the laws of the state, and as law evolves, they are simply the product of the personal feelings of those and their associated pressure groups with the most power and influence. Therefore, they have no more intrinsic validity than our own thinking, other than the force and backing of government and those in power.

We are therefore in need of a “gold standard” against which to measure our personal philosophies, and that is what the Bible is – a word from God, our creator, that transcends our personal feelings and provides a guide for our thinking and ethics. Of course, a series of objections will immediately be raised:

1. The Bible was written by men, so how can it be a word from God? The answer is that the Bible is validated by the fact that Jesus Christ used it and commended it to us as God’s word.
2. How can we trust that Jesus was who he claimed to be – the divine Son of God and a part of the Godhead? We can trust it by his life and ministry, the miracles that he performed, and especially by his resurrection from the dead and ascension into heaven.
3. How can we trust that these things actually took place as described? We can trust them because of the multiplicity of witnesses to these events, and the fact that these men then abandoned fame and fortune in order to dedicate their lives to telling others about what they had seen.

³ Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, Simon and Schuster, 1987

4. How can we trust that the Bible in its present form has not been corrupted, and accurately conveys the message as it was originally seen, heard, and recorded? That issue is covered in detail below.

Accepting the Bible as the gold standard means that absolute truth exists, which breaks apart the foundation of post-modernism, the philosophy of our culture. But so be it – human culture has always been wrong in one direction or another, and our current culture is no exception. “Let God be true, and all men be found liars.” Romans 3:4 Post-modernism is simply one more philosophical system that will eventually be washed away.

Even among those who acknowledge the Bible as God’s word and the standard for life and behavior have many disagreements about the meaning and interpretation of various texts. There is a central unity of truth in the Bible, but also many peripheral issues that are open to debate, so we must approach it with humility and with an open mind. It is also inevitable that we will view the Bible from our own cultural and historical perspective, and it is extremely hard to break out of that mold and see things through the eyes of those for whom the texts were originally written. We must try to put our own views and biases aside and seek to honestly come to grips with what the text truly means. But many of the current attacks on the Bible are not based on honest seeking, but rather on deception. As in politics where debaters often ignore the issues and instead seek to slur the character of their opponent with ad hominem attacks, so critics have treated the Bible, painting it with a black brush regardless of the facts. Here are some questions and claims along with a response:

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- **Question:** Is the text of the Bible reliable?
 - **Claim:** The Bible evolved through countless translations, additions, and revisions. History has never had a definitive version of the book.

The books of the Bible were written over a sixteen-hundred-year period, from around 1500 BC to AD 100. The Old Testament books were collected into what the Jews called the Torah (the first five books of the OT known as the Pentateuch) and the Tanakh (the rest of the OT books – however, the word “Torah” is often used in place of “Tanakh” to represent the entire OT). The canon of the OT (the list of approved books) was completed by the time of Ezra, who lived in the fifth century BC. The New Testament books were written in a much shorter period of time, from AD 40 to 100, and all of them were in use by the early Christian era (AD 100-150).

Naturally, these books had to be copied by hand, using the technology and writing implements of the times. But regardless of their age, both the Old and New Testaments are very well supported by copies that were rigorously compared. Jewish copyists of the Torah/Tanakh, had word and letter counts for each text to ensure that the copies were accurate, and the copies were made and kept with great care (a Torah scroll was a priceless object). Prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls in 1948, the oldest versions of the Old Testament were from the tenth century. The Dead Sea scrolls were therefore a significant find, because they were a thousand years older, and contained portions of almost every Old Testament book. While there were minor differences in spelling and word usage, amazingly, there was not even one change that altered the meaning of the text of any OT passage in the entire Dead Sea scrolls. Therefore, during a one-thousand-year interval there were no significant changes to the text.

The New Testament documents are especially well supported, *more than fifty times better than any other writing from the same period*.⁴ There are approximately 5,000 Greek copies alone dating from as early as AD 350, and many more fragments that date back as far as 130. As indicated above, this is from a relatively short period of time from when they were originally written. Minor variations have appeared in versions, but none of these variations has produced any substantive changes. The ancients were much more careful than we are even with the spoken word because many agreements were oral. They were even more careful with writings, of which there were very few.

As in the case of most books, the authors collaborated and relied on others for information and editing. For example, both the OT books of Psalms and Proverbs are the work of several authors. In the NT, Mark was a close associate of the apostle Peter, and Luke indicates that his work was the product of careful research. Having multiple people involved in the writing/editing process does not invalidate the contents of a book, rather it strengthens it because it has been reviewed by more than one pair of eyes. The assertion that large portions of the New Testament documents have been rewritten or replaced by substitute parts is simply wishful thinking.

Caesar's *Commentaries on the Gallic Wars* mentioned above are used in Latin classes, but as Thomas Cahill points out in his book *Desire of the Everlasting Hills*, the Old and New Testaments are virtually the only ancient documents that are still widely read by the public. A child can read and understand most of the Gospel accounts, which is a testimony to both their simplicity and power.

The synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) were written during the period of AD 40-75, with the letters of Paul also being composed during the same era. The Gospel of John and Revelation were probably written later (or written earlier and edited and published later), perhaps during the period 80-100. Many of the NT writings including the Gospels were known to early Christian leaders such as Ignatius (?-110), Polycarp (70-155), Irenaeus (125?-202) and others because they quoted from various NT documents in letters that they wrote. Thus, there is direct evidence of the NT documents being used by various far-flung churches in the period AD 100-150, around sixty years after they were written.

It is certainly true that the Gospel writers borrowed from each other, used a variety of sources, and that some degree of editing was performed. But this was not done in an atmosphere of conspiracy and power struggles, as some suggest. The early Christian church was constantly persecuted and on the run, first by the Jewish authorities beginning around AD 37, and then by various Roman emperors until the Edict of Milan issued by Constantine in 313 which legalized Christianity and finally halted government-sponsored persecution.

In regard to the process of how books were chosen to be included in the NT, this was done over time and as churches and church leaders developed a consensus. The criteria for selection were: 1) known authorship by an apostle of Christ or a close associate; and 2) harmony of teaching and doctrine. The letters of Paul were being copied and passed around to various churches by AD 100, and by AD 115 Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch, had already accepted the current four gospels as we have them today. The churches had settled on the books they considered to be authoritative and canonical by around AD 200 (indicated by Origen and other church leaders). There were disagreements on the books of Hebrews, James, II Peter, II and III John, and Revelation, but these disputes were settled by the middle of the third century. The official canon of Scripture for the western church was declared at the Councils of Hippo in AD 393 and Carthage in AD 397 (the Roman Catholic Church did not

⁴ F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* Intersity Press, 1972

officially adapt the current NT until the Council of Trent in 1563). But as indicated above, even these Councils basically recognized the same twenty-seven NT books that had been considered to be canonical by the churches since the second century – the same NT that we have today.

Contrast the process of the development of the NT canon with that of the Quran. Muhammad was said to be illiterate, and therefore ordered his followers to memorize what he indicated the angel Gabriel had told him. In the years following his death in AD 632, written versions of the Quran appeared with many differences between them. The Caliph (follower of Muhammad) and ruler at the time was Uthman, and he appointed a small group to decide which version would be authoritative. Uthman's version was promulgated, and all other versions of the Quran were burned. He was later assassinated in AD 656.

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- **Question:** Is the Bible myth, and why do some archaeologists think so?
 - **Claim:** Much of the Old Testament is myth. Joseph, Moses, Joshua, and others mentioned were fictitious and invented to supposedly create a history for the Israelite nation.

The above claim is completely false. The existence of the Hebrews in Egypt and later in Palestine is very well supported by many archaeological and textual discoveries, such as the Yusef canal near Cairo, the Ipuwer Papyrus, the archaeological digs at Avaris (the Biblical Land of Goshen), and many others. Some of the impetus to challenge the OT Biblical narrative comes from Palestinians who even deny that the holocaust in WW2 took place, and who promulgate fictitious documents such as *The Protocols of the Ruling Elders of Zion*. The Bible is by orders of magnitude, the best supported of any ancient document, and with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls the first known copies of Biblical texts go back to before the era of Christ.

Some archaeologists believe that much of the Old Testament is “pious fiction” invented by the Jews to explain their history. In general they base their position only on whether and to what degree archaeological evidence has been found. But archaeology can only tell us about sites that have been found and explored and cannot inform us of what has not yet been found, or of what existed and may never be found. Therefore, many of the criticisms are “arguments from silence”, and it is a mistake to unduly rely on archaeology as the primary criteria of historicity – to do so unduly inflates the importance of archaeology. Given the complexity and humanness of the Biblical stories, and the hundreds of points of agreement between the Bible and known history, that argument stretches credulity to the breaking point. Abraham and the patriarchs were pastoralists and lived in tents rather than stone buildings, and it is not until the era of the kings of Israel that such structures were erected, so it is not surprising that little would remain even if it could be found.

The historicity of the Abraham, Moses, and the Exodus has especially been challenged. Archaeologists such as Israel Finkelstein have indicated that the account of Abraham is mythical because it mentioned camels which supposedly were first domesticated around 1000 BC long after the time of Abraham. However, it has long been known that camels were domesticated around 3000 BC, so Finkelstein is either ignorant or lying.⁵ It has been further stated that Moses could not have written

⁵ See, for example: <https://www.bibleplaces.com/blog/2014/02/the-domestication-of-camel-observations/>, and https://www.academia.edu/15710900/Abraham_and_Chedorlaomer_Chronological_Historical_and_Archaeological_Evidence. The latter article states: “Edward Lipinski, Professor of Eastern history and biblical studies wrote: 'Camels seem to have been domesticated in Arabia since the 3rd millennium BCE.' Given the abundance of evidence regarding the domestication of camels up to 2000 BCE, the frequent reference to Finkelstein claiming that this domestication began around 1000 BCE (the main argument used to discredit the Bible) is indicative of the propensity to believe media

the Torah because alphabetic forms of writing such as “Old Hebrew” did not exist until around 900 BC, and Hebrew writing was supposedly borrowed from the Phoenicians. However, scripts have been discovered carved into the walls of caves in Egypt and the Sinai that date to around 1850 BC.⁶ These scripts used a few of the pictographs of Egyptian hieroglyphics to represent letter sounds (the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet) and were therefore the first known alphabetic form of writing in existence. This coincides with the time that Joseph was vizier in Egypt, and this script was probably developed by him and/or his sons to record their history (they were non-Egyptian and therefore not tied to Egyptian practices). Over time the script evolved⁷ and became the written form of Hebrew that Moses uses to write the Torah.⁸ Hebrew was therefore the source for Phoenician and Canaanite written languages, rather than the other way around. Given the fact that the script was “readable” (i.e., the letters represented sounds of the language as opposed to pictographs), literacy became much easier, and was therefore probably widespread among the Hebrews after the time of Moses, enabling the Jews to “write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” as instructed in Deuteronomy 6:8. This also helps explain the Jewish respect and reverence for the written word that has persisted throughout their history.

There are many instances where the Bible was doubted or scoffed at but were later shown to be accurate. For example, the story of Jesus healing that paralyzed man pool of Bethesda in John 5 was questioned until the pool was later found and excavated. Other examples include the excavation of ancient Ninevah, the tunnel of Hezekiah, the pool of Siloam, the Moabite stone, the Lachish ostraca, the Tel Dan inscription, the excavation of Megiddo, discovery of the city of Ziklag, the identification of the town of Emmaus.⁹ Nelson Glueck, the Jewish archaeologist (1900-1971), wrote:

“It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference.”

The Book of Daniel has come under intense attacks from secularists because of its accurate predictions of succeeding empires (Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman) and they have contended that Daniel was written during the Second Temple period. But the fact that it was considered valid by the scribes who created the Septuagint version around 300 BC (i.e., during the Second Temple period) should give pause to that contention. Daniel is also a good example of the

disinformation. Claiming that the camels of Abraham are anachronistic, as do most Egyptologists, reflects a serious disregard of archaeological and linguistic data. This recurring criticism of anachronism is often taken up by conformism inside academia. The “unveiling anachronisms” by Finkelstein is in fact atheist propaganda. This misinformation is deliberate since Finkelstein knows his subject and numerous studies on the domestication of the camel are also available in most major libraries.”

⁶ They were first discovered in 1905 by W.M. Flinders Petrie and his wife in the Sinai Peninsula. Petrie immediately recognized hieroglyphic characters in the inscriptions, but upon closer inspection realized the script was wholly alphabetic and not a combination of Egyptian glyphs. Similar scripts have been found elsewhere in Egypt, but none dating after the Exodus (1446 BC), which would tend to support their Hebrew origin.

⁷ The first version of the script used symbols selected from hieroglyphics. Over time the character shapes changed and became simpler and less pictorial, allowing scribes to write more quickly and accurately until Hebrew finally evolved into the block-letter form of today. The script of Joseph’s time may therefore be thought of as “Hebrew 1.0” and that which Moses used could be referred to as “Hebrew 2.0.” The Old Hebrew used at the time of Joshua and the Judges was then “Hebrew 3.0” and it has continued to evolve into the written Hebrew of today.

⁸ Douglas Petrovich, *The World’s Oldest Alphabet: Hebrew as the Language of the Proto-Consonantal Script*

⁹ See, for example, <https://www.crossway.org/articles/10-crucial-archaeological-discoveries-related-to-the-bible/>, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2020/december/biblical-archaeology-new-discoveries-2020-bible-artifacts.html>, <https://blog.logos.com/6-recent-archaeological-discoveries-that-affirm-details-in-scripture/>, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2019/december/biblical-archaeologys-top-10-discoveries-of-2019.html>, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2018/december/biblical-archaeology-top-10-discoveries-2018-israel.html>, <https://endtimeheadlines.org/2020/06/these-three-ancient-discoveries-could-prove-the-bible-was-right/>

embarrassment of liberal scholars and archaeologists who previously mocked the book for the scene of Belshazzar's banquet, as everyone supposedly knew that the last king of Babylon was Nabonidus. But after the Nabonidus cylinder was discovered they had some serious egg on their faces.¹⁰ The book has been supported by a number of other archaeological discoveries, such as the Mesopotamian Chronicles, the discovery of "lion pits", and other confirmations of its accuracy.¹¹

A number of anti-Christian scholars have stated that the New Testament is essentially myth. In his book *Atheism: The Case Against God*, George Smith says, "As one moves from the earlier to the later gospels, some of the miracles become exaggerated." He cites as evidence Mark 1: "all were brought to Jesus and many were healed"; Matthew 8: "many were brought to Jesus and all were healed"; and Luke 4: "all were brought to Jesus and all were healed." The problem with this analysis is that the Gospels writers did not use the words "all" and "many" in a clinical sense. Mark 1 states: "All the country of Judea was going out to him (to John the Baptist), and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River..." It is clear that Mark is talking in general terms and did not mean that every single person in Judea and Jerusalem was baptized by John. It is also clear that even in the Mark account, Jesus healed many people and thus performed hundreds of miracles; George Smith's argument is thus reduced to a meaningless quibble. Furthermore, all of the Gospels culminate in the resurrection, the greatest miracle of all. If the resurrection is a lie, then none of the other miracles matter. But if the resurrection is true, then all of the other miracles are believable, because the resurrection demonstrates that what Jesus said about himself was true – that he was the Son of God.

Another typical objection is the one stated by historian Archibald Robertson: "We are witnessing the progressive growth of a legend."¹² But the Apostle Paul, in I Corinthians 15:3-8, recorded a creed of the early church that was based on eyewitness accounts of the resurrection. Various scholars have dated this creed to a few years after the crucifixion of Christ,¹³ much too quickly for a mythology or legend to have been developed. The scrap of papyrus from Matthew mentioned above refers to his divinity.

Contrast this to the miracles supposedly performed by Muhammad. In the Quran Muhammad is presented as an ordinary man, both by himself and his contemporaries.¹⁴ The miraculous acts he was said to have done, such as his ascension to heaven from the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, come from the Muslim Hadiths ("sayings"). These were additional oral traditions, collected and written one to two hundred years later, and thus constitute a hagiography of Muhammad, rather than an eyewitness account as in the case of the Gospels.

Discovering the eerily accurate fulfillment of Biblical prophecy makes the back of one's hair stand on end. There are over three hundred prophecies fulfilled by Jesus including the place of his birth, that there would be a massacre of children, that he would be rejected by his people, that he would come from Nazareth, that he would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver, that he would be crucified, that his hands and feet would be pierced, that he would die with criminals, that soldiers would gamble for his

¹⁰ See, for example: <https://bereaninsights.org/nugget/nabonidus-cylinder/>

¹¹ See, for example: <http://tektonics.org/af/danieldefense.php>

¹² Archibald Robertson, *The Origins of Christianity*, International Publishers, 1954

¹³ Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians. A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 251; Fee, *Corinthians*, 723; Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Jesus: History, Experience, Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 35. Reginald H. Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 11.

¹⁴ See, for example, Sam Shamoun, "Muhammad and Miracles: Analyzing Muslim Arguments for Muhammad's Supernatural Feats", www.infolinkislam.de/Main/Responses/Azmy/mhd_miracles.htm

clothes, that his bones would not be broken, that he would be buried in a rich man's grave, that his death was a sacrifice for sin and would remove the need for animal sacrifice, that he would be resurrected from death and ascend to heaven, and that he was the Son of God.¹⁵

Some of the more subtle and amazing fulfillments concern things that took place during the exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt for with the meaning was never explained at the time. For example, when the Israelites complained and cursed God, they were afflicted with venomous snakes. The remedy for this was a bronze serpent made by Moses and set on a pole, so that "that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live" (Numbers 21:8). But why a serpent on a pole? Around 1,500 years later, Jesus explains the meaning of that event: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life" (John 3:14-15). This of course is followed by John 3:16, the most famous verse in the New Testament.

An even more amazing fulfillment is the Passover, which was the last plague against Egypt as described in Exodus 12. The people were told to kill a lamb, sprinkle the blood over their doorposts, and then roast the lamb and eat it with unleavened bread. Furthermore, they were told to celebrate this event every year, and this date was to become the starting month of their calendar. But no explanation was ever given for this strange command – just obey. At the Last Supper which was a Passover observance, Jesus told his disciples the reason for this ceremony which they and their ancestors had been celebrating for centuries – that he himself was the Passover lamb, that it was his blood which would be "put over the doorpost", and it was his body that would be broken. "And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' And in the same way he took the cup after they had eaten, saying, 'This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.'" The Bible in incredibly and amazingly deep.

Furthermore, the Bible claims divine authority for itself in many places, such as the following:

"Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of our God shall stand forever." Isaiah 40:7-8

"Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path." Psalms 119:105

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17

"Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were led by the Holy Spirit." 2 Peter 1:20-21

It also claims to be both true and consistently relevant to all people in all eras of history:

"The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of

¹⁵ See, for example: <https://accordingtothescriptures.org/prophecy/353prophecies.html>

the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous.” Psalms 19:7-9

“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.” John 17:17

- **Question:** Is the Bible compatible with science?
- **Claim:** The Bible is incompatible with science.

The above statement is completely false – the Bible is in accord with science. It was not intended to be a scientific textbook (e.g., the fact that it speaks of the “sun rising” is not a scientific observation). This accusation comes mostly from Darwinists who mock the book of Genesis and its account of a six-day creation. However, there are different views of the creation story in Genesis, and current scientific discoveries make a six-day creation a reasonable position.¹⁶ Darwinism has also grown weaker and is being seriously questioned as a lame theory that is full of holes.¹⁷ Richard Dawkins wrote, “Any theist who appeals to ‘design’ of living creatures simply betrays his ignorance of biology.” My response is that “Any Darwinist who rejects the intelligent design of living creatures is also ignorant of biology.”

Many eminent scientists both from the past and the present acknowledge the reality that God created the universe and also created science. Robert Boyle, the scientist considered to be the founder of chemistry was a Christian, as was Sir Isaac Newton, who is widely regarded to be the greatest scientist that ever lived. Newton wrote more on theology and the Bible than he did on science. Others include Johannes Kepler in astronomy, Lord William Kelvin in thermodynamics, Max Planck in quantum physics, Guglielmo Marconi inventor of wireless communications, and many others. Following are some quotes:

“The common belief that... the actual relations between religion and science over the last few centuries have been marked by deep and enduring hostility... is not only historically inaccurate, but actually a caricature so grotesque that what needs to be explained is how it could possibly have achieved any degree of respectability.”

~ Colin Russell, Cambridge University historian of science

“I have a fundamental belief in the Bible as the Word of God, written by those who were inspired. I study the Bible daily.”

~ Sir Isaac Newton

“God created everything by number, weight and measure.”

~ Sir Isaac Newton

“In the absence of any other proof, the thumb alone would convince me of God’s existence.”

~ Sir Isaac Newton

¹⁶ See, for example: John F. Ashton, *In Six Days: Why Fifty Scientists Choose to Believe in Creation*, Masterbooks, 2000

¹⁷ See, for example, “The Darwinian Emperor is Naked”,
https://www.academia.edu/42232462/The_Darwinian_Emperor_is_Naked

“Both religion and science require a belief in God. For believers, God is in the beginning, and for physicists He is at the end of all considerations... To the former He is the foundation, to the latter, the crown of the edifice of every generalized world view.”
~ Max Planck, the Nobel Prize winning physicist, the founder of quantum theory, and one of the most important physicists of all time.

“There can never be any real opposition between religion and science; for the one is the complement of the other.”
~ Max Planck

“God [is] the author of the universe, and the free establisher of the laws of motion.”
~ Robert Boyle

“I believe that the more thoroughly science is studied, the further does it take us from anything comparable to atheism.”
~ Lord William Kelvin, noted for his theoretical work on thermodynamics, the concept of absolute zero and the Kelvin temperature scale based upon it.

“If you study science deep enough and long enough, it will force you to believe in God.”
~ Lord William Kelvin

“Those laws are within the grasp of the human mind. God wanted us to recognize them by creating us after his own image so that we could share in his own thoughts... and if piety allow us to say so, our understanding is in this respect of the same kind as the divine, at least as far as we are able to grasp something of it in our mortal life.”
~ Johannes Kepler, German mathematician and astronomer who discovered the laws of planetary motion which later served as one of the foundations for Issac Newton’s theory of universal gravitation.

“I am proud to be a Christian. I believe not only as a Christian, but as a scientist as well. A wireless device can deliver a message through the wilderness. In prayer the human spirit can send invisible waves to eternity, waves that achieve their goal in front of God.”
~ Guglielmo Marconi, winner of the 1909 Nobel Prize in Physics for his invention of the first successful system of wireless telegraphy. Marconi is the inventor of the radio; his revolutionary work made possible the electronic communications of the modern world.

“We all know that there are regions of the human spirit untrammelled by the world of physics. In the mystic sense of the creation around us, in the expression of art, in a yearning towards God, the soul grows upward and finds fulfillment of something implanted in its nature. The sanction for this development is within us, a striving born with our consciousness or an Inner Light proceeding from a greater power than ours. Science can scarcely question this sanction, for the pursuit of science springs from a striving which the mind is impelled to follow, a questioning that will not be suppressed. Whether in the intellectual pursuits of science or in the mystical pursuits of the spirit, the light beckons ahead and the purpose surging in our nature responds.”
~ Sir Arthur Eddington, physicist

“Those who say that the study of science makes a man an atheist must be rather silly.”
~ Max Born, Nobel Prize winning physicist who was instrumental in the development of quantum mechanics.

“God is a mathematician of a very high order and He used advanced mathematics in constructing the universe.”

~ Paul A. M. Dirac, Nobel Prize winning physicist who made crucial early contributions to both quantum mechanics and quantum electrodynamics.

“This much I can say with definiteness – namely, that there is no scientific basis for the denial of religion – nor is there in my judgment any excuse for a conflict between science and religion, for their fields are entirely different. Men who know very little of science and men who know very little of religion do indeed get to quarreling, and the onlookers imagine that there is a conflict between science and religion, whereas the conflict is only between two different species of ignorance.”

~ Robert Andrews Millikan, winner of the 1923 Nobel Prize in Physics for his work on the elementary charge of electricity and on the photoelectric effect.

“To me it is unthinkable that a real atheist could be a scientist.”

~ Robert Andrews Millikan

“[Reason tells me of the] extreme difficulty or rather impossibility of conceiving this immense and wonderful universe, including man with his capability of looking far backwards and far into futurity, as the result of blind chance or necessity. When thus reflecting I feel compelled to look to a First Cause having an intelligent mind in some degree analogous to that of man; and I deserve to be called a Theist.”

~ Charles Darwin, author of *The Origin of Species*.

“When it comes to the origin of life there are only two possibilities: creation or spontaneous generation. There is no third way. Spontaneous generation was disproved one hundred years ago, but that leads us to only one other conclusion, that of supernatural creation. We cannot accept that on philosophical grounds; therefore, we choose to believe the impossible: that life arose spontaneously by chance!”

~ George Wald, Nobel Laureate in medicine and physiology

“You accept the historical Jesus?”

“Unquestionably! No one can read the Gospels without feeling the actual presence of Jesus. His personality pulsates in every word. No myth is filled with such life.”

~ Albert Einstein

“I want to know how God created this world. I am not interested in this or that phenomenon. I want to know his thoughts; the rest are details.”

~ Albert Einstein

“Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.”

~ Albert Einstein

“In view of such harmony in the cosmos which I, with my limited human mind, am able to recognize, there are yet people who say there is no God. But what really makes me angry is that they quote me for the support of such views.”

~ Albert Einstein

“The vast mysteries of the universe should only confirm our belief in the certainty of its Creator. I find it as difficult to understand a scientist who does not acknowledge the presence of a superior rationality behind the existence of the universe as it is to comprehend a theologian who would deny the advances of science.”

~ Werner von Braun, the father of space science and the most important rocket scientist involved in the development of the U.S. space program.

“Let me say that I don’t see any conflict between science and religion. I go to church as many other scientists do. I share with most religious people a sense of mystery and wonder at the universe and I want to participate in religious ritual and practices because they’re something that all humans can share.”

~ Sir Martin Rees, British cosmologist and astrophysicist, Astronomer Royal since 1995, president of the Royal Society between 2005 and 2010, and winner of the Craford Prize, the most prestigious award in astronomy.

“When I began my career as a cosmologist some twenty years ago, I was a convinced atheist. I never in my wildest dreams imagined that one day I would be writing a book purporting to show that the central claims of Judeo-Christian theology are in fact true, that these claims are straightforward deductions of the laws of physics as we now understand them. I have been forced into these conclusions by the inexorable logic of my own special branch of physics... From the perspective of the latest physical theories, Christianity is not a mere religion, but an experimentally testable science.”

~ Frank Tipler, professor of Mathematical Physics and author of *The Physics of Christianity*.

“Jesus knows our world. He does not disdain us like the God of Aristotle. We can speak to Him and He answers us. Although He is a person like ourselves, He is God and transcends all things.”

~ Alexis Carrel, winner of the 1912 Nobel Prize in Medicine and Physiology for his work on vascular suturing and the transplantation of blood-vessels and organs,

“Physics filled me with awe, put me in touch with a sense of original causes. Physics brought me closer to God. That feeling stayed with me throughout my years in science. Whenever one of my students came to me with a scientific project, I asked only one question, ‘Will it bring you nearer to God?’”

~ Isidor Isaac Rabi, winner of the 1944 Nobel Prize in Physics for his work on the magnetic properties of atomic nuclei.

“God is Truth. There is no incompatibility between science and religion. Both are seeking the same truth. Science shows that God exists... The observations and experiments of science are so wonderful that the truth that they establish can surely be accepted as another manifestation of God. God shows himself by allowing man to establish truth.”

~ Sir Derek Barton, winner of the 1969 Nobel Prize in Chemistry

“I believe in God. It makes no sense to me to assume that the Universe and our existence is just a cosmic accident, that life emerged due to random physical processes in an environment which simply happened to have the right properties. As a Christian I begin to comprehend what life is all about through belief in a Creator, some of whose nature was revealed by a man born about 2000 years ago.”

~ Antony Hewish, winner of the 1974 Nobel Prize in Physics for his discovery of pulsars.

“The best data we have (concerning the Big Bang) are exactly what I would have predicted, had I nothing to go on but the five books of Moses, the Psalms, the Bible as a whole.”

~ Arno Penzias, 1978 Nobel Prize recipient in physics

“If there are a bunch of fruit trees, one can say that whoever created these fruit trees wanted some apples. In other words, by looking at the order in the world, we can infer purpose and from purpose we begin to get some knowledge of the Creator, the Planner of all this. This is, then, how I look at God. I look at God through the works of God’s hands and from those works imply intentions. From these intentions, I receive an impression of the Almighty.”

~ Arno Penzias

“I strongly believe in the existence of God, based on intuition, observations, logic, and also scientific knowledge... At least this is the way I see it. I am a physicist. I also consider myself a Christian. As I try to understand the nature of our universe in these two modes of thinking, I see many commonalities and crossovers between science and religion. It seems logical that in the long run the two will even converge.”

~ Charles Hard Townes, winner of the 1964 Nobel Prize in Physics for his fundamental work in the field of quantum electronics.

“I believe in God, who can respond to prayers, to whom we can give trust and without whom life on this earth would be without meaning (a tale told by an idiot). I believe that God has revealed Himself to us in many ways and through many men and women, and that for us here in the West the clearest revelation is through Jesus and those that have followed him.”

~ Sir Nevill Mott, winner of the 1977 Nobel Prize in Physics for his research on the magnetic and electrical properties of non-crystalline semiconductors.

“A scientific discovery is also a religious discovery. There is no conflict between science and religion. Our knowledge of God is made larger with every discovery we make about the world.”

~ Abdus Salam, winner of the 1979 Nobel Prize in Physics for his work in electroweak theory.

“It seems to me that when confronted with the marvels of life and the universe, one must ask why and not just how. The only possible answers are religious... I find a need for God in the universe and in my own life.”

~ Arthur L. Schawlow, professor of Physics at Stanford University and winner of the 1981 Nobel Prize in physics

“Religion is founded on faith. It seems to me that when confronted with the marvels of life and the universe, one must ask why and not just how. The only possible answers are religious. For me that means Protestant Christianity, to which I was introduced as a child and which has withstood the tests of a lifetime.”

~ Arthur L. Schawlow

“But the context of religion is a great background for doing science. In the words of Psalm 19, ‘The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows his

handiwork'. Thus scientific research is a worshipful act, in that it reveals more of the wonders of God's creation."

~ Arthur L. Schawlow

"Being an ordinary scientist and an ordinary Christian seems perfectly natural to me. It is also perfectly natural for the many scientists I know who are also people of deep religious faith."

~ William D. Phillips, winner of the 1997 Nobel Prize in Physics for development of methods to cool and trap atoms with laser light.

"I believe that a full understanding of this remarkable human capacity for scientific discovery ultimately requires the insight that our power in this respect is the gift of the universe's Creator who, in that ancient and powerful phrase, has made humanity in the image of God (Genesis I: 26-27)."

~ John Polkinghorne, Cambridge University professor of mathematical physics. He later changed careers and joined the Anglican priesthood

"The ghostly presence of virtual particles defies rational common sense and is non-intuitive for those unacquainted with physics. Religious belief in God, and Christian belief that God became Man around two thousand years ago, may seem strange to common-sense thinking. But when the most elementary physical things behave in this way, we should be prepared to accept that the deepest aspects of our existence go beyond our common-sense intuitions."

~ Tony Hewish, physicist and Nobel Prize winner

"What are your thoughts on the concept of God and on the existence of God?"

"I think only an idiot can be an atheist. We must admit that there exists an incomprehensible power or force with limitless foresight and knowledge that started the whole universe going in the first place."

~ Christian Anfinsen, winner of the Nobel Prize in chemistry

"The laws [of physics] ... seem to be the product of exceedingly ingenious design... The universe must have a purpose"

~ Paul Davies, British astrophysicist

"It may seem bizarre, but in my opinion science offers a surer path to God than religion."

~ Paul Davies

"There is for me powerful evidence that there is something going on behind it all... It seems as though somebody has fine-tuned nature's numbers to make the Universe... The impression of design is overwhelming."

~ Paul Davies

"The significance and joy in my science comes in those occasional moments of discovering something new and saying to myself, 'So that's how God did it.' My goal is to understand a little corner of God's plan."

~ Henry F. Schaefer, Graham Perdue Professor of Chemistry and director of the Center for Computational Quantum Chemistry at the University of Georgia

“A Creator must exist. The Big Bang ripples and subsequent scientific findings are clearly pointing to an ex nihilo creation consistent with the first few verses of the book of Genesis.”

~ Henry F. Schaefer

“The exquisite order displayed by our scientific understanding of the physical world calls for the divine.”

~ Vera Kistiakowsky, MIT physicist

“Nevertheless, just as I believe that the Book of Scripture illumines the pathway to God, so I believe that the Book of Nature, with its astonishing details—the blade of grass, the Conus cedonulli, or the resonance levels of the carbon atom—also suggest a God of purpose and a God of design. And I think my belief makes me no less a scientist.”

~ Owen Gingerich, Harvard University research professor of astronomy and the history of science.

“It now seems to me that the findings of more than fifty years of DNA research have provided materials for a new and enormously powerful argument to design.”

~ Antony Flew, Professor of Philosophy and former atheist

“Astronomers who do not draw theistic or deistic conclusions are becoming rare, and even the few dissenters hint that the tide is against them. Geoffrey Burbidge, of the University of California at San Diego, complains that his fellow astronomers are rushing off to join ‘the First Church of Christ of the Big Bang.’”

~ Hugh Ross, Astrophysicist and former post-doctoral fellow at the California Institute of Technology, and author of *The Creator and the Cosmos: How the Latest Scientific Discoveries of the Century Reveal God*.

“For many years I have believed that God is the great designer behind all nature... All my studies in science since then have confirmed my faith. I regard the Bible as my principle source of authority.”

~ Sir Ghillelan T. Prance, knighted British botanist and ecologist, and Fellow of the Royal Society.

“We know that nature is described by the best of all possible mathematics because God created it.”

~ Alexander Polyakov, Soviet mathematician

“I build molecules for a living. I can’t begin to tell you how difficult that job is. I stand in awe of God because of what he has done through his creation. My faith has been increased through my research. Only a rookie who knows nothing about science would say science takes away from faith. If you really study science, it will bring you closer to God.”

~ James Tour, one of the world’s leading nano-scientists

“Who created these laws? There is no question but that a God will always be needed.”

~ Barry Parker, cosmologist

“If we need an atheist for a debate, we go to the philosophy department. The physics department isn’t much use.”

~ Robert Griffiths, winner of the Heinemann Prize in mathematical physics.

“It is increasingly clear to modern science that the universe was exquisitely fine-tuned to enable human life.”

~ Richard Smalley, winner of the Nobel Prize in chemistry

“Astronomers now find they have painted themselves into a corner because they have proven, by their own methods, that the world began abruptly in an act of creation to which you can trace the seeds of every star, every planet, every living thing in this cosmos and on the earth. And they have found that all this happened as a product of forces they cannot hope to discover... That there are what I or anyone would call supernatural forces at work is now, I think, a scientifically proven fact.

~ Robert Jastrow, astronomer, physicist and founder of NASA’s Goddard Institute of Space Studies

“For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.”

~ Robert Jastrow

“What is the ultimate solution to the origin of the Universe? The answers provided by the astronomers are disconcerting and remarkable. Most remarkable of all is the fact that in science, as in the Bible, the world begins with an act of creation.”

~ Robert Jastrow

“For myself, faith begins with a realization that a supreme intelligence brought the universe into being and created man. It is not difficult for me to have this faith, for it is incontrovertible that where there is a plan there is intelligence—an orderly, unfolding universe testifies to the truth of the most majestic statement ever uttered – ‘In the beginning God.’”

~ Arthur Compton, Nobel Prize winning physicist and discoverer of the Compton Effect

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- **Question:** If God is good, why do evil and suffering exist?
 - **Claim:** The fact that there is so much evil in the world and that innocent people suffer means that either God is not powerful enough, or not good enough to stop it.

God created us as moral being, free to choose good or evil. People have freely chosen to be sinful, and human choice is where evil comes from. Around 300 BC the Greek philosopher Epicurus stated the following:

If God is willing to prevent evil, but is not able to, then He is not omnipotent.

If God is able, but not willing, then He is malevolent.

If God is both able and willing, then where does evil come from?

If God is neither able nor willing, then why call Him God?

This succinct statement of the problem of evil has come to be known as Epicurus’ Paradox, and for those who are struggling with the God of the Bible, this issue is one of, if not the major stumbling

block. The problem of evil, also known “theodicy”, is of course, not unique to Christianity/Judaism – every religion must face it. The humanist/atheist will explain that because there is no God, the universe is amoral by nature. After having stated this they supposedly can relax because their religion seems to provide a simple answer for this perplexing question. But they have the same problem in a different form – if humanity is simply the accidental product of time and chance, existing in an amoral universe, how would humans have ever have developed a conscience distinguishing between good and evil? Why would good and evil even be an issue that humans grapple with? That is a much more difficult dilemma to resolve, but here we will focus on the problem of evil in the context of Christianity.

The Bible teaches that God is omnibenevolent (all-loving), omniscient (all-knowing), and omnipotent (all-powerful), but the problem of evil calls all of these into question. If we take the Bible to be true, then we must confront Epicurus’ paradox and answer it. Theodicy is especially important in our current intellectual climate in which humanists and atheists routinely state that God in general and Christianity in particular are a danger to society, and perhaps even the chief danger (e.g., *god Is Not Great* by Christopher Hitchens, *The God Delusion* by Richard Dawkins, and *The End of Faith* by Sam Harris). This claim is rather silly given the horrendous human rights record of humanistic/atheistic regimes (the Communists in Russia, China, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos, and the Germans under Hitler) where more people were tortured and killed than in all of the other wars of history combined. These claims are also well-countered in books such as *Atheist Delusions* by David Bentley Hart, *The End of Christianity* by William Dembski, and *The Problem of Pain*, by C.S. Lewis. What follows here is essentially the “Cliff Notes” version of those books.

So where did evil come from? Pantheists would say that God contains elements of both good and evil (He is not omnibenevolent, and is impersonal and/or detached). Gnostics would say that God is good but sometimes is defeated by his opposite (God is not omnipotent/omniscient). Communists and socialists claim that capitalism, corporations, and the profit motive are the source or evil. But the Bible states that the source of evil is wrongful desires of the human heart. Every person is therefore a potential source of evil. As Pogo said, “We have met the enemy, and he is us.”

For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, and slanders. These are the things which defile the man. Matthew 5:19-20

But if everything that God created was good, how did things go bad? Both angels and humans were created with a free will and therefore capable of making moral choices; with that grant from God came the possibility of choosing evil instead of good. God holds everyone responsible and accountable for the choices that they make.

Thus evil began before the creation of the world when the angel Lucifer refused to serve anyone else, wanted the power of God for himself, and so rebelled against God. Lucifer’s sin was pride, the most basic and central of all sins. By his choice he then became Satan, the Devil, and the great enemy – everything that God is not.

How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! For you said in your heart, “I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.” Isaiah 14:12-14

Satan then recruited other ex-angels who likewise wanted to rule and dominate rather than serve. His goal then became to attack and pollute God's world and destroy the human race. Satan was therefore the tempter of Eve in the Garden of Eden, and the essential element of the temptation was getting her to distrust God – to believe that He was holding back on her, and screwing her out of something that she and Adam should rightfully have had. Satan, speaking through the serpent, planted those doubts in her head and egged her on, but it was Eve herself who made the choice to pick the fruit, and it was Adam's choice to eat it along with her. In an act of rebellion they disobeyed a divine command, and declared that they no longer trusted in the goodness of God.

Some would see Adam and Eve's disobedience as a small thing – a tempest in a teapot. But it was a rebellion and as the quote from Jesus above indicates, the spirit of rebellion metastasizes like cancer. A few years later Adam and Eve's oldest son Cain became the first murderer in history, killing his brother in a fit of jealousy. A baby seems to be so innocent, but Hitler, Stalin, and Mao were all at one point babes in their mothers' arms.

The important thing is not how we view disobedience but how God views it. Clearly, he took a very serious view, as this rebellion resulted in God making fundamental changes in the environment as well as in the human genome, with a number of curses laid on Adam, Eve and their progeny as a result of their choice:

1. They would physically decay and eventually die rather than live forever.
2. Fulfillment of the roles for each of them would be much more difficult – the man's efforts to provide would become laborious and stressful, and childbirth for the woman would become painful.
3. There would be a continual conflict between Satan and humanity
4. Sin would become a genetic human condition necessitating a sacrifice as payment.
5. A long-term plan was put in place for the propitiation of sin and the redemption of mankind, which was the death and sacrifice of Christ.

The fall of Adam and Eve was thus the cause of catastrophes and corruption in the natural world (e.g., storms, natural disasters, animals preying on each other, etc.), as well as the evils caused by human sinfulness. This is in stark contrast to the typical contemporary view of the cosmos as uniformitarian (i.e., what exists now has always existed in more-or-less the same way). Uniformitarianism forms the backdrop to humanism and Darwinism, and is accepted and treated as fact by many. However it is actually a religious faith with much evidence against it. God has been deeply involved, not only with people but also with our planet: it had a beginning, it underwent a number of significant changes at least some of which were orchestrated by God, and it will have an end.

We may make light of sin and question God's response, but he is God and we are not. It is only his opinion that matters in the long run. The fact that rocks are hard and fire is hot are realities of life, and our feelings and wishes about them make no difference whatsoever. In similar fashion we may want God to be different and say, "I refuse to believe in such a God!", but God is not subject to our feelings, and it doesn't matter if we believe in him or not.

Rather, it is we who need to conform to his desires for us, because he created us and is the owner and controller of everything. Consider the following:

“Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars; the one who leads forth their host by number and who calls them all by name. Because of the

greatness of His might and the strength of His power, not one of them is missing.”
Isaiah 40:26.

“Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.”
The words of King David in Psalm 139:16.

“I am God, and there is no other. I am God, and there is none like me. My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.” Isaiah 46:9-10.

There are many other verses that affirm the same concept.

Jesus said the following:

“Fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!” Luke 12:5.

“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” Luke 6:46.

Consider also the words of the prophet Isaiah when he saw God:

“Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips. For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!”
Isaiah 6:5.

Our response to God should therefore be awe, humility, and obedience, rather than pride and rebellion, which was the path taken by Satan. We need to read the Biblical book of Job, which was about a man from whom everything was taken away, and who was then afflicted with boils. His response was “I was born naked, and naked I shall die. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” A teenage boy who had been crippled as a toddler by falling down the stairs and had many operations and spent much time in hospitals was once asked if he blamed God. “Oh no,” the boy responded. “God has all of eternity to make it up to me.”

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.” Proverbs 1:7.

“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit’, yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? You are only a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.’” James 4:13-15.

It may therefore seem like God is a divine tyrant, but this is balanced by other aspects of his nature:

- God will not do anything that would deny His own character. Since God is immutable, His words must reflect His integrity (Numbers 23:19). God cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18), and keeps every oath and promise He makes.
- God is loving and caring but also a psychologist and disciplinarian. He is therefore the perfect model for parents, coaches, and anyone else in authority. As David said in Psalms 121:2, “My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.”

- God is not a respecter of persons, and no one has an automatic “in” with God. He loves and values us regardless of our race or gender, and rewards/disciplines on the basis of our behavior and our calling. He is drawn to those who choose (or will choose) to love and obey Him. Jesus quoted Isaiah 61:1 as his mission.
- God cannot be tempted by evil. There is no element in His nature to which evil can make an appeal (James 1:13). While God will test us, He tempts no one. In fact, God uses His power to enable us to resist evil if we seek help (1 Corinthians 10:13).
- God cannot deny or contradict Himself (Malachi 3:6), and never revokes what He has given, or discards who He has chosen (Romans 11:29).
- God cannot forgive sin without the payment being made. Because God is just, He cannot simply “wipe the slate clean” (Romans 6:23). Christ cried out in the Garden of Gethsemane, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me” (Matthew 26:39), but it was not possible.
- God cannot force anyone to love Him or to receive His gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. It is and must be an act of man’s free will (John 1:11–13).

A similar question is, why didn’t God create a world where sin is impossible, and everyone automatically loved everyone else? The answer is that love is not real love unless it is a free choice. Robots don’t sin, but they don’t love either, because they do not have free will and can only do what their programming dictates. God created people in His image with a mind, a will, and a conscience, and therefore capable of making decisions to love or hate. He values our freedom of choice so much that he refuses to demand or force us to love Him.

We are therefore free to choose heaven or hell, and the book of Revelation explains what will happen at the end of time:

“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.”
Revelation 20:11-12.

Another related question is, why would a good and all-powerful God have created a being such as Satan who would rebel and be the source of evil? Aside from the issue of free will, the fact that evil exists makes our choices and the consequences of them real. I remember attending a writer’s conference where a speaker gave us every possible theme that a novelist could use, and all of them involve conflict. Without conflict there is no adventure and no life.

Those who choose God will eventually sing: “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power; for you created all things, and because of your will they existed, and were created.”

- **Question:** Why would a good God order the killing of people?
- **Claim:** God ordered the killing of people in the Old Testament (e.g., in the flood of Noah, and the conquest of Canaan), so he is therefore cruel, sadistic, and not worthy of devotion.

God is the ultimate judge. Just as we want justice – for criminals to be condemned and for the righteous to be preserved, God wants the same thing.

The Bible does not provide very much detail on what life was like in the days of Noah, but it does give us some clues:

“Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose. Then the Lord said, ‘My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.’ The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown. Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.” Genesis 6:1-5

There is a scholarly debate about who the “sons of God” were, but IMO and that of many others they were demons that came to earth, cohabited with women, and produced a hybrid race known as the Nephilim (“the fallen ones”). The sons of God were probably also the “ancient aliens” who built or helped to build the wonders of the world, as well as Satan’s attempt to pollute the human gene pool.

The Nephilim were therefore very large and strong, and like their forebears, were devoted to evil – a tribe of psychopaths that inherited such traits from the genetic payload of the demonic sons of God. Imagine living at a time when there were few weapons, and you were surrounded by clans of evil giants intent on raping and killing you. This is probably the backdrop to God’s extreme decision concerning the flood.¹⁸

The Nephilim reappeared after the flood, probably because of Nephilim genetics in the line of Ham, one of Noah’s sons.¹⁹ The land of Canaan was named eponymously after Ham’s son who was cursed by his grandfather Noah, and when the people of Israel entered that land many years later, they were given careful instructions that only the remaining Nephilim-related groups were to be completely wiped out. God’s commands were therefore intended as an act of mercy for the future of society, rather than one of cruelty.

We may disagree, and those opposed to any killing may still accuse God. But as explained above, our opinion of God and His ways doesn’t matter. “See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no God beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of My hand.” Deuteronomy 32:39.

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- **Question:** Is Jesus the only way to God, and if so, what will be the fate of non-believers?
 - **Claim:** Christianity cannot be a valid religion for everyone because many people have a different religion, have never heard of Christ, or have only a minimal knowledge and understanding of him. If God is good, why would entire societies be consigned to hell because they never accepted Christ? How will God deal with people who have done good things and helped others even if they

¹⁸ “Were the Nephilim Genetically Psychopathic?”,

https://www.academia.edu/41967404/Were_the_Nephilim_Genetically_Psychopathic

¹⁹ “Was Ham’s Wife of the Nephilim?”, https://www.academia.edu/42206272/Was_Hams_Wife_of_the_Nephilim

didn't know or believe in Jesus? Can a person who is not a Christian in life somehow survive the white throne judgment and enter heaven? It is unfair that a person would be judged on the basis of things completely outside their control, such as who their parents were or where they were born.

Everyone has a conscience – an inner sense that informs us of whether our thoughts and actions are right or wrong. Our conscience can be “seared”, i.e., overridden by repeated wrong actions, but that does not excuse us. Furthermore, as the Apostle Paul indicated, everyone has some knowledge of God simply by looking around:

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools.” Romans 1:18-22

The philosopher Thomas Aquinas indicated that the souls of ordinary people are just as important as those of thinkers, and that the former have much less time and less inclination to engage in a search for truth. Therefore, they have at the minimum been given natural revelation as the evidence of God's existence. God will thus judge people on the basis of the light that they had – what they knew and how they responded to it. This is especially true for those who lived before Christ, or for those who had little to no knowledge of him. However, Jesus indicated that he is the only way to God, and there are no other ways:

“I am the door; if anyone enters through me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture” John 10:9.

“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” John 10:11.

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me” John 14:6.

“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. But the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.” Matthew 7:13-14

The story is told of two boys who had a deep friendship. One grew up to be a judge, and the other a criminal. Years later the criminal was caught, brought before the judge's court, and convicted. The judge then stepped down, took off his robes, and served the criminal's sentence. Either we pay for our own sins or we accept the payment that Christ made for us. Coming to God through Christ is thus the only certain and sure way that God can be approached.

How can we come to grips with the exclusivity of Christ as the only way to God, and the many other religions which have expressed different ideas? Think of it as follows: everyone is given “maps” to follow and to guide their behavior in life. We have a “moral map” consisting of our conscience and

the teachings of those in authority over us, a “natural map” consisting of the creation around us, and a “religious map” consisting of the Bible and teachings about Christ. Some people were only given the first two maps, and the third map was never available or clear to them. God will judge people on the basis of how well they followed and were true to whatever maps they had available to them. God knows the hearts of all people, so for those that could not or did not have any knowledge of Christ He knows whether they would have followed the map. The real issue is therefore not the people who have never heard the Gospel, but the ones who have heard at least parts of it, and how they have or have not responded to it. A number of Biblical passages make it clear that God’s judgement will be based on what a person did, and how he or she lived and behaved, and not merely what he or she believed (e.g., Matthew 25:31-46 and Revelation 20:11-13). As James says, “The demons also believe and shudder.” Therefore belief must be accompanied by deeds, otherwise it is not true belief.

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

Also relevant is that God is the creator of the universe and the ruler of all; we are created beings, so humility before Him is the appropriate attitude.

“You will say to me then, ‘Why does He still find fault? For who can resist His will?’ On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? Will the thing molded say to the molder, ‘Why did you make me like this?’” Romans 9:19-20

Putting all of this together, we don’t know exactly how God’s judgement will work. But if God created the world and designed men and women, then He has both the right to judge everyone, as well as the capability of judging us fairly. Our concepts of justice and morality all come from Him because we were created in His image; as Abraham said in Genesis 18:25, “Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?” God is the ultimate and righteous judge, and therefore we can be assured that he will be fair in a way that is impossible for any human court. Not only does He have the right and the capability, He also has the evidence, because He knows the secret motives of every heart and has a record of everything that we have ever thought and done.

“I say to you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him! Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? Yet not one of them is forgotten before God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.” Luke 12:4-7

“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.” Revelation 20:11-12

There will be no clever lawyers, no confused juries, and no payoffs or plea-bargains in that court.

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- **Question:** Why would God allow us to be confused with many religions and denominations?
 - **Claim:** If God truly exists then he would have made his existence plain to everyone, and there would be only one religion. So how can we know what is actually true?

People are often troubled by this issue. The answer was given in part above under the questions “If God is good, why do evil and suffering exist?” and “Is Jesus the only way to God?” in that there is a natural revelation of God given to everyone. However, the rest of the answer comes from two factors: 1) Satanic deception; and 2) human willfulness.

We must first understand that Satan is a real being, and that the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis is an historical account. Satanic deception began in the Garden of Eden where Satan in the person of the serpent created doubt in Eve’s mind about the goodness of God and whether His commands should be obeyed (“Has God actually said xxx and did He actually mean xxx?”). Demonic deception has continued down through the ages and has led people into many different and destructive directions. If there is any way that God and people can be attacked, Satan will find a way to do it.

Demonic deception goes hand-in-hand with human willfulness. We tend to rebel against authority and to do our own thing, and the gods and goddesses of antiquity were created by people who wanted the authority of God for themselves so that they could rule over and oppress others. Some of the gods and goddesses were also modeled on their demonic counterparts. Once societies were established and led in that manner, and had developed their own rituals and beliefs, it became very hard for the descendants to break free, so various religions were created and followed.

In the West where many are free to choose what they will believe, people may reject God and therefore be drawn to atheism, humanism, or pantheistic religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism. Among Christians there are many denominations due to ethnic differences, as well as from disagreements over minor points of doctrine (e.g., should people be baptized as infants or as adults?). The Catholic Church considers itself to be the “true” church, but that is based on a faulty interpretation of Jesus words to Peter as well as ignoring the instruction for having multiple leaders and avoiding the problem of one-man rule. But despite some differences in doctrine and practice, Christians are unified in their devotion to Christ, and their commitment to the Bible. In order to do the right thing we need to read God’s book (the Bible), follow it, associate with others of like mind, and be humble enough to know that we don’t have all of the answers.

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- **Question:** Are the four Gospels accurate in their depiction of Jesus?
 - **Claim:** The Gospel writers disagreed on the ordering of some of the events in Jesus life, and also on a number of details such as who was present at certain events, what was said, etc. Also, there is much material that is included in some Gospels but not in others. This invalidates them as authoritative accounts of Jesus’ life and work.

The Bible in general is extraordinarily accurate in its depiction of events in their historical, geographical, and cultural settings, and so it is with the Gospels.

Unlike the Gnostic “gospels,” which were written between 100 and 300 years after the events that they supposedly portrayed, all of the Biblical Gospels were penned by individuals who lived during the time that they wrote about. These accounts are the recollections of the life and times of Christ by four men who were either apostles or close associates of Jesus, and they represent what each writer saw at the time or gathered from first and second-person sources. Furthermore, as is true of all writings, each author had their own unique perspective and intended audience, and each one focused on the things that were most significant in his view. They did not bind themselves to record every single event or to place all of the events in the actual chronological sequence in which they occurred. This is similar to obtaining accounts from multiple witnesses for a trial. Different eyewitnesses may describe the same events differently and in a different order, and may mention different details, but that does not invalidate their testimony. A group of people who all see the same event will always have different perspectives and may seemingly disagree on some of the minor details. So it is with the gospel accounts.

The gospel authors clearly intended that what they wrote was to be taken literally, as things that they and others had truly seen, heard, and experienced.

“In as much as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.” Luke 1:1-3

“For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.” 1 Peter 1:16

Much has been made in recent years of the supposed power struggles for supremacy among the disciples/apostles. The Gospels do not hide the fact that these were very human men with egos and tempers, and who at times had to be rebuked. This is one of the amazing things about the stories of the Bible; most of ancient literature is fairly one dimensional, casting its characters as either heroes or villains, but even in the OT, the Bible stories are of “real” people, warts and all. King David, for example, was a great leader, but who also had an adulterous affair with Bathsheba, and then has her husband killed in an attempt to hide his involvement. The Gospels are the same – Peter is the brash and eager disciple who sometimes puts his foot in his mouth, and who discovers that he is not the courageous hero that he thought he was.

But there was nothing like what would be considered to be a true power struggle among the disciples because there was no money, property, or power at stake to struggle for. To be the most prominent among them meant you had to be a servant-leader, not a warrior or a politician. Jesus repeatedly tells Peter “If you love me then you will feed my sheep.” Becoming a follower of Jesus was thus a humbling prospect, and many of Jesus’ followers gave up wealth and property in order to follow him. The rich young ruler who came to Jesus in Matthew 19:16-22 decided that the cost was too great.

Furthermore, being a follower of Jesus in those perilous times guaranteed that you would be a target for arrest and persecution, which is exactly what happened in the days of the early church. The only reason that a reasonable and intelligent man would want a position like this is if he were totally convinced of what he believed, and he understood that the rewards for his work would primarily be eternal rather than temporal. Although there were personal rivalries and occasional clashes of ego and

perspective, the early church was, in general, very united in purpose, and the notion that one or more of the gospels were written by some disciples to discredit or seize power from others is pure hype. Serious struggles for power in the church only began after the Edict of Milan in AD 313 when Christianity was legalized, the church in Rome became dominant, and the Papacy was formed. The church's political success became a cause of the leadership's frequent slides into debauchery.

All writings are the product of human effort and are therefore biased to some degree by the author's perspective and point of view. But some writings are much less biased than others because the authors have attempted to minimize it by showing all sides of the characters and the issues which are the subject of the text. Thus, the Gospels show Jesus as a human man who gets hungry, tired, and in need of divine reassurance. The apostle Peter is likewise shown as real, with both his strengths and weaknesses revealed. There are many other similar examples.

In contrast to others such as Muhammad, the authors of the Biblical books for the most part did not gain power or wealth, and many were martyred, such as Isaiah who was reputedly sawn in two, Paul who was killed in Rome, James who was beheaded. Jesus Christ, the central figure of the Bible, was crucified.

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- **Question:** Was Jesus just a “good man” or was he actually divine and a member of the Godhead?
 - **Claim:** The Council of Nicea in AD 325 voted to make Jesus divine. Previously he was viewed as purely a moral prophet. The emperor Constantine is the one who forced the church to adopt the current books of the New Testament at the Council of Nicea, and he promulgated a new Bible with different or modified gospels.

From the very beginning Jesus was viewed by the church as being both human and divine. The main purpose of the Council of Nicea was to consider and decide on the teaching of Arius, who promoted a new belief that Christ was a created being and therefore not fully divine. The Council overwhelmingly rejected the views of Arius by confirming the existing doctrine of Jesus' dual divine/human nature, and the Council did not invent any new teaching. The Nicene Creed, which was written and voted on overwhelmingly at the conclusion of the Council (and still in use today), restates in summary form what Christians had believed about the nature of Christ since the beginning. The Creed states in part:

“We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only son of God...of one Being with the Father, and through him all things were made.”

The New Testament confirms Jesus' divinity in many passages, for example, John 1:1, Titus 2:13, Hebrews 1:8-10, and II Peter 1:1; the words of Thomas to Jesus after the resurrection were: “My Lord and my God.” Jesus' humanity is evident in so many places in the Gospels that it is ludicrous to claim that he was not human. It was only after the end of the first century, long after Jesus resurrection and the death of the apostles, that Gnostics and other groups claimed that Jesus was either purely human or purely spirit.

The Bible indicates that Jesus was not only the son of God, but also God, and that he was the creator of all things:

“The Father and I are one.” John 10:30

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.” John 1:1-3

“He [Jesus Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn [inheritor] of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.” Colossians 1:15-17

The above statement about the emperor Constantine is completely fictitious. He did not force the church to adopt the current books of the New Testament, nor did he promulgate a new Bible with different or modified gospels. It is important to understand Constantine’s motives in enacting the Edict of Milan and attending the Council of Nicea. The Roman Empire of his day was coming apart at the seams, and rightly or wrongly Constantine saw Christianity as a means to reunify and pacify the Empire under his rule. It is alleged that he became a Christian at some point in his life, but his actions to stop persecution and support Christianity were primarily motivated by political concerns.

Constantine was concerned what this religion he had selected as the unifying force of his empire was all about. Thus, he presided at the Council of Nicea, and tried to moderate the strong views of the participating bishops (his concern was undoubtedly whether their disagreement would provoke a wider societal split). But he did not vote and had little or no influence on the theological issues being debated. Thus, the notion that Constantine promulgated a new system of beliefs is completely false. Many, if not most of the bishops who attended the Council had assumed leadership in the church prior to Constantine’s edicts legalizing Christianity and therefore had done so at the risk of their lives. Christians and especially Christian leaders had routinely died for their faith in Roman arenas for over two hundred years. Such men would certainly not have caved into any major shift about the core of what they believed, and for which they had risked their lives.

Furthermore, the selection of books that would make up the Bible was not an issue at the Council of Nicea. As indicated above, the OT canon had been settled by around 400 BC, and the NT canon by around AD 250. Constantine, who came on the scene many years later, had absolutely nothing to do with this process. We have existing portions of the New Testament that predate Constantine, and it would therefore be known if changes had been made by him or others following the Council of Nicea. Constantine’s only request was to ask the bishop Eusebius to make fifty copies of the books that were considered to be the authoritative Scriptures, and these copies included all of the current Old and New Testament books.

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- **Question:** If one becomes a Christian, can he or she be rejected by God?
 - **Claim:** There are several streams of Christian doctrine: Calvinism claims that once a person is saved they are always saved, but Arminianism claims that a person can lose their salvation. How can both of them be right?

Both of these doctrines are right in some ways and wrong in others. The Bible indicates that once a person has accepted Christ then they are a child of God, and can be certain about their destiny:

“My sheep hear my voice; I know them, they follow me, and I give eternal life to them. They will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.” John 10:27-30

“But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” John 1:12-13

“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.” Romans 8:1-2

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but delivered him over for us all, how will he not also with him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is he who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, and who also intercedes for us.” Romans 8:31-34

On the other hand, “accepting Christ” is much more than simply signing a document, believing that he existed, or going forward in a church service. There must be a correlation between what we believe and how we live (both publicly and privately), otherwise we have no grounds for assurance. Those who claim to be followers of Christ but don’t live that way are self-deceived hypocrites. The story is told of Pope Julius II (the “warrior pope” who named himself after Julius Caesar, and who spent his papacy in conquest of the Papal States) that after he died and approached the gates of heaven, they were shut and no one came to meet him. In frustration he banged on the gates with his stick, and shouted, “I’m the Pope and I have the keys to the kingdom in my pocket!” Saint Peter came out and carefully examined the keys. Then he told Julius, “I’m sorry but your keys don’t fit anywhere in this kingdom.”

“But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited me in; naked, and you clothed me; I was sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry, and feed you, or thirsty, and give you something to drink? And when did we see you a stranger, and invite you in, or naked, and clothe you? When did we see you sick, or in prison, and come to you?’ The King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of mine, even the least of them, you did it to me.’

Then he will also say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was

hungry, and you gave me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite me in; naked, and you did not clothe me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit me.’ Then they themselves also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” Matthew 25:31-46

“What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and be filled’, and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. But someone may well say, ‘You have faith and I have works.’ Show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one, you do well; the demons also believe and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.” James 2:14-26

“So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” Philippians 2:12

All of us have and will fail at one time or another to say or do the right thing. We are all sinful, but the question posed by the Bible is: What is the direction of your life? Where are you going, and what are you doing?

A related issue is the concept of predestination.

“For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren. These whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.” Romans 8:29-30

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.” Ephesians 1:1-6

If our destiny is decided ahead of time, and we are predestined to make the choices we will make, does free will exist? Yes, because God never overrides our will and we are always free to choose the path we will take. We are predestined only in the sense that God knows ahead of time what our decisions will be.

Even though we may be a child of God and headed for heaven, there is still the issue of inheritance and rewards. These can be gained or lost depending on our behavior and how we have invested or failed to invest our resources for God. Contrary to the expectations of many, the citizens of heaven will not

be equal; some will have vast rewards, riches, and crowns, whereas others will have very little, and this will be based on how they have used and developed the resources that were given to them.

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.” Galatians 6:7-10

“According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work. If any man’s work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” 1 Corinthians 3:10-15

“But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.” 2 Timothy 4:6-8

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- **Question:** Is Christianity a cult?
 - **Claim:** Christianity seems to be a cult or to have cultic aspects.

While there are cults that claim to be Christian (as well as non-Christian cults), there are many Christian groups that are not cultic at all. The Bible warns that cults and cult leaders will try to corrupt the teachings of Christ and the Bible, and use them for their own purposes:

“Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits.” Matthew 7:15-16

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.” 1 John 4:1

“For such boasters are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is not strange if his ministers also disguise themselves as ministers of righteousness. Their end will match their deeds.” 2 Corinthians 11:13-15

“At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold.” Matthew 24:10-12

What is a cult? Following are characteristics of cults, and how a person would identify whether a religious group they are considering or already belong to is a cult:

1. The core doctrine and/or writings of the group is the product of one individual or a small group, and serves to support their power and authority. It is often based on dreams, visions, or celestial appearances that cannot be verified. Often the doctrines are partially based on the Bible with various elements added, removed, or modified.
2. The group has only one, or a small core of human leaders, and displays an overly zealous and unquestioning commitment to their belief system and pronouncements.
3. Questioning, doubt, and dissent are strongly discouraged and sometimes prohibited. Some groups even pursue and harass ex-members in order to silence them and keep them from speaking out.
4. The group forbids contact by current members with ex-members, especially prohibiting family members from contact. This may be referred to as “shunning”, “dis-fellowshipping” (Jehovah’s Witnesses), etc. For example, Scientology declares that ex-members as well as any member expressing doubts are “suppressive persons” and “enemies”, and they may be subject to attacks via Scientology’s “fair game” policy. Contact between current group members and suppressive persons is forbidden and can result in the member being declared as suppressive.
5. The leadership excessively dictates, sometimes in great detail, how members should think and act, such as what to wear, where to live, what can be said, who to date and marry, whether to have children, what job to take, forcing a pregnant female to have an abortion, etc.
6. The leadership encourages or requires members to report to the leadership on suspect behavior of other members, even within one’s own family, and may require members to cut ties with others, sometimes even a spouse or children.
7. The leadership is not accountable to any authorities, unlike other societal leaders such as teachers, military commanders, and ministers of mainstream religious groups. There are no checks and balances.
8. The group is elitist, claiming an exalted status for themselves and seeing everyone else as inferior or evil. The leadership are considered to be special beings, and the group has an “us-versus-them” mentality, which may cause conflict with outsiders. The group may also teach or imply that its supposedly exalted purpose justifies whatever means are necessary, and which would normally be seen as unethical or reprehensible, such as lying to protect the group, perjury in court, collecting money for bogus charities, having an abortion, refusing blood transfusions or other medical procedures, etc.
9. The group may engage in mind-altering and/or overly controlling practices, such as speaking in tongues, public shaming/blaming and denunciation sessions, debilitating or prison-like work routines for disobedient members, drugs, etc.

10. The group is preoccupied with making money, and may demand large donations and/or purchases of group-related material from members.
11. Child and spouse abuse may be hidden in order to protect the group, and women may be treated as chattel. Other information about the group may be hidden as well.
12. The group is devoted to bringing in new members, sometimes requiring all existing members to engage in missionary activities, such as going door-to-door. Members may also be expected or required to devote inordinate amounts of time to the group, and to live and socialize only with other group members.
13. Loyal group members feel that there can be no life outside the group and no other way to live. They typically fear reprisals to themselves or others if they even consider leaving the group.

Examples of cults include Scientology, Jehovah's Witnesses, The Latter Day Saints (Mormons), the Church of Christ/Scientist, Children of the Way, the Unification Church, Hare Krishna, the Branch Davidians, the People's Temple, Boko Haram, etc., etc.

Some aspects of Islam are also cultic and include: core doctrines are the product of the one leader via secret visions supposedly from the angel Gabriel; questioning Muhammad or the Koran is often attacked; contact with non-Muslims is discouraged; elitism and teaching that others should be converted, enslaved, or killed; unaccountable leaders; subordinating women, hiding spouse abuse; and "honor killings" of Muslim women that date or marry non-Muslims.

In contrast to this, the Bible teaches plural leadership, standards of morality and purity for leaders, responsible obedience to secular authority, personal freedom and choice, the enjoyment of life and family with priority given to the home over religious duties, a balance between male headship and female submission, and so on.

"Now as an elder myself and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it; not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock." 1 Peter 5:1-3

"It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." 1 Timothy 3:1-7

"Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.” Romans 13:1-2

“Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.” 1 Timothy 6:17-19

“Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her... So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.” Ephesians 5:22-33

“Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she smiles at the future. She opens her mouth in wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and bless her; her husband also, and he praises her, saying: 'Many daughters have done nobly, but you excel them all.' Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her the product of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates.” Proverbs 31:25-31

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- **Question:** How is Judaism different from Christianity?
 - **Claim:** Judaism and Christianity have the same Bible, at least the Old Testament. Why and how are they different, and why can't people just agree?

All of the original Christians were Jews, so why did the split between Judaism and Christianity occur? It happened because even though Jesus was the Messiah, he was rejected by most of the Jewish religious leaders. Jewish Rabbis have long believed that there were two Messiahs: the suffering Messiah “Ben-Joseph” and the conquering Messiah “Ben-David.” What they have never understood and accepted is that Jesus is both of these – he was “Ben-Joseph” in his first coming and will be “Ben-David” in his second and future one.

Judaism employs only the Old Testament which they refer to as the Tanakh. The OT Jews, like other ancient societies, had a sacrificial system where the blood of innocent animals was shed in order to atone for their sins. When reading through Leviticus and all of the regulations given by God to the Jewish priests, there is a mind-numbing level of detail in handling all of the animal sacrifices for sin and guilt offerings. One is struck by the number of animals killed, and by the seeming

bloodthirstiness of the entire process – God is pictured by skeptics as being brutal and barbaric. But the significance of Leviticus is understanding the seriousness of human sin in the eyes of God, and the severity of His requirements for atonement. What we may excuse and see as being trivial is serious in the eyes of God – He is God and we must therefore adapt to His terms rather than trying to impose our terms on Him.

“Why are the nations in an uproar, and the peoples devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, ‘Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!’ He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. He will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury.” Psalms 2:1-4.

“On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God?” Romans 9:20.

It is only after understanding this ancient sacrificial system that one can fully appreciate the sacrifice of Christ. The Levitical system was thus necessary to prefigure the work of Jesus, the innocent God-man, whose blood was shed for a universal atonement – for all who have or will accept his sacrifice for themselves.

“For the law can never make perfect those who draw near by the same sacrifices which they offer continually, year by year. Otherwise, they would have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins... Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God.” Hebrews 10:1-12.

Thus, Christianity is the fulfillment of Judaism, just as the New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old. The Apostle Paul explains as follows:

“For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen by race. They are Israelites, and to them belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ... But it is not as though the word of God had failed, for not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his descendants, but ‘Through Isaac shall your descendants be named.’ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are reckoned as descendants.” Romans 9:3-8.

Despite the fact that Jesus’ death ended the need for animal sacrifice, and that the veil of the temple covering the Holy of Holies was torn open signifying that the way to God was now open, sacrifices continued there until 70 AD when the Romans under Titus destroyed the temple. Non-Christian Jews were then in a quandary – they believed that animal sacrifices were still necessary as an atonement for sin, but the place where the sacrifices had to be performed no longer existed. What to do? One of the most respected Rabbis of the time lived in the town of Yavneh, and around 100 AD the Jewish leadership there made several decisions: 1) To transform Judaism into more of a “works” religion by

doing good deeds in order to justify themselves before God instead of the sacrifices that had previously been required; 2) To oppose the authority of the Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament which was being used by Christians. A new translation known as the Masoretic Text was therefore begun which attempted to remove possible references to Christ; and 3) To support Simon Bar-Kosba as the Jewish Messiah-Ben-David. In contrast to Jesus, Simon was a violent military organizer, and was declared by the Rabbis to be Simon Bar-Kokhba, the son of a star. He eventually led a series of revolts against the Romans, which the Christian Jews refused to support and were then persecuted by Bar-Kosba. Jewish forces were temporarily successful but were eventually crushed by Roman armies with relentless ferocity – by 135 AD all fortifications and virtually all towns in Israel were destroyed, and the remaining Jews were deported or sold into slavery. Simon, who was previously hailed as the Messiah-Ben-David, was renamed from “Bar-Kokhba” to “Bar-Koziba” (son of a liar). The surviving Jews were in great distress which led to the development of Gnostic sects such as the Cainites, who taught that God in the Torah was evil and that Satan was good. The Gospel of Judas Iscariot was a Cainite writing. Israel did not become a nation again until 1948, almost 2,000 years later. Many Jews have become Christian but many more have not. Partly this is due to the sad history of pogroms by Christians and pseudo-Christians – the cross became a symbol of oppression to Jews rather than a symbol of hope. But it is also because of stubborn adherence to their tradition.

“But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart, but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.” 1 Corinthians 3:15-16

However, there are signs of change; in 2006, the widely popular Rabbi Yitzhak Kaduri passed away at age 108, and thousands attended his funeral – it was said to be the largest in the history of Israel. Before he died, he gave a note to his followers to be opened one year after his death. When the note was eventually opened and decoded it said, “the name of the Messiah is Yehoshua (Jesus).” The press largely ignored this as this message was politically incorrect, but a number of his followers became Christian.²⁰

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- **Question:** Why doesn't prayer work?
 - **Claim:** There are supposedly some amazing promises about the power of prayer in the Bible, but prayer doesn't seem to work.

Here are some statements from the Bible about prayer:

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!” Matthew 7:7-11

“And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, be taken up and cast into the sea, it will happen. And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.’” Matthew 21:21-22

²⁰ See, for example, <https://bible-menorah.jimdofree.com/english/rabbi-kaduri-note/>

If we can get anything through prayer, why not ask for a new BMW? If we pray for world peace why doesn't it happen?

1. God requires faith and trust in him.

“But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.” James 1:6-8

2. God may ignore prayers that are made from selfish motives.

“You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.” James 4:2-4

3. God may answer a prayer later or in a way different from that which we asked. We are called to persevere in prayer.

“Now he was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, saying, “In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, ‘Give me legal protection from my opponent.’ For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, ‘Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.’” And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge said; will not God bring about justice for his elect who cry to him day and night, and will he delay long over them? I tell you that he will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” Luke 18:1-8

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” Romans 8:28

4. God may choose not to answer a prayer because he has a different plan or a different timing. Of course, we don't know his plans, so we can only pray in a way that makes sense to us. Like a good parent, God will hear us, but may choose not to answer.

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- **Question:** What should we make of the many reported psychic and near-death experiences?
 - **Claim:** When the brain dies and life is over, then our consciousness and existence is also over, so near-death experiences are only the brain playing tricks on us.

Near-death experiences (NDEs) were previously explained away as brain activity during the time that the body is dying. But there have now been thousands of NDEs from people all over the world, that have been studied by scientists, and in a number of instances the person's brain was dead (i.e., flat-lined with no activity). After the presumably dead person came back to life, they reported seeing and hearing things that took place while their brains were dead, which by naturalistic and “scientific” standards is impossible.²¹

²¹ See, for example: <https://ndestories.org/dr-mary-neal/> and <https://ndestories.org/tricia-barker/>

These documented experiences reveal the fact that human awareness is more than just neural activity in our brains. Like a computer, we are apparently composed of both “hardware” and “software.” Our hardware is the body and brain, and our software is being and consciousness. The Bible indicates that we are eternal – our bodies will die, but our being and our essence lives on forever.

“Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.” Daniel 12:2-3

NDEs reveal what people have long known but had no way of conclusively demonstrating, that there truly is life after death, and that some psychic and paranormal activities and experiences are real. This is why it is important for everyone to seek and live for Jesus, so that our eternal destiny can be assured. Despite the fact that there is and has always been chicanery and deception, some people truly have psychic abilities, and perhaps all of us have them in very small and limited measures.

However, the Bible strongly warns us to avoid psychic activities, such as Ouija boards, tarot, remote viewing, channeling, mediums, palm reading, fortune-telling, “high” magic, shamanism, voodoo, the occult, spirit guides, divination, witchcraft, necromancy, and attempts to contact the dead. We are not warned because these things are false, but rather because they are true. The problem is that when we enter the realm of the occult we have no idea what is actually taking place, and we open ourselves up to demonic forces that can easily deceive us, and in some cases take possession of us.²² We have a hard enough time understanding things in the physical world that we can see, let alone things in the spirit world that we can’t see. Mediums may draw a chalk circle on the ground as a “circle of protection” from evil spirits. But if the yellow lines on the highway don’t protect us from drunk drivers, how much less would a chalk circle protect us from demonic forces seeking to take possession of us?

“It is not uncommon for occultists’ spirit guides that were once considered divine or enlightened entities to discover they were actually demons. When the American spiritualist movement began with the Fox sisters in 1848, the first messages from the spirits were typically warm and loving:

‘Dear Friends... you must proclaim these wonderful truths to the world. This is the dawning of a new era. God is with you and good spirits will protect you in this vital endeavor’ (The Challenging Counterfeit, 48). But after a lifetime of proselytization for spiritism, and a life of misery, including being led into alcoholism and immorality, Margaret Fox herself confessed the following publicly in 1888: ‘I am here tonight, as one of the founders of spiritualism, to denounce it as absolute falsehood... the most wicked blasphemy the world has ever known.’

“What’s interesting is that these deceptive, evil spirits will even threaten them if they turn to the Lord Jesus Christ:

²² See, for example, Malachi Martin, *Hostage to the Devil*, Harper, CA, 1992, or Dan Korem, *Powers – Testing the Psychic & Supernatural*, Intervarsity Press, IL, 1988

“...occultists who are converted to faith in Jesus Christ, be they witches, mediums, psychics, gurus, spiritists of all stripes, UFO ‘contactees,’ etc., always seem to discover that their once-friendly ‘familiar, spirit helpers, ascended masters, devas and gods, space contacts,’ etc., now turn against them” (Ankerberg & Weldon, *The Coming Darkness*, 296).

“... people with occult subjection will often suffer their first attacks after they seek to follow Christ and serve Him. In other words, the battle often does not begin until a person receives Christ” (*Demonology Past and Present*, 105).

“Medium Wanda Sue Parrott notes how easy psychics may lose a grip on reality:

“What is the greatest threat to human well-being in the world of psychic phenomena? I would say from experience, fear. Fear of losing one’s sanity and self-control are nearly as common as fear of losing one’s soul.’ (“Inside the Psychic Jungle,” in *Ebon*, *The Satan Trap*, 67).

“Former witch turned Christian Doreen Irvine said, ‘Be warned: those who walk down the dark road of witchcraft lose their reason, often going completely insane... Minds are twisted and warped.’ (*Freed From Witchcraft*, 95).

“Black magic is distinguished from white magic by its form. In the worldwide literature of magic, it is maintained that black magic is done by the help of the devil and white magic with the help of God. This definition is false. White magic is just as dependent on the powers from below as is black magic. The evidence is not difficult to find. The effects of white magic are the same as those of black magic.”

“It is known particularly in the field of psychiatry that prolonged activity with mediumistic forces produces symptoms of schizophrenia. This has been termed mediumistic psychosis. Psychology too has drawn certain conclusions on the matter, and Professor Bender, a psychologist of the University of Friburg in his booklet entitled ‘Parapsychology- Its Results and Problems,’ has warned people in these words: “Thousands of people base their hopes on the deceptive statements of spiritistic practitioners and subsequently become dependent upon the advice they receive from the ‘other side.’ I have quite a number of patients who have suffered serious psychic disturbances through the misuse of such practices. Their personalities have been split and they have been utterly confused by the spirits on which they have called.” (Kurt Koch, *Between Christ and Satan*, 120).²³

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- **Question:** Was Jesus married to Mary Magdalene or some other woman?
 - **Claim:** A Gnostic writing indicated that Mary Magdalene was married to Jesus and/or had a sexual relationship with him. Jesus must have been married because it is inconceivable that he could have been a Rabbi and remained single. The royal bloodline of Jesus Christ has been chronicled in great detail by many historians.

²³ <https://jesustruthdeliverance.com/th-serious-dangers-of-the-occult/>

There is no indication whatsoever in the Bible that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene or any other woman. Jesus was not a Rabbi in the formal sense. He was called “Rabbi” because of the respect that people accorded him but was never formally confirmed or appointed as such.

In no place do even the Gnostic writings ever claim that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married, that they had children, or even a sexual relationship. The Gnostic text that is frequently quoted from the purported *Gospel of Philip* alleges that “Jesus loved Mary more than other women” and “more than the disciples,” and that “the disciples resented Jesus for expressing affection to Mary.” Consider this: if Jesus and Mary Magdalene had actually been engaged and/or married, why would the disciples express concern or jealousy over his being affectionate with her?

Although it was expected that a Rabbi would marry, there are a number of examples of celibate Jewish religious leaders, such as John the Baptist and Paul the Apostle. Therefore, the notion that celibacy is inconceivable for a Rabbi is historically incorrect.

The ancestry and lineage of Christ is stated in a number of Biblical passages, but he had no descendants, and therefore no bloodline from him has been or can be documented.

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- **Question:** Did Jesus give Mary Magdalene authority over the church?
 - **Claim:** One Gnostic writing indicate that Jesus gave Mary Magdalene authority over the church, and that Peter resented this. Jesus supported female power and wanted women to be leaders in the same way and in the sense as men are.

In no place does Jesus give Mary Magdalene authority over the church, and the concern that Peter actually expresses in the Gnostic writing is that the Gnostic concepts being expressed by Mary are “strange ideas.” Jesus did not give any individual authority over the church – the Roman Catholic position that Peter was given such authority is incorrect. Church leadership as depicted in the book of Acts was always plural to avoid the problems of a single leader seizing power, which is exactly what happened in Catholicism and which led to centuries of corruption.²⁴

Jesus affirmed the worth of women, and taught that in the eyes of God that women are of equal value to men. But despite Jesus’ revolutionary teachings on love and the responsibilities of power, he consistently upheld traditional sex roles. He did not condemn female leadership, but did not encourage it either, and allowed for a dynamic where women would lead and use their gifts, but would do so in the context of traditional male/female paradigms. There are many examples of this: all of the disciples that Jesus chose were male; when speaking to the woman at the well he asked her to “go and call your husband”; his acceptance of Mary anointing and kissing his feet; and so on.

In their writings, the Apostles upheld the same balance – affirming the value and worth of women and encouraging them to use their talents and gifts, while maintaining that men should be the leaders in marital relationships. There are also many examples of this, such as the teachings of Paul and Peter regarding wives in Ephesians 5:22-24, Titus 1:6, Titus 2:4-5, 1 Peter 3:1-6, etc. Furthermore, the paradigm used consistently throughout the Bible is marriage: God as the husband and the people as his bride in the Old Testament, and Christ as the husband and the church as his bride in the New Testament.

²⁴ See, for example, “Criticism of the Church”, https://www.academia.edu/42210577/Criticism_of_the_Church

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- **Question:** Were the Gnostic “gospels” suppressed by church leaders?
 - **Claim:** The Gnostic documents such as those discovered at Nag Hammadi were wrongly suppressed by misogynistic, patriarchal church leaders.

The Gnostic documents were written around AD 150-350 and were therefore composed a hundred years or more after the other books of the New Testament. They were rejected because they tried to present false theological ideas and concepts – this had nothing to do patriarchy or misogyny. Gnosticism (from the Greek “gnosis=knowledge”) indicates that adepts have a secret knowledge or wisdom given to them, whereas Christianity teaches that the only the Bible is authoritative, and everyone can have access to it. God in Gnosticism is also different, and his power is the same as Satan’s.

One of the key criteria used for selecting the books that make up the New Testament was whether a book was authored by an apostle or an apostle’s associate, and therefore composed when original sources who could verify the details were still alive. All of the original disciples and apostles were long since dead by the time the Gnostic documents were written. Furthermore, the latter portray a view of Christ and his teaching that was vastly different than that which is presented by the New Testament eyewitness accounts, all of which were written and in the hands of the church by AD 100. They are simply the work of a group with different religious concepts, and with their own ax to grind; thus, they do not supply any “new light” on the Biblical gospels.

It is the Gnostic documents which are poorly supported rather than the NT gospels. For example, the *Gospel of Mary* was a pseudepigraphal work written anonymously around AD 200 and then ascribed to Mary Magdalene. There are only a few surviving fragments, and even among these there are significant differences in the text. Furthermore, the theology expressed in the *Gospel of Mary* and other Gnostic writings is totally at odds with the Bible. For example, Jesus is quoted as saying, “All natures, all formed things, all creatures exist in and with one another and will again be resolved into their own roots, because the nature of matter is dissolved into the roots of its nature alone.” The Gnostic “gospels” have relatively little to say concerning Christ’s life, and typically consist of sayings and/or philosophical speculations. Therefore, they would not have been considered worthy of serious consideration for inclusion even if they were composed centuries earlier. So these documents were rightly rejected by the church, and this rejection had nothing whatsoever to do with misogyny or patriarchy.

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- **Question:** Were church leaders threatened by women, and so sought to destroy the “sacred feminine”?
 - **Claim:** Leaders of the patriarchal male church were so threatened by the power of women that they considered women to be an enemy and labeled goddess worship and the sacred feminine as unclean. Constantine and his successors converted the world from matriarchal paganism to patriarchal Christianity by waging a propaganda campaign to demonize the sacred feminine.

There were many women involved in the early church at multiple levels, and the claim that male leaders in general were threatened by women or considered them to be the enemy is preposterous.

There has never been a time in the history of humanity where any group or society has been a matriarchy, pagan or otherwise, so the notion that Constantine or anyone else converted society from matriarchy to patriarchy is completely false. Anthropology has decisively shown that no matriarchies exist anywhere in the world, nor is there any evidence that any have ever existed in the entire history of humanity. Given the innate biological and psychological differences between males and females, it is highly unlikely that a matriarchal group could ever have begun or survived for any period of time.

There certainly have been matriarchal elements in many past societies, such as the worship of female gods, e.g., Isis and Ishtar, and occasional powerful queens such as Cleopatra and Queen Elizabeth. Some societies and groups have matrilineal elements, such as inheritance and property rights being passed through the female side, and/or matrilineal methods of organization where new families live with or near the woman's family. But a detailed examination of past societies reveals that in general, men ruled and dominated women much more completely than in the western societies of today.²⁵ The current freedom available to women in western societies has primarily been due to the influence of Christianity and Christian thought, that ironically is the very thing that many feminists are attempting to destroy.

It is true that goddess worship and the "sacred feminine" were thought of as unclean, but not because men were threatened by women. The real reason is that these religious beliefs were and are simply one more form of false pagan idolatry, and therefore not in accord with the true nature of God. For example, the Bible condemns the worship of Baal, a male god, as well as Astarte, a female goddess. The condemnation is based on the activities that were involved in the worship, and not merely that it was some other god.

Actual goddess worship (not merely revering women such as the Virgin Mary, or the veneration of small household idols by ancient women to protect themselves and their children) has been relatively marginal throughout history. Even during times when goddesses were worshiped, such as Isis in Egypt and Ishtar in Babylonia, male gods were also worshiped, and were almost always more significant and superior in power and authority. Ancient societies in general were thoroughly male dominant.

Wicca dates from the 1950s, and it was not until the women's movement of the 1960s and following when the concepts of feminist theology and the concomitant conspiracy theories about Christianity were invented and promulgated.

Furthermore, the actual source of church policy and practice involving the "loathing of sex," the "unworthiness of the body," and the resulting "fear of women" was largely Gnosticism itself, and the ideas of Plato upon which they were partially based. The Greek philosopher Plato, circa 400 BC, believed that the heavenly form or archetype of all things was the ideal, and that earthly things are only shadows of the heavenly, and therefore inferior. Gnosticism borrowed this concept and taught, among other things, that only the spiritual aspects of a person were good, and the body was evil. This meant that sex, and especially the female body, was from the "dark side." Gnostic theology also espouses "dualism," which is notion that God and the devil are essentially equal in power and constantly battling each other for supremacy. Christians never adopted Gnosticism, because it is simply one more form of false belief, and the dualistic concepts of Gnosticism are contrary and antithetical to the God of the Bible. However, the Roman Church unfortunately allowed some of the Gnostic anti-sexual overtones to creep in through Augustine and the ascetics, with many negative consequences, such as the teachings that sexual pleasure is tinged with evil, sex is for procreation

²⁵ Stephen Goldberg, *Why Men Rule*, Open Court, 1993

only, birth control is wrong, priests must be celibate, and that women are a temptation that must be avoided if a man would be truly spiritual.

The Cathars, who lived in the Languedoc area of southern France, were perhaps the most historically significant Gnostic group. They were typical Gnostic dualists believing in an equally powerful “god” and “devil.” They also believed that sex was sinful and a man who truly desired to serve God could never engage in it. Instead, they accepted sodomy as a replacement for heterosexual union. Catharism was hostile to maternity and family, and pregnant female followers were told that they carried demons in their bellies, making the religion unattractive to women (and men), especially for those who understood what the Cathars actually taught (many did not, and thought of it as essentially another form of Catholicism). The Cathars also practiced flagellation and self-mortification and did not eat meat on the grounds that it came from animals that required sexual intercourse for the purposes of reproduction. However, they did eat fish, not realizing that they also reproduce in a sexual manner. However, a person could be a nominal Cathar follower and avoid committing themselves to all of the strictures of the faith. The Cathar religion was divided between a small minority of *perfecti* (the “perfect ones”) who had pledged themselves to celibacy, to the dietary rigors, and who had passed through a ritual laying on of hands by the Cathar leadership, and the vast majority of *credenti* (“followers”). Only *perfecti* were considered to be members of the Cathar Church, and many *credenti* became *perfecti* only on their deathbeds to avoid what they considered to be the unpleasant aspects of Catharism. Thus, despite their undesirable beliefs and practices, the Cathar religion was attractive to many, especially those who despised the Catholic Church for its worldliness and money-grubbing, as the Cathar preachers were poor itinerants who did not demand tithes and had no church buildings. It is often alleged that the Cathars were medieval feminists, with men and women sharing power in all areas, and that the Catholic Church attacked them for that reason. Both of those assertions are also untrue and are likewise the product of contemporary feminist mythmaking. It is true that the Cathars were more egalitarian, that *perfecti* could be either male or female, and that there were significant number of female *perfecti*. However, the Cathars had an episcopal structure similar to the Catholic Church (i.e., bishops and deacons), and females were not allowed in those positions, nor were they allowed to perform the ritual functions of the church leadership. Furthermore, preaching by female *perfecti* was rare, and they functioned in more-or-less the same way as nuns did in the Catholic Church except, they did not live in cloisters.

The Roman church was concerned with the growth of this heresy and became jealous of the popular appeal of the Cathars, as well as being stung by their accusations of the worldliness of the Catholic leadership. After a number of attempts to convert them to Catholicism, in 1213 Pope Innocent III began the Albigensian Crusade in an effort to stamp the Cathars out; for thirty years they were pursued and eventually hounded to their death.

Even though the Catholic Church was largely successful in eliminating this Gnostic group, the resentments caused by their vicious actions created even more hatred against Catholicism, and the echoes of that hatred have persisted through the centuries. And despite the Christian rejection of Gnosticism, the Roman church was heavily influenced by the Gnostic idea of the evil of the body and other material things.

The church thus created many tensions and problems for itself, but the notion that the major threat was the power of women and goddess worship is historical fabrication.