

Supernatural Hypocrisy:

*The Cognitive Dissonance
of a God Cosmology*

*Volume 1:
Cosmology of God & Jesus*

Kelli Jae Baeli



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Supernatural Hypocrisy:
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of a God Cosmology
Volume 1: Cosmology of God & Jesus
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Summary:

6-Volumes: An author struggles to find her own
Personal Cosmology by examining her beliefs
about God, the Bible and Christianity.

Classification:

1. Atheism 2. Religion 3. Humanism 5. Secularism
6. Women Authors—non-fiction 7. Adult non-fiction

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One nation, not necessarily under God,
unless you choose to be UNDER a mean deity,
Where we can freely create and print things.

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Author's Note

I will make no secret of the fact that, at this writing, I am, without question, a card-carrying atheist. This book is a representation of how I got there.

I am not a Bible scholar or a Ph.D.–wielding lecturer, nor a scientist. I earned a degree in Professional Writing & Editing, and intend to complete a Masters Degree program in writing as well, soon. Other than that, I am just an author who is many other things, not the least of which is a voracious lifelong learner and seeker of truth. Though I have, at odd intervals, been accused of being an elitist—I think an elitist would not encourage the sharing of ideas by those without an alphabet soup after their name, a prestigious university at their back, or a mainstream publisher hawking their work. I believe everyone has something to say, and should be able to say it. It should be up to the readers whether or not the content is worthy of perusal.

This journey is a personal one. My truth may never be your truth. So take this or leave it. But understand that I embarked upon this task with the utmost sincerity and the most profound need to know myself and my place in this world.

I am only now fully recognizing the courage it will take for me to embrace this part of my identity in a world where this stance is often cause for oppression in general and ostracization in particular. But I'm no stranger to that. I have been a minority more than once and still am. I am a woman—(though not minority in number, at least minority in a patriarchy and all that entails); I am also a lesbian—though I dislike the connotation of that moniker. I am simply attracted romantically to certain other women, and never, men. I also fought disability for years, but refuse to let that define me, currently. And last, and most sobering: I am also now an atheist.

Let's see...what more could I do to achieve the permanent status of pariah?

In this work, I do not seek to denigrate other great thinkers or respected persons, but to ferret out the facts and, as much as possible, put it down in words.

The act of composing the volumes of this book led me to some conclusions, or verified those I suspected along the way, and so there will be an unavoidable slant in that direction throughout the text, in that I won't always be equitable when I speak of religion. I believe that political correctness has done more harm than good, and we ought to stop being a nation of whiners. We ought to speak our truth, as respectfully as possible, but with no regard for the toes that might be metaphorically mashed due to the honesty of the content. If we spend all our time coddling adults as if they were children, we create a nation of puerile adults who cannot make mature and rational decisions, nor function in a way that is at all beneficial to humanity in general.

I didn't stumble on this project after a random thought waltzed through my head. I began the project to refine the ideas and questions that have always niggled at my brain; questions about belief, mortality, morality, reason, religion, human nature and my place in this world. I seek peace with those things I know which might at first appear daunting, and clarity about those things I sense on some intuitive level to be true, especially when bolstered by the overwhelming evidence.

I seek my own personal cosmology.

Acknowledgements

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To the authors, philosophers and others who have provided the information I needed to make such a monumental decision about what I believe: Richard Dawkins, David Mills, Carl Sagan, Bart D. Ehrman, Christopher Hitchens, Victor J. Stenger, Neil DeGrasse Tyson, George H. Smith, Daniel C. Dennett, Russ Kick, Bertrand Russell, Richard Carrier, Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, Susan Jacoby, Sam Harris, William A. Dembski, Earl Doherty, Socrates, Isaac Asimov, Helen Ellerbe, Plato, Michael Shermer, Friedrich Nietzsche, Robert M. Price, Stephen Jay Gould, Michael Martin, John W. Loftus, Robert Ingersoll, Steven Novella, PZ Myers, Dan Barker, Steven Pinker, Austin Cline, Frank J. Tipler, and so many others, whose names and works can be found in the references section. Special mention to Rachel Maddow, who digs a little deeper and brings us news we really need to hear.

Thanks to the organizations that have collected data and made it available to those like me, who search for truth: The Philosophy Forums, Skeptical Inquirer, Discover Magazine, Scientific American Magazine, Science magazine, The American Association for the Advancement of Science, The Internet Infidels, Freedom From Religion Foundation, and Skeptics magazine, and The Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster.

And to the one book that was, as Isaac Asimov put it, “the most potent force for atheism ever conceived” — The Bible.

Formatting & Style Note

I have endeavored to make these volumes as readable as possible for anyone who might find the material of interest. I am aware that one can be intelligent, but still unclear about certain jargon and schools of thought and study.

Throughout my own research for this volume, I often had to look up terminology in order to fully understand the context of some more scholarly and academic passages. Thus, I include definitions of uncommon words in the form of footnotes, so the reader can glance down for clarification, without having to thumb to the back of the book for this reference, though all references are also cited in the References section. I have always disliked the use of end notes, as they are cumbersome and interrupt the flow of the text. Footnotes serve the purpose better, and that's why I chose to use them for page-by-page citations, definitions and anecdotal comments. I chose to employ a Turabian citation style, and took some liberties with it, due to the complicated nature of the many materials used. Complete references, are relegated to the back of these volumes as warranted, along with any Appendices, which I hope will be of interest and help answer any additional questions from the reader too interruptive or lengthy for the text. I hope this will make the journey through this material less cumbersome, and offer more clarity.

Dedication

To everyone who ever dared seek the truth, in spite of the ostracization it may cause from those who do not choose reason over myth.



Cosmology of God & Jesus

"You can safely assume that you've created God in your own image when it turns out that God hates all the same people you do."

~Anne Lamott

"I contend that we are both atheists. I just believe in one fewer god than you do. When you understand why you dismiss all the other possible gods, you will understand why I dismiss yours."

~Stephen Henry Roberts

"Isn't it enough to see that a garden is beautiful without having to believe that there are fairies at the bottom of it too?"

~Douglas Adams

"The Lord slew Onan, and to this day the Christian world cannot understand why He stopped with Onan, instead of slaying all the inhabitants for three hundred miles around — they being innocent of offense, and therefore the very ones He would usually slay. For that had always been his idea of fair dealing. If he had had a motto, it would have read, 'Let no innocent person escape.'"

~ Mark Twain, Letters From The Earth

"God himself shows little respect for what is best in the Bible. He commands 'Thou shalt not kill', and then promptly orders the killing of many thousands. Moses condemns human sacrifice but God demands the sacrifice of Isaac and accepts that of Jephthah's daughter. Jesus preaches 'whoever shall say 'you fool!', shall be in danger of Hell fire', but shortly after this rages at the Pharisees saying 'you fools!'."

~ Prof Carl Lofmark, What is the Bible?



Education Begets Questions

*"Every mind was made for growth, for knowledge,
and its nature is sinned against when it is
drowned in ignorance."*

~ William W. Channing

Though I've had eight years of college, most of my higher education has been achieved autonomously. It's not unusual for me to delve into a subject and spend 16 to 18 hours a day studying it, until I feel I have a firm grasp.

I am also a devout Disciple of Google. The Internet has been, hands down, the most useful tool in my personal development as a knowledgeable and discerning person, and as a writer as well; though you do have to practice that discernment when using Internet resources. Many, of course, are unreliable.

I can recall years ago when I first began to write books, that the research alone took forever. Now, all I have to do is keep my Firefox Google search box open and click over whenever I want to know about even the strangest or most esoteric detail.

Thus, I am a hard-liner about ignorance. There is hardly ever an excuse to remain uninformed, illiterate, or unenlightened. (Exceptions might be brain injury or some other cognitive defect).

Education allows you to make more informed decisions and to discern between pertinent and impertinent facts, so that those decisions will make sense. An uneducated person

can fall prey to fallacious arguments and questionable facts, due to the lack of understanding where those facts are concerned. Additionally, the understanding of vocabulary, and the meaning of words is not subject to debate or alteration. We have a dictionary that allows us to communicate based on the agreed definition of words. When those words are redefined to suit an ideological, spiritual or emotional need, we undermine our ability to enjoy clarity, and clarity is paramount to the resolution of ideas and beliefs. For example, when believers misuse the definition of words like "truth" or "fact" or "know" then there can be no reconciliation, no understanding, and thus, no agreement about important concepts.

My pursuit of higher learning, then, has ultimately led me to this point, to these foreboding and complicated matters under the umbrella of belief.



Cognitive Dissonance

“Logic: The art of thinking and reasoning in strict accordance with the limitations and incapacities of the human misunderstanding.”

~Ambrose Bierce

As I reexamined the Scriptures, after having moved decidedly away from them over the last 17 years, I found that I had good reason to move away from Scriptures, and indeed, the Christian faith in particular. What I had done subconsciously was perhaps based on a real reaction to living my life in the context of having a belief in a higher power—an invisible entity who was somehow at the helm, but who failed miserably to show me any authentic evidence of his presence.

I will never allow someone else, much less an invisible being, to tell me what to think, and who I am. One has only to read the Bible, as I did, cover to cover, to understand what the truth really is. What I found was the opposite of those common verses that clergy like to pluck out of the Bible in order to win more believers. In renewed study of Scripture and Christian ideology, I found that I agreed less and less with all the Bible taught, and agreed more and more heartily with secular humanists, freethinkers, and various nonbelievers.

It might be pertinent to mention here, that when I first considered the idea of existence without belief in the Chris-

tian God, I was one of those people who thought atheists were angry, mean, ignorant and even somehow "mental" individuals. I can say now, with a generous amount of confidence, that I was completely wrong.

My studies led me to the same conclusion that Richard Carrier expressed—namely, that the Bible revealed to me "a terrible, sinful God" who was a "jealous, violent, short-tempered, vengeful being whose behavior is nonsensical and overly meddlesome and unenlightening."¹ And I was not surprised by Carrier's and others' revelations that many Christians "have never actually read the Bible, and have no idea what is really in there," and agree with Carrier also when Christians admonished me, with unfettered hypocrisy, to read the Bible before I make negative judgments. I did. And my judgment is more negative than before. I didn't have to try very hard to find a plethora of reasons to refuse being a passenger on that crap-wagon.

¹ Richard Carrier. *Sense and Goodness Without God: A Defense of Metaphysical Naturalism*. (AuthorHouse.23 February 2005), 15.



The Quest

“Any person sufficiently capable of recognizing discrepancies, will one day apply those capabilities to her world view, and to questions that both address those incongruities, and answer them in some satisfactory way. When this incongruity happens, it is referred to as Cognitive Dissonance.”

~ Kelli Jae Baeli

I have always been a seeker. I am forever trying to find where I fit in the world, and though I've made great strides in that regard, I have come to the proverbial fork in the road, knowing that I can't stand at that junction forever, but must make mindful decisions about which path I wish to tread.

My beliefs about religion, spirituality, human nature, and all things related, have been sorely tested and now I have embarked on a quest for answers. I spend a good deal of time studying about it, and this book is the result of that personal journey.

I have posted excerpts, questions and ideas from this book, to various places on the Net, hoping to find others who were struggling with this vexation—not because misery loves company, but because seekers need kindreds. I have thus been bombarded with difficult conundrums and precarious paradigms which demand clarity.

I am exceedingly thankful to reside in a country that now allows all its people to put their thoughts and insights down on paper, and publish it for all to read at will. Whether or not this work will be traditionally published is almost beside the point. The act of doing it and offering it for public consumption on my own is enough.² It is a vivid embodiment of the Freedom of Speech, and the Freedom of

² As of January 2011, I am Managing Editor of LightSwitcher Books, LLC. This press will be passionate about publishing quality fiction and nonfiction.

the Press. Again, another reason why this country is a great one. Though there will be those who endeavor to silence unpopular notions, Frantz Fanon said, "*There comes a time when silence becomes dishonesty.*" Fortunately, I am still able to speak my truth without much fear of reprisal.

I do not pretend to be an authority on any of the subjects covered in this book. I am only an authority of myself, and this is at once a personal account of my own journey in discovery of a personal cosmology. I share it for the sake of sharing it, as communication is its own reward. I share it because perhaps it will allow others to view their own cosmologies with a bit more care and discernment, and because perhaps it will give them permission to share theirs as well.

Any person sufficiently capable of recognizing discrepancies, will one day apply those capabilities to her world view, and to questions that both address those incongruities, and answer them in some satisfactory way. When this incongruity happens, it is referred to as *Cognitive Dissonance*. According to Ethics Scoreboard,

Cognitive dissonance is a psychological phenomenon first identified by Leon Festinger. It occurs when there is a discrepancy between what a person believes, knows and values, and persuasive information that calls these into question. The discrepancy causes psychological discomfort, and the mind adjusts to reduce the discrepancy.

In ethics, cognitive dissonance is important in its ability to alter values, such as when an admired celebrity embraces behavior that his or her admirers deplore. Their dissonance will often result in changing their attitudes toward the behavior. Dissonance also leads to rationalizations of unethical conduct, as when the appeal and potential benefits of a large amount of money makes unethical actions to acquire it seem less objectionable than if they were applied to smaller amounts.³

So, while cognitive dissonance can manifest in decidedly

³ Ethics Scoreboard. "Rule Book" 2007. The Ethics Scoreboard, ProEthics, Ltd., 2707 Westminister Place, Alexandria, VA 22305. http://www.ethicsscoreboard.com/rb_definitions.html.

negative ways, it can also be utilized as a tool for personal evolution. That's precisely what these volumes represent.



The Shift in Consciousness

"My biggest regret is not the floodgates of curiosity being opened, but that I had not begun to ask certain questions much earlier than I did."

~ Kelli Jae Baeli

I am, among other things, what some refer to as a "late bloomer." Once I began to question things, my real growth began. The many permutations of self I have experienced have led me to this point; an undeniable angst about the world and my place in it. I believe that once I began to truly pay attention to people and events and ideas, that I also began the process of evolution as a person completely involved in my own life path.

One thing I have discovered along the way, is that once you learn how to ask questions, more questions will present themselves, and more answers will be required. The more questions I asked, the more hungry I became for those answers, and the more I needed those answers to satisfy me.

My biggest regret is not the floodgates of curiosity being opened, but that I had not begun to ask certain questions much earlier than I did. I feel that I would have had more to show for myself had I sought answers sooner.

At the beginning of this shift in consciousness, my best friend asked me, "If these ideas are so great, then why are you so angry?"

Good question. But I know the answer. It's because I was in a process of transition. I was honestly facing all my fears about my own personal beliefs; and to have your entire personal cosmology upended is disturbing at first. I was angry because I felt I'd wasted most of my life floundering in the lies of Christianity and other spiritual belief systems, when the answer was there all along. I was angry that I had been brainwashed by the mainstream lemmings, though I

accept my own responsibility in allowing that to happen. I was angry that I wasn't evolved enough in my learning and understanding to have found these answers long ago, and angry at the way logic and reason and education has taken a back seat to superstition, hypocrisy, and fear.

But this is how it happened, and I will honor the process, and myself, and the nature of human curiosity, by voicing these ideas and conclusions to the best of my ability, in the hope that someone might reach the logical conclusions I have, and so rid themselves of a perpetual fiction that disrupts the rightful position of truth.



The Trepidation of a Godless Paradigm

*“Even if the open windows of science at first make us shiver
after the cozy indoor warmth of traditional humanizing myths,
in the end the fresh air brings vigor, and the great spaces
have a splendor all their own.”*

~ Bertrand Russell

I find it both ironic and comical (ironical?) that theists’ efforts to defend Christianity is known as “apologetics.” An apology would be appropriate for expecting any thinking person to believe in a being who is invisible, mean, contradictory, misogynistic, apathetic, murderous, and irrational.

The first thing that opened my mind to the idea of a godless paradigm was a poem by Stephen Crane that began:

“God lay dead in Heaven...”⁴

I had a really hard time moving past that first line. And I recognize that perhaps that first line was all I needed to take from that poem. The thoughts and ruminations and fears and possibilities that one line inspired in me, is to this day, overwhelming. Thus, the question arises: why is it overwhelming to imagine an existence without God?

I think it is because it’s all we’ve known as Americans, if not as an entire species; even if the being was some form of a godlike deity—or many gods—there was always, it seems, some aspect of God in our experience as human beings.

⁴ Stephen Crane, Poem 67, “God Lay Dead in Heaven.” *The Black Riders & Other Lines* (1905). (Kessinger Publishing, LLC, September 10, 2010).

I suspect this is the strongest habit ever formed in all of human history. As humans, we cringe in the face of suffering, loneliness, ostracization, death, and lack of meaning.

So, FEAR.

There are fears that bubble up to the surface when considering such an idea. *No God*. I didn't know how to behave without a God-Paradigm. Though for a very long time I had on some level behaved that way anyway, because there was always so much that did not make sense. It never added up.

Even as a child, I have a memory of arguing with my grade school teacher. She wrote on the chalkboard, $2 + 2 = 4$.

I raised my hand, frowning, and asked, "Why isn't it 22?"

The exchange dissolved into some sort of debate which resulted in my trip down the hall to the principal's office, my offense being insubordination. Not "thinking for myself," mind you. No, that would be too close to the truth.

And truth is something many people seem to have a great degree of difficulty wrapping their brainwashed heads around.

So what is this deep-seated fear humans in general—and Americans specifically—have about an existence without God?

I gave this some thought and came up with a list of things that came to mind for me, personally.

Who will I turn to in a dire moment? I had to ask myself: did I really turn to God before? If so, was it a comfort to me? Did it help?

NO. And, No, and No...

Placing myself in such a position—a condition of being without God—is at once a frightening prospect for me on a level that is perhaps uncommon for some others:

I have no family.

I have no child.

I have no partner (at this writing).

If I negate God as well, there is a sense of being utterly alone. But haven't I always, to some degree, or another, felt utterly alone throughout my life anyway?

Yes.

Does this suggest that I was utterly alone from the beginning?

Maybe.

How will I be okay with my life, if there's no promise of an After-Here Paradise?

Well, truthfully, I never could quite wrap my head or my heart around that concept, anyway. I never was able to work up the appropriate JOY at the thought of all that Heaven supposedly represented. How could I get excited about something that wasn't happening, and seemed far-fetched enough to be considered impossible? How could I be enthused about something for which, by its very supposed nature, there is no comparison?

We understand things through association. That's how the human brain processes new input. So how can we understand something for which there is no precedent and no evidence, and no video or photographs?

I am not divorced from my emotions. I am considered very sensitive. Yet, at different times in my past I have been diagnosed with both "Emotional Intensity Disorder" and Anhedonia, the inability to feel joy or happiness. This dichotomy illustrated the ephemeral and fluid nature of emotion, and the way in which it can alter our lives and toy with our reality.

I learned, finally, that the intensity of my emotions had not served me, but crippled me. They usurped my reason, more often than not, and kept me from categorizing things in a rational way. They made me take things far too seriously, and far too personally, and often resulted in behavior that was harmful to myself and to others. Much like Chris-

tian zealots. Is this the cause of the inherent evil perpetrated by those who carry the banner of God? Are they so emotionally invested in it, that they cannot function in a rational way?

I intend to explore that here.

What if I Can't Handle it Alone? Another question that arises in the concept of a Godless universe is, *What if I'm not up to the challenge of being solely responsible for myself?*

Isn't it what I have been, anyway? Have my decisions ever been about pleasing some entity I've never seen, never felt, and never had any real evidence for? Or have they been about pleasing myself, whom I have seen, have felt, and do have evidence for? Certainly, that's easy to answer. Ultimately all decisions are based on what we feel is best for ourselves, unless we are one of those unfortunate doormat types. And even that, it could be argued, is a form of selfishness, in that the person needs love or some other intangible from the person they allow to abuse them.

But in a larger, non-personal sense, what would people do if they couldn't blame their actions on the Devil? Or dismiss their behavior by way of a ubiquitous God's ostensible wishes?

What if I'm Shunned? The next fear that surfaced was, *What if everyone abandons me? ...and ruin my whirlwind social life, business contacts and family dynamics?* I'm being sarcastic, of course, because as I said, my life is not what I would call common, and has not included those considerations ⁵

Why would I necessarily be shunned, when I essentially remain the same person, at my core, that caused those who now love me to feel that way? Why wouldn't I, instead, be a more peaceful person, knowing that I have reconciled my-

⁵ Hopefully this will change soon with my new decisions to relocate to a region more suited to my needs.

self with my truth?

What if I Go to Hell? What if not believing Buys Me a Ticket to the Eternal Furnace?

If there *is* a God, do I really believe this is part of his shtick??

No.

If there is a God, and I deny him, utilizing the brain he allegedly gave me, do I really believe he will cast me into the fire like an errant marshmallow?

No.

I have genuine difficulty imagining the degree of cruelty it would take for any transcendent being to behave in that way. That's made doubly disturbing by the underlying idea that God should be good. God should be the embodiment of love and acceptance and caring. *Shouldn't he?*

In thinking about this idea that God is a loving entity, there are some immediate problems.

A friend of mine pointed out that she believes God is all things, and this would mean both good and evil. While this idea explains much of the alleged "behavior" of the Christian God, why would I voluntarily worship such a being? If I'm to worship some entity, I would want it to be the best of all things good, and I would aspire to be as much like that being as possible. Otherwise, why would we even complain about the Hitlers and Bin Ladens and Saddams of the world? Aren't they merely manifesting a portion of that which God created? A portion of *himself*?

Thus, I can find no rational reason to embrace nor worship a God who is as evil as he is good.

If there is *no God*, then the decision to *not* believe he exists, only reveals my own brilliance. It's a win-win.



Religion Revealed

"What is wanted is not the will to believe, but the wish to find out, which is the exact opposite."

~Bertrand Russell

If God Is Love, and loves me as his child, why don't I ever see him at the dinner table? Did that Last Supper thing leave a bad taste in his mouth?

Seriously. If you can't see or touch or interact in an authentic way with this being, then every idea you have about him necessarily becomes a product of creation in your own mind and in the minds of others. The very definition of an imaginary friend. Thus, there can be no way to know what is or isn't true about this being, or even that the being exists at all.

Christianity is called a "revealed religion" which means, "a religion founded primarily on the revelations of God to humankind."⁶ And yet, paradoxically, or *oxymoronically*, God has never revealed himself to anyone. *Ever*.

Is it revealing yourself if you come in odd forms, speak through other beings, or manifest in a burning bush? Or in symbols in dreams? Or in a *feeling* you have? Or in contradictory ideas passed down for generations from sources both improvable and perhaps entirely fictional? If information is to be respected and accepted as true, don't we need some empirical data? Don't we need something irrefutable?

And if this information is about our very souls and the nature of the universe and the life in it, isn't it important enough to provide proof for? Why is this proof a source of irritation for the theist?

Believers will argue that if God revealed himself—proved his own existence—then we would not require faith,

⁶ Wordnet, Princeton University.

and this would somehow undermine the process of accepting God in any genuine way. But I know my best friend loves me because I have seen enough examples of it, and this evidence in no way undermines my belief that she loves me—on the contrary, it bolsters my belief and makes me appreciate her to a higher degree. Furthermore, her love is not predicated on a demand that I love her, nor colored by a threat of eternal suffering if I choose not to believe she loves me. Which also makes me love her all the more.

Why, then, do theists offer only *ad hoc*⁷ arguments for the lack of proof that God loves us?

⁷ Ad hoc—done or set up solely in response to a specific situation or problem, without considering wider or longer-term issues. In the context of Christian apologetics, it refers to the theists tendency to invent suppositions to answer questions about contradiction or mystery; “An ad hoc hypothesis is one created to explain away facts that seem to refute one’s theory.” (The Skeptic’s Dictionary).



So, Why Do We Feel We Need a God?

"If a man will begin with certainties, he shall end in doubts, but if he will be content to begin with doubts, he shall end in certainties."

~ Francis Bacon

In summary, one reason we feel we need a god might be that we are simply brainwashed by the presence of this God in human consciousness, collective and cultural, since the beginning of human existence.

This would naturally lead to a second reason: FEAR. As I mentioned, we don't know how to behave without a God-Paradigm; who will we turn to in a dire moment? How will we be okay with our miserable lives if there is not even a promise of an After-Here? What if we are not up to the challenge of being solely responsible for ourselves? What if we will be shunned by everyone? What if not believing buys us a ticket to Eternal Hell Fire?

Again, religion is predicated on fear, and plays to our most primitive weaknesses. The need to belong, the need for acceptance, the fear of isolation, the fear of being wrong, the fear of pain and suffering, the fear of pointless existence.

It doesn't help that there is also an innate need for humans to have someone bigger and stronger to take care of them. That starts early on, as we are children, dependent on parents. It's an easy transition to superimpose that same need onto a supernatural Ultimate-Parent figure, so that we don't ever have to take full responsibility for ourselves, our behavior, and our well-being.



Seeking Sense

"The difference between fiction and reality?

Fiction has to make sense."

- Tom Clancy, paraphrasing Mark Twain

I've always looked for what made sense, or when confronted with nonsensical things, needed to make sense of them somehow in order to find peace. Along this life path I have encountered many things that made sense.

Reason
Love
Friendship
Education
Integrity
Pets
Weather
Creativity

And many more things that did NOT make sense:

God
Jesus
The Bible
Evil people
Hatred
Injustice
The fear of properly used eugenics
The laws against compassionate euthanasia
Religious wars and wars in general
Taxation without representation
The war in Iraq

And some things that made sense at first, but upon closer inspection, no longer did:

God

Jesus

The Bible

Christianity

Religion

The electoral college

The law of attraction

And then one thing that made no sense at first, but then,
did:

Atheism.



Cosmology of God

*"I cannot accept any concept of God based on the fear of life or the fear of death or blind faith. I cannot prove to you that there is no personal God, but if I were to speak of him I would be a liar."
~ Albert Einstein*

*"Religion has convinced people that there's an invisible man, living in the sky, who watches everything you do every minute of every day. And the invisible man has a list of ten specific things he doesn't want you to do. And if you do any of these things, he will send you to a special place, of burning and fire and smoke and torture and anguish for you to live forever, and suffer and burn and scream until the end of time. But he loves you. He loves you and he needs money."
~ George Carlin*

*"We must question the story logic of having an all-knowing all-powerful God, who creates faulty Humans, and then blames them for his own mistakes."
~Gene Roddenberry, Free Inquiry, Autumn, 1992.*

*"If this being is omnipotent, then every occurrence, including every human action, every human thought, and every human feeling and aspiration is also his work; how is it possible to think of holding men responsible for their deeds and thoughts before such an almighty Being? In giving out punishment and rewards he would to a certain extent be passing judgment on Himself. How can this be combined with the goodness and righteousness ascribed to him?"
~Albert Einstein, Out of My Later Years*



How Convenient *Cop-outs about God*

Merely by using the same reference material that Christians use to justify their blind allegiance, *you can truly know God*. Let's look at some of that information...

The only way one can, theoretically and according to theists, know God to any appreciable degree, is after death when our souls ascend to Heaven— which is reportedly the domain of the Deity himself. But since death prevents any of these people from reporting back to us— and if they had, it would still be a case of improvable speculation— then this is never something any of us can know for certain.

How Convenient.

According to Saint Thomas Aquinas, God is also "infinitely knowable" but it is impossible for humans to know God to that infinite degree, since we are finite beings. He could thus be known only to an infinite intelligence like himself, and there is no one like himself. Especially not when we're talking about Christians who parrot such nonsense. This one becomes one of those absurd circular propositions made by believers to avoid admitting that they cannot know this God, and cannot claim to know him, and thus cannot claim anything other than agnosticism, which they continue to deny.

How convenient.

In what George H. Smith calls "The unique epistemological process of 'knowin' in one's heart"⁸ Christians and clergy alike opt to ignore the atrocities of the Bible's God, since they are so unpleasant.

How convenient.

In the Gospels of the New Testament, we read about miracles performed by Jesus. It's probable that Gospel writers may have invented the miracles of Jesus after the fact, just as they did the Gospels themselves, which science has shown were composed 40 to 90 years after the death of Jesus. But we are also told in the Scriptures that Jesus did not perform miracles in his native country "because of their unbelief." The verse in Mark 1:43-44 also tells us, "See that you say nothing to anyone" after Jesus cures a leper. Perhaps this was because those who knew him might later say they saw no miracles and the Gospel authors could use this "unbelief" excuse as an escape hatch.

How convenient.

⁸ George H. Smith. *Atheism: The Case Against God*. (Prometheus Books. 1980), 79.



Thatness And Whatness

What is God?

"God is the invention of Man. So the nature of God is only a shallow mystery. The deep mystery is the nature of Man."

~ Nanrei Kobori, Buddhist Abbot

Christian theology, in all its ambiguity, states that God is incorporeal, which is to say, nonmaterial. This means God is not composed of matter. Which renders the reference to God as a being, meaningless. For if something is non-matter, how could it matter? We are beings who are made of matter (in the simplest terms) and thus our understanding of everything is predicated on matter. All else is both immaterial in a literal and figurative sense, and negligible.

And what of ideas and concepts and immaterial things like enthusiasm or kindness? Might the theist argue that these are real to us, though not made of matter? Of course the theist could argue that, but the argument would dissolve under the powerful force of reason; kindness is not being touted as an entity, as well as something immaterial. If God is not made of matter or of anything humans can comprehend, then God, is in a very real way, NOT REAL. If we cannot perceive God, then, why would we believe in him? If we cannot experience God, since God is non-matter, how could he possibly exist to begin with? And why don't Christians who peddle this, while simultaneously admitting they don't really know, just admit that they are agnostic?

Slippery slope, that.

In *Atheism: The Case against God*, George H. Smith ex-

plains:

...either we can use human language to speak meaningfully of God (in which case, God cannot differ in kind from finite existence), or human language cannot be applied to God at all (in which case, the word 'God' becomes meaningless). By stipulating that God is supernatural and unknowable, the Christian effectively removes God from the domain of language and communication—hereby removing himself from the context of rational consideration. Since God is incomprehensible, we cannot examine God's characteristics, and then conclude that God and man have certain traits in common. Anyway, if this were possible, we would already have direct knowledge of God's nature prior to the comparison, which would eliminate the need for analogy. How, then, can the Christian claim a resemblance between God and man?⁹

Late night television will often garner you an unwanted advertisement for some Gospel album. (Advertisers must believe that the faithful are up at all hours, perhaps fretting about their impending flinging into the fiery abyss). One such ad featured a song entitled, "God is in control"—and my first thought was, "Well he ought to step down, then, because he's doing a rotten job."

How can we begin to know what the Christian God does, if we don't or can't understand what he reportedly is?

Existence and essence—two things we are prevented from knowing about God from within the Christian faith. Why would we adopt a lifestyle, belief system, code, or any other guideline that has no basis in rational thought nor empirical proof? To say, as many Christians do, that the reason we should believe is because God must be accepted "on faith" is just another circular argument.

⁹ Smith, *ibid*, 57.



The Omni-Everything

“Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is not omnipotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Then whence cometh evil? Is he neither able nor willing?

Then why call him God?”

~ Epicurus

The problem with religion in general, and the Christian mindset in particular, is that when all words and ideas can be modified or overtly changed, there will never be the opportunity for logic, clarity, understanding or consensus, and this is why the debate rages on throughout millennia.

If we insist, however, that the agreed upon definition be adhered to, the religious adherents lose their footing, and it becomes impossible for them to defend their position in any logical way.

By way of illustration, imagine we live in a world where it is acceptable and commonplace to change definitions at will. You are approaching an intersection in your car, and the light is green, and you keep going. An accident is caused because the oncoming traffic has a red light, but one car's driver decided that red means keep going, and you are killed by that driver. Is this sort of ambiguity likely to insure the survival of our species?

Thus, when we examine the definitions the Chris-

tian religion uses to explain their God, one of these points must be true:

- the person who puts down that definition does not understand the meaning of the words, (either through mental defect of self-delusion) or,
- that information is a lie.

Let me clarify what I mean.

There are the common ideas about the nature or essence of God. These attributes are at once a conundrum of “Godly” proportions. There are also the lesser-known, or lesser-mentioned attributes of God that have arisen from various *ad hoc* situations in which a contradiction appears, and an explanation is then provided to explain that contradiction. It’s rather like the situation a pathological liar finds himself in: one lie is told, and another is inevitably added to cover the discrepancy that arises from the previous lie, so that another lie must eventually be told to clear up that discrepancy, and so on, *ad infinitum*. The irony is that the explanation is almost always a contradiction in itself, and so the debate continues and the confusion gets compounded.

Let’s look at these alleged attributes of this being no one has ever met, and can only guess the nature of:

Omniscience

If God knows everything all at once, then aren't we helpless to change our fate? Isn't it all pre-determined? And why are some lives deserving of good things, so full of pain and unfairness while others undeserving are not? To address this, you must use another *ad hoc* ploy: *it is not our place to question God, he knows best.*

George H. Smith, asks, “how can an event be *free* in the first place if God has infallible knowledge of it be-

fore its happening?"

To know all, means that our definition of knowledge must be redacted. How can you "know" something that has no empirical evidence of existence? No one has really seen this god, they have only seen what they interpret as evidence, and this interpretation is founded on a wish or a notion, but not on tangible fact. The very foundation of religion is predicated on faith, which is the opposite of fact. It is a choice to believe in something that has no empirical evidence, and thus, no one can claim to have knowledge of this god. Only interpretations of feelings and ideas.

The nature of omniscience is such that it has to be explained outside the realm of what we know in human experience. Since we are not, ourselves, omniscient, then to make sense of it, we must depart from knowledge in its truest sense and invent a paradigm of fantasy in order to grasp any sort of coherent set of ideas.

Free will also contradicts the omniscience of God. If God knows all with no restraints, then we do not have free will. For we cannot act in any other manner other than what God has created, and seen ahead of time. So either free will does not exist, in which case we are in a determined existence, set up by God, or God does not exist, and we have free will because we are the only ones directing our own behavior (aside from parents, who direct—or should direct—the behaviors of their small children during the maturation process).

But if you believe God created everything, then he created me, and I'm an atheist. That's only because I have free will, you say? Then God cannot be omniscient, because the fact that I have free will, means that I could have chosen to be a believer, and I didn't, and

that implied choice means that God could not have known which choice I would make.

Is your brain burning yet?

Omnipotence

Omnipotence means all-powerful. The attribute of omniscience, according to Smith, also contradicts the attribute of omnipotence...

...if God knows the future with infallible certainty, he cannot change it—in which case he could not be omnipotent. If God can change the future, however, he cannot have infallible knowledge of it prior to its actual happening—in which case he cannot be omniscient. (This is similar to the issue of in what sense, if any, God can be said to have free will. Does God know his own future decisions? If so, how can those decisions be free? Perhaps God does not make decisions. If so, how can the idea of volition apply to a being with no decisions—and hence no choices—to make?) The major problem with omniscience is that the "knowledge" of God bears no resemblance to the concept of knowledge as we understand it (which is, by now, a familiar problem). Consider the prerequisites of knowledge. In order to know anything a being must be conscious, and this presupposes a living organism. If God is said to know everything, therefore, we must presume that God is a conscious, living being.

In what sense can God be said to be alive? God is not even a material being, much less a biological organism with metabolic processes. The concept of life has no meaning when applied to God.¹⁰

Recall the popular thought experiment, "Can God make a rock so big even he can't lift it?"¹¹ If he can't create that rock, then he's not all-powerful. If he can, but can't lift it, then he's not all-powerful either.

¹⁰ Smith, *ibid*, 74-75.

¹¹ When I was asked this question in my Philosophy 101 class in college, my response was "Who says God is a man" The professor rather liked that answer and even exclaimed, "That's what philosophy is all about!"

Similarly, the Archangels exist to carry out God's will. Why would God need assistance? Can't he just snap his Omni-fingers and make anything happen? Isn't his will at once already fulfilled? God, the argument goes, is not temporal or constricted by linear time—he must exist in all time, outside of time. Thus, the will of God must be enacted spontaneously, and to us, would already be there waiting for us in our linear time at any given moment.

To use Archangels to do God's bidding is an immediate contradiction of the supposed nature of this God.

So we once again find the concept of God fraught with contradiction. And the contradictions don't end there. The Omni-everything God is one which conflicts with reason and even good sense. He often cannot be one thing without negating the other thing. Take the problem of evil...

Briefly, the problem of evil is this: If God does not know there is evil, he is not omniscient. If God knows there is evil but cannot prevent it, he is not omnipotent. If God knows there is evil and can prevent it but desires not to, he is not omnibenevolent. If, as the Christian claims, God is all-knowing and all-powerful, we must conclude that God is not all-good. The existence of evil in the universe excludes this possibility.¹²

At every turn one finds logical fallacy, contradiction, cognitive dissonance and absurdity.

Omnipresence

We are told that God is omnipresent—always there watching you. This smacks of a stalker-god, does it not? Again, a fear-factor associated with religion.

Also, if Satan is omnipresent, in that he can suddenly be blamed for the evil deeds of people every-

¹² Smith, *ibid*, 81.

where at odd intervals, with no discernable limits to this influence, then what's so special about God? There is apparently another being in possession of the same attributes.

Additionally, if God is everywhere, then he is in Hell, too. And he's in the figurative hells we all too often experience in our lives. Think about what that really means. Your God is there when everything happens. *Everything*. He's there when women are raped, when children are abused. (How does that feel, Christians?) Statistics are enough to show us that a tragic number of women and children meet with that fate¹³ and most of us know someone who's had those experiences. Maybe it's even you, dear reader. If God is everywhere, that means he's there when the bad things happen too, and yet bad things still happen, so that leads to all the other problems with that concept—like his omnipotence. He let those things happen, though he had the power to prevent them, and in fact, according to your own dogma, he *knew* these things were going to happen, and did nothing to prevent them. Is that acceptable to you?

But here's the main problem with a god who is "everywhere." If God is neither a physical being, nor empty space, then how can he *be* anywhere? Much less, *everywhere*?

¹³ 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys are sexually abused before the age of 18. Nearly 70% of all reported sexual assaults occur to children ages 17 and under. An estimated 39 million survivors of childhood sexual abuse exist in America today. http://www.darkness2light.org/know-about/statistics_references.asp) In regard to women, 1 out of every 6 American women has been the victim of an attempted or completed rape in her lifetime (14.8% completed rape; 2.8% attempted rape) 17.7 million American women have been victims of attempted or completed rape. [National Institute of Justice & Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences of Violence Against Women Survey. 1998].

Omnitranscendence

Dictionary.com defines transcendence as:

1. exceeding or surpassing in degree or excellence
2. a. (in the philosophy of Kant) beyond or before experience; a priori b.(of a concept) falling outside a given set of categories c. beyond consciousness or direct apprehension
3. theol (of God) having continuous existence outside the created world
4. free from the limitations inherent in matter

Since God is incorporeal, he does not exist in space and time. So how can he be present everywhere, too?

A being cannot be omnipresent and transcendent at the same time, for if he exists, he is not above and beyond everything. He is part of everything. This is a logical fallacy, and can never be solved unless you're willing to forget what the definition of *transcendent* is.

If God is this perfect transcendent being, and always has been a perfect being, what caused him to create the world and humans? The state of being perfect means that nothing is lacking. So why create something if you don't need to? And humans are obviously imperfect, yet created by a perfect God; this is also illogical, as nothing imperfect can come from something perfect in that sense, or else it would not really be perfect.

Likewise, if the Bible is supposed to be the perfect word of HIMSELF, and we know the Bible is imperfect, then it makes no sense. If God created imperfection, then he is not perfect to begin with. Thus, he is not transcendent.

This concept is further complicated by another attribute assigned to God — that of immanence, or omnipresence. A thing cannot be both everywhere and nowhere.

The point here, is that if defining a being becomes an exercise in contradiction and futility, then the subject matter becomes unintelligible, and so loses both its clarity and its significance.

Omnibenevolence

Additionally, if a god is omnibenevolent—infinately compassionate and loving—then the problem of evil arises again. He cannot be both omnibenevolent and at the same time allow pain and suffering and also often be the source of that pain and suffering. A morally good and perfect god cannot be those things only sometimes, or this is not all-good or perfect. It is sometimes good and sometimes perfect. A perfectly loving god could not allow (nor command) the slaughter of innocents, the rape of women, the abuse, neglect, and murder of children, the rejection of the disabled, the sacrifice of a human to appease him, nor the sacrifice of even an animal for the same reason.

A perfectly loving god would not be capable of sending plagues, ordering the stoning of a man who collected firewood on the Sabbath, nor condoning (or commanding) the enslavement of people.

A perfectly loving god could not, would not, send his son to die for a concept that would not be necessary, had he not created the problem to begin with; i.e., God created Hell for those who denied him, and then ordered the death of his son to save those who would otherwise be doomed to this Hell. An omnibenevolent god would not create a problem and then offer a repulsive, cruel, or ethically reprehensible solution.

Other attributes given to God also make no sense or are absolutely false, according to the only book we have about him. The *Theopedia* graciously provided the

definitions for these attributes, and I use them here because they are the very foundation of the Christians' understanding of the god they worship.

He is reportedly **immutable**: *"this means that God never changes in his being (who he is) or promises (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17; Hebrews 6:17)."*¹⁴ And yet there are myriad examples of this god being angry, then compassionate, then making promises, then breaking them, as you will see in the other sections of this book.

One example, though, can be found in Jonah 3:10 *"...and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not."*

God is also supposedly **impassable**: *"God is without passions. He is not overwhelmed by any emotion, he is not incapacitated or weakened or stifled by any event or any amount of grief or love. Rather, God is totally self-controlled. While God does grieve, and does passionately love, he does so completely on purpose."* This one is laughable, for many of the same reasons, as the Bible cites a slew of examples that the Judeo-Christian God is very passionate, constantly overwhelmed by emotion, though I admit, seldom incapacitated or weakened or stifled, as he is much too angry for that. Again, these examples will be covered in some detail later.

God is said to be **holy**. *"To say that God is holy is to say that he is eternally separate and distinct from all impurity. The term holiness in Hebrew, qodesh, has the notion of separation, of uniqueness, of one-of-kindness as it were. (Bruce Ware)."* If we use the derivative definition of qodesh, then this is also not accurate, as this god's behavior belies any unique nature; the gods of mythology behave in the same manner, perform the same ac-

¹⁴ Theopedia. "List of God's Known Attributes."
http://www.theopedia.com/List_of_God%27s_known_attributes.

tions, perpetrate the same atrocities, and generally terrorize their adherents just as completely as the Christian God does.

God is claimed to be **infinite**. *"having no limits or boundaries in time or space or extent or magnitude."*¹⁵ If God is in everything, or is everything, unlimited, with no beginning and no end, then why does he need measly humans to worship him? Why did he create the boundaries of the Earth and other planets? Why did he supposedly create the boundary of time?

Then there's the old stand-by, God is **Love**. *"He who does not love does not know God, for God is love."* 1 John 4:8 (NKJV). *God is concerned for his creatures, and especially his people. He is tender toward them, and does not take pleasure in their suffering or condemnation. He seeks the best for us, and he offers up his Son in love as a substitution for sin. He loves to love people through Hi[m].*" Need I repeat the reasons why this proclamation is absurd? Tenderness is rare in this god. So is his lack of condemnation, or that he does not pleasure in human suffering. And what of the contradiction that killing his son is a loving act? Same goes for his alleged tendencies to be **merciful, just** and **gracious**. Theology admits that God is **jealous**, and this of course contradicts the other attributes which are considered positive.

God is **self-existent**. (related to self-sufficient, which is primarily the same pretense, with primarily the same rebuttals). *"God's self-existence means that he does not need us or the rest of creation for anything. While everything other than God depends on God for everything, God depends on no one for existence. He is absolute reality, with whom we have to reckon."* Here, it says God does not need anything. But in the singular book about him,

¹⁵ Definitions. <http://www.definitions.net/definition/infinite>.

he needs us to worship him, he needs us to obey him, he needs us to do his works, he needs us to sacrifice a lamb to him, he needs us to do battle, he needs us to turn ourselves over to him...for a self-existent god, he certainly is needy.

Also note the usual redefining of the word "reality." The dictionary defines reality as "*that which is real; an actual existence; that which is not imagination, fiction, or pretense; that which has objective existence, and is not merely an idea.*" God is none of those things.

An issue that I continue to point out, because it is at the crux of all other issues in debate, is that definition is paramount. We have dictionaries precisely because language requires common, agreed-upon definitions of words and ideas, so that we can communicate clearly. When a person changes definitions to suit his own needs, he deviates from this common ground that allows us to communicate with clarity, and then all progress is lost, and there can be no possibility of reconciliation of understanding.

Let's look at other aspects of that fundamental Christian tenet that God is Omni-everything, and then in the pages of their own holy book and from their own devout lips, offer contradictions to this assertion. To wit:

God Rested. God created the world in 6 days and then RESTED on the 7th day. Why would a God need to rest? I thought he was omnipotent?

"My God is an angry God." In the "Good Book", (which I find a blatant oxymoron) Isaiah 5:25 says that because of rejecting the law of the Lord,

On this account the anger of the Lord has burned against his people. And he has stretched out his hand against them and struck them down, and

the mountains quaked; and their corpses lay like refuse in the middle of the streets. For all this his anger is not spent. But his hand is still stretched out.

Does God need to go to anger management classes? How does this behavior make him any less evil and callous than, say, Osama Bin Laden or Saddam Hussein? Never mind the example it sets for followers. This is just the sort of verse that Fundies like Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins¹⁶ love to use as fodder for their hatred and psychopathic genocidal babble toward unbelievers.

This verse becomes even more nonsensical when we find that in James 1:19, humans are told not to be angry. God can be angry, because that's a human emotion, and He's not human, but man is human, yet cannot have the human emotion of anger. Humans must behave like...God. Who doesn't behave that way — still another slew of contradictions.

“God created man because he was lonely.” An oft-parroted declaration which is another effort to cater to simplistic explanations, and to also humanize God. If God was lonely, why didn't he just create company to exist with him wherever he was? Why create them, and place them in a universe with a time-space continuum that would require billions of years before he could even begin to have a meaningful conversation with his creations?

On a planet in a vast solar system (ostensibly also of his own making), why create billions of other planets and stars and moons and galaxies if he only needed that human species to keep him company? Why not just create one planet? And why a planet? Why not just

¹⁶ Authors of the bestselling end-times novels known as the “Left Behind” series.

suspend them somewhere? Why not create sniveling little servants who would sit at his feet and tell him how great he is in his own time-space, or make them smart enough to engage him in stimulating discourse across a great celestial table? Makes no sense to me, but maybe I'm just being a hard-ass.

Is the cognitive dissonance setting in for you, yet? Because when I considered these points, it certainly did set in for me.