

**SMITING
SHEPHERDS**
How to Overthrow Your Church

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ISBN

*Won't you triumph the day?
If not, who will?*

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Foreword

Waste your priest's time. Every hour of their time you consume is an hour they can't spend indoctrinating a young person. Christianity is not a large, powerful global organization; it is a network of countless small, local churches. No one person is powerful enough to free the world from the church's tyranny; but you are mighty enough to overthrow your church. This guide will teach you how.

Despite all of their strengths and advantages, most individual churches teeter on the brink of ruin, shepherded by clergymen on the verge of burnout from their physical, mental, financial, social, and spiritual burdens. Implementing our strategy can send any parish tumbling into a vicious circle of self-destruction when it is subtly applied to the critical few directing the congregation – smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered. Just as no one raindrop causes the flood, the aggregate of many small, non-violent, direct actions on the local level can topple even the mightiest of institutions – just like how the Tea Party destroyed the United States Government. For maximum effect, you will need some training in general Biblical scholarship, counter-apologetics, and sowing seeds of doubt – but this information has been made available to you because **synergy allows people to transcend themselves.**

Chapter 1

Be Aware of the Consequences!

Within the last fifteen years, many books have been written espousing atheist philosophies and worldviews. These books contain various social, moral, logical, rhetorical, and even theological arguments against the continued practice of religion.

This is *not* one of those guides. This guide is something all-together different. **This guide does not explain why religion must be stopped – it explains *how it may be done*.** This guide outlines a strategy; it explains a method, and provides the tools needed to bring this dream to fruition.

Whatever your reason may be for choosing to undermine your church, it cannot be done in anger. Anger is a positive emotion because it induces change, but anger fades over time. Instead, you must act out of some personal indignation, so your willpower will never be depleted. Besides, believers want to paint non-believers as being angry, embittered misanthropes, to create an artificial demand for religion. By not conforming to the believer's stereotype, their standard approaches for dealing with nonbelievers become useless.

If you haven't come out of the closet as an atheist/agnostic/anti-theist/nonbeliever/etc., then it is imperative that you hide this fact until it is safe for you to do so. **This guide was created specifically for those who *cannot come out as non-believers***, so they could undermine the churches which control them. While anyone can use these methods, it will be easier for those who already have an existing rapport.

If you question your safety, then tell no one about this guide; not even your friends. Even those who would never willingly betray you might do so unwillingly – your secret may slip out by accident, or may be revealed under duress. If it is unsafe for others to know that you are using this guide, then never let others know – because what they don't know can't hurt *you*. Hide this book, there are many helpful internet guides for hiding things. Personal experience shows that a box of a disliked board game makes an excellent hiding place. If being found out is a grave concern, then store the hard copies outside of your home. (e.g., by burying it in a durable, waterproof container in the woods, so you can read it while on nature walks.)

We realize that there are people who wish to implement our system, but the risks they face are simply too great to do so. We wish we knew what to tell them; we wish we could give them what they need to become strong. This is why it is imperative that those who are able to implement this system do so – for the sake of those who cannot.

Chapter 2

The Need for Strategic Assessments

“If you know thy enemy and know thyself, then you shall never know defeat.”

– Sun-tzu, The Art of War

The first step in developing any strategy is to assess the strengths and weaknesses of both parties, to determine the most efficient means of action. Conflict has no standardized form, and any strategy can be countered. By understanding the church’s strengths, you will understand how those strengths will be used against you. By avoiding these strengths, you can discover and exploit their weaknesses, and win by changing the narrative and fighting on your own terms. [1] We have included our strategy, based on our research and assessments, for you to use and modify to fit your particular situation.

The ideal strategy involves no fighting; it coaxes the enemy into surrendering through a combination of intimidation, influence, and leverage. **The ideal leader conquers their enemies by calculation, and not by force.** The church has spent millennia fortifying their position; while the Crusades, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and Postmodernism has eroded their clout from time of Constantine, the deck remains stacked in their favor.

Sun-tzu teaches us that a well-positioned, well-armed, well-defended, and well-supplied fortified enemy *should not* be directly confronted for *any* reason. When the deck is stacked against you, any quantum of progress will come at an enormous cost. The church explicitly engineers situations to rile opponent’s anger, and to drive them into making foolish decisions, so those who oppose them will waste their resources and manpower. Instead, **fortified opponents must be fought indirectly**, either by: [1]

- **Threatening something the enemy cares about.** This lures the enemy out of their secure position to perform a rescue.
- **Maintaining a secure perimeter around their stronghold, to prevent it from being resupplied.** When the enemy eventually consumes all of their supplies, material needs will coax them into leaving their stronghold.
- **Virtuous living.** Goodness severely demoralizes your enemies, since they will have no argument for hating you. By acting with dignity, enemies cannot rally for action and liberation against your moral outrages, since they won’t exist.

While the odds against you are great, they are not insurmountable. **Nothing is invincible.** The warriors of the ancient legends won great battles only because they attacked their enemies in their weakest places. Truly great warriors were never praised for being brave, clever, or even lucky — they merely set themselves up to succeed. There are many ways in which the strong can be overcome: [1]

- **Avoid direct confrontation.** Instead, set up traps, and make the enemy come you.
- **The weak can control the strong in moments of transition or change.** A well-timed joke can embarrass and enrage your enemies, making them attack heedlessly, without forming a strategy.
- **Bigger is not always better.** Force the enemy to waste their strength and energy, instead of letting them use it to defeat you. Rather than making one brash charge, constantly attack your enemy in different ways and different places, wearing them out by constantly responding to emergencies. A “death by 1,000 cuts” often goes unnoticed until it is too late.
- **Cause division within the enemy’s organization.** Sabotage the enemy’s relationships, friendships, and alliances. Have infiltrators enter the enemy’s organization; have them commit sabotage and spread rumors to divide a powerful enemy into smaller, weaker enemies who fight among themselves.
- **Prepare for all contingencies.** Daily training is needed to avoid becoming fearful and hesitant when confronted. Likewise, leaders must constantly develop strategies for different contingencies. The end goal of this constant plotting is not to create an exhaustive encyclopedia of strategies, or to make a master decision tree or flowchart to reduce conflict to a series of automated responses to enemy action. Such a system is impossible, because a clever opponent can find and exploit hidden weaknesses.
- **Cleverness conquers all,** and leaders who are constantly making plans will become excellent at planning. Thus, they will be able to quickly adapt their plans to account for an enemy’s trickery, or to exploit their mistakes.

Chapter 3

The Church's Strengths

"Illusion is the ultimate weapon."

— M.A.S.K.

Immature strategy is the cause of grief, [2] on the battlefield, in the boardroom, and in all aspects of human dynamics. Always remember that are no irreversibly grim situations; change is inescapable and inevitable. Even the most powerful enemy has a limited sphere of strength and influence, and their strength will dissipate when they are drawn out of that sphere. [3] This is why the kanji character for invincible (*tenkamunteki*) can be read as "having no rivals". [4]

In recent centuries, the church has been forced to assume a strategy of deception, as their loss of temporal power leaves them with no other options. These typically take the form of smokescreens, distractions, hand-waving arguments, and white lies, often taking the form of invented stories which have a grain of truth to them to make them believable. [5] These, like all psychological attacks, are intended to artificially frame others into a position of comparative weakness, reminding others of what they wouldn't like to happen. These psychological attacks are intended to produce compliance, and failing that, an emotional response to stop their target from thinking clearly or quickly, leading them to make obvious and predictable responses. [6]

Strategy is a plan of action; tactics are expedient means of achieving an end. Tactics are the part that can be seen or deciphered; strategy is the overarching plan that ties the tactics together. Tactics by themselves will inevitably fail without an overarching strategy. [7] A strategy of deception typically relies upon the following illusion tactics: [8]

- **Intimidating Appearance.** By carrying yourself as though you cannot be attacked or defeated, then others will think the same. This is why you must study your enemies, and only be concerned with what they can do, rather than what they can seem to do.
- **Professional Appearance.** Good posture and a neat, clean-cut appearance is often enough to convince someone that you're a professional, allowing for intimidation through the trappings of authority.
- **Threatening.** Posing a threat causes others to momentarily lock up as their minds transition to deal with the changed situation, and as they think up ways to mitigate or counter the threat. This break-in-the-action can be used to setup the next argument or threat.
 - Please note that this only works on the lowly, and when there are clearly-defined goals.

- **Skillful Use of Hard and Soft Approaches.** Rather than trying to do things the easy way or the hard way, it's better to equally rely on both, starting with one and finishing with the other in a metaphorical pincer maneuver. This allows an optimist to "cover their bases," and a pessimist to "hedge their bets." Either way, opponents are burdened since they must effectively fight against two opponents contained within the same person.
 - This is the basis behind surprise attacks.
 - This is most commonly used to transfer emotion, by fostering certain feelings between another, and then quickly changing your demeanor (e.g., by making someone feel tense, and then suddenly lightening up, they will drop their guard.)

The clergy is able to continue their deception strategy since they are enabled and abetted by their various external sources of power. **By working in ways to undermine, mitigate, or destroy these metaphorical horcruxes, the church will have no power over you — or anyone else.**

3.1 — Capital

Taken as a whole, American churches generated \$100 billion per year, and own \$610 billion worth of real estate (as of 2009). The Catholic Church is one of the largest corporations in the US, with branch offices in most towns. At their peak (c.1965), the Catholic Church's assets and real estate holdings exceeded those of Standard Oil, AT&T, and US Steel combined; and their roster of dues-paying members was second only to the US Government tax rolls. In addition, all churches greatly benefit from exploiting tax loopholes which exist solely to further their agendas. **All church revenue is tax-exempt (excluding a preacher's declared personal income). Churches and ministries aren't even required to register as 501(c)(3) charities;** [9] since they have an automatic "mandatory exemption" under 26 U.S. Code §508(c)(1)(A). **As a result, churches have no need or requirement to file tax returns, and since there are no shareholders, they have no financial accountability to anyone.** It is impossible to determine how much any church or religious organization has, or what they are doing with it. [10]

Because of this, many churches have grown into "a religious-industrial complex," through their investments. For example: [11]

- The Temple Baptist Church owned the Los Angeles Philharmonic Auditorium.
- The Muskingum Ohio Presbytery owned a cement block factory in Arizona.
- California's Christian Brothers were once major vintners and brandy-makers.
- The LDS church owns (or has owned) the SLC Deseret News, KSL (the Salt Lake City NBC affiliate station, via their for-profit holding company, Bonneville International), 100,000 acres of ranch land (via Zion Securities Corp.) and Laie, HI.

- The Jesuits were prominent stockholders of Republic and National Steel, Boeing, Lockheed, Curtis-Wright, and Douglass Aircraft.
- The Knights of Columbus owned the land beneath the original Yankee Stadium (but not the building itself), among other New York City landholdings.

Corporations and churches alike have found these partnerships to be extremely advantageous, due to “sale and lease-back” arrangements. Churches or religious organizations buy a business, which they finance with a mortgage, then lease the facility back to its original operators. The church charges high rents (~80% of the business’ earnings) to pay off the mortgage; so the business quickly pays for itself. Since the church is tax-exempt, it keeps 100% of the profits, and can thus safely borrow enough to outbid tax-paying purchasers, who can only work with their after-tax earnings. By acting as middlemen, churches can thus extract additional wealth from what the seller would have paid as taxes. The Supreme Court of the United States has ruled that these self-liquidating lease-back transactions, or “bootstrap purchases,” are entirely legal. [12] As a consequence, churches can exploit their mandatory tax exemption as a self-sufficient capital-producing device, and thus free themselves from the reliance (and scrutiny) of parishioners, contributors, and/or donors. [11]

Many societal problems persist due to the inadequate funding of the social programs established to eradicate them. This is because people aren’t taxed in proportion to their wealth; in a holdover from colonial times, city tax revenue is largely generated from property taxes, and not from income tax. [13] The church’s massive landholdings are tax-exempt, and thus cannot contribute to funding social programs; this indirectly perpetuates society’s problems, while creating an artificial demand for church programs which only symptomatically treat society’s ills. *Challenging these social ills is to indirectly attack the church.* Conservatives deplore welfare because it gives abused women a chance to escape, and challenges absolute patriarchy. The “welfare queen” is a myth; there are no incentives for welfare mothers to have more children, since benefits mostly come in non-cash forms (e.g., food stamps, Medicaid, and housing and daycare allowances which are paid directly to the providers). [14]

Furthermore, priests never have to deliver on *any* of their religious claims — there are no refunds in the religion business, because there are no transactions or contracts. Since all funding is “by donation,” even the most exploitative televangelist faith-healing charlatans cannot be arraigned on fraud charges. [9] A particularly shrewd and/or devious person could easily use church collection baskets to launder money. [15]

3.2 — Perceived Authority

Historically, churches were important to overall social organization — but only as instruments of social control and discipline. [16] Priests must act as authority figures, since Christianity presupposes that people do not — *and cannot* — know what is and is not good for them; God alone knows these things. [15] Because of this, **people respect priests, because priests tell**

them to do so. The primary message of all religions is that you need the religion, even though only the priests will benefit from it. Secondary messages include: [17]

- **What the group believes is reality** — not a worldview, or a theory — it just *is*. This belief is never to be discussed or argued, since truth only exists within the church and its teachings. (This is why it's impossible to win a creationist debate — even agreeing to a debate acknowledges that their views contain some quantum of merit, which automatically grants them some degree of victory. [18])
- **This “reality” is a black-and-white, good-vs.-evil dichotomy.**
- **The church members are part of a “chosen” group.** This fact makes followers feel special, which in turn, keeps them in line.
- **Submission to the group's will is required.** Individual dreams and goals must be tailored to support and coincide with the church's goals.
- **Control is asserted through fear, guilt, and shame.** The individual is *always* at fault; never the church. “Love” is always conditional and mostly directed at new members, as a recruiting tool. Those who do not conform to the church's ideology are gradually and subtly dehumanized by being assigned despised characteristics. This attack is highly abstract, to negate the reality of concrete, specific, and unique human characteristics. This new, exclusive community fosters rigidity, conformity, and intolerance against these “straw men.” This is intrinsically dangerous, as extremists never begin as extremists; it is a gradual process, which continues as long as they do not meet resistance. [19] This behavior has been codified as Catholic dogma, under Canon Law 1369. [14]

The clergy has historically opposed those who questioned their authority. Darwinian evolution, cosmology, and the geosciences are perennial threats to religious authorities since they imply a morally-neutral universe. [19] This hostility is reinforced by the inherently anti-science Bible; Christ advises us to “be like little children” who neither study calculus, economics, or medicine. While the church no longer teaches that education is sinful, education is still considered to be dangerous because it can lead to questioning dogma. [20] However to “be like little children” also means to be completely pliable to authority; children are (mostly) obedient to authority, and they will change their stories to meet what they think that adults want to hear. Also, stories about people will cause children to change their views about those people, to better conform to the stories. [21] In the same way, apologists escape the need for evidence by constantly arguing about the criteria needed for something to constitute evidence. [18]

To ensure their authority, Christians have co-opted virtually every institution to serve their needs. Christians offer no means or opportunity for alternate worldviews; four of the Ten Commandments mandate a monotheistic religion, and therefore oppose a pluralistic society. Outsiders are marginalized, but are accepted (or at least tolerated) as long as they don't push the invisible boundaries which were established for them. [14] While this is seemingly inclusive, group pressure and the tendency to conform will play

an influence the thoughts and actions of non-Christians. Separating people from competing influences, discrediting, and/or defining potential competing influences as illegitimate is sufficient to control most people's attitudes. [22] Children are shaped by coercion (typically in the form of guilt and expectations) to condition them into reliance upon external authority for their moral choices amid the chaos of our lives. This way, they will not challenge male authority figures as adults. [19]

Anyone can assume this authority; it is not regulated in any way.

There is no need for ordination; anyone claiming to be "ordained by God," [11] holds as much legal and spiritual authority as a seminary graduate. This is easier in the US, where the *appearance of honesty* is valued above honesty. This practice is the seed of "moral corruption;" when lying becomes commonplace, it becomes increasingly necessary to hide previous deceptions, which quickly snowballs. When lying is taken for granted, it then becomes a part of one's self-presentation and will inevitably spread from the public sphere to the private sphere, corroding interpersonal bonds. [23] This is why self-ordained priests tend to have short careers. Still, **most religious authorities are self-proclaimed**; this is especially true of Catholicism, which invented most of its traditions and mythos: There are no biblical mandates for: [22]

- An exclusive, hierarchical clergy.
- The sacraments of reconciliation and marriage.
- Any complicated or legalistic postmortem punishment and reward system.
- Several central dogmas and doctrines (e.g., papal infallibility, the Immaculate Conception, the Assumption of Mary).
- Some Catholic traditions even *directly contradict* the Bible, like:
- Celibate clergy (1TIM 3:2).
- One-way confessions to priests (JAM 5:16).
- Calling priests "father" (MAT 23:9).

It should be noted that Fundamentalism strongly correlates with racism, homophobia, ethnocentrism, and punitiveness. Fundamentalists target women, homosexuals, Jews, atheists, blacks, and a host of other groups when confronted with the imperfections of our culture. [14] This is in part, due to Fundamentalism's binary worldview, which renders its followers incapable of seeing others as anything but inverted reflections of themselves. Those who believe they are immune from evil and/or bear no resemblance to their enemy, will inevitably come to embody the evil which they claim to fight. When this "evil" is externalized, the resulting "moral purification" always entails eradicating the other group. [19] This has come to a head in the form of Dominionism, an extreme form of Calvinist Reconstructionism cloaked in rabid American patriotism. The Dominionists believe they hold dominion over all-creation, as promised by God (GEN 1:26-31), and thus seek to redefine traditional democratic and Christian terms and concepts to augment their political power. Essentially, Dominionism is a form of fascism, [19] with American Christians playing the role of the master race. [19] Dominionists now control at least six national TV networks, virtually all of the 2,000+ religious radio stations in the US, and the Southern Baptist Convention. **Debating**

Dominionists is fruitless, because they seek hegemony, not dialogue.

[19] “It doesn’t matter if you believe this stuff. What matters is that they do.”
[17]

In many ways, the clergy fear love the most, for love can unleash passions and break bonds far stronger than their carefully constructed edifices that tap and enclose followers. [19]

3.3 — Weaponized Language

George Orwell was the first to notice that language, not physical force, is the key to manipulating minds. In fact, growing evidence in behavioral sciences reveals that a smiling “Big Brother” has a greater influence than a visibly threatening person. [24] Modern Christians have learned to avoid violence, if nothing else, to avoid the ensuing backlash. Christians prefer to poison the channels of public information, bending the truth to support themselves. Conservative Christians claim to be super-patriots, while seeking to destroy every Constitutional liberty. Conservative Christians laud free enterprise, but make their living as the spokesmen of monopolies and vested interests. **By simultaneously controlling both the power of the state and the power of the market, hegemony is ensured.** [19]

Religious belief is commonly defended through clever semantics. When confronted about a specific issue with their faith, Christians will commonly claim not to believe that aspect. When subsequently asked why they do not believe that aspect, or why they continue to believe at all, then the conversation transforms into a monologue disguised as a dialogue, [18] to drown out any contrary views.

3.4 — Psychological Tools

Christians assert their dominance through the exploitation of seven interlocking psychological devices. Christians are able to successfully deny this manipulation because, in isolation, these techniques are too obvious and transparent to be manipulative, or they have fleeting effects which quickly subside. However, each of these methodologies synergistically interacts with one another; their cumulative effect greatly exceeds the sum of their individual effects. These interlocking psychological devices include: [22]

1. **The Bible’s Benign, Attractive Persona.** The Bible appears quaint and harmless, and anything objectionable is deeply coded within its subtext. However, everything the Bible says holds alternate meanings, which are learned as the initiate deepens their studies. (Essentially, this is the classic “bait-and-switch” con.)
2. **Discrediting “The World.”** Christianity establishes a rhetorical framework wherein *ad hominem* attacks (i.e., personal insults) are legitimate arguments, to be used on Christians and challengers alike as a means of control, since Christianity must dominate any and all aspects of life (COL 31:-17; PHIL 2:1-11; 1COR 12:12-31).

3. **Doublespeak.** By design, the New Testament uses deliberately confusing terminology, to uphold the Pharisaic tradition of putting interpretive glosses on scriptures; Paul freely admits to this deceit (2COR 12:16). Common words and phrases are loaded with additional confusing and/or contradictory alternate meanings, so they can no longer effectively communicate information. The new meanings are always more somber and meaningful than their common-usages. As a member is further indoctrinated, these new meanings supplant the old ones; this makes communication with non-members difficult, and later, unintelligible. This insulates members from outside influences, and helps portray outsiders as foolish and/or immoral. The Tower of Babel incident demonstrates that God encourages the use of doublespeak against the advocates of science, technology, and mutual cooperation, since these can all usurp God's sovereignty. [22]
 - Doublespeak is enhanced by the many ways wordplay, translations, and hyperbole is used within the literary traditions of other cultures; modern biblical translations will change or remove words or passages to optimize this effect.
4. **Assaulting Integrity.** Religious faith demands conceding to the idea that belief can be sanctified by something other than evidence. [25] Christians further assume that any curiosity or doubts regarding dogma are forms of ridicule and rage. The immoral actions and/or character flaws of other Christians are usually shrugged aside, invoking the No-True-Scotsman Fallacy as the go-to defense. [26] As a result, Christians have rigged discourse such that it is considered rude to directly question their beliefs; this can only be done indirectly, if at all. [27]
5. **Inducing Disassociation.** Faith is presented as a constant outpouring and energy expenditure, and the "peace" and "joy" it provides does not mitigate this drudgery. Obsessive conscious concentration is lauded; mental relaxation, flights of fancy, and anything resembling ecstasy are devalued and negatively characterized. (1THES 1:3, 5:5-9; 2THES 1:11-12; 1TIM 6:12; EPH 6:23-24). Letting your guard down for even a second can possibly result in instant damnation, as Christ will swiftly return at an unknown time (1THES 5:2,4; 2PET 3:10; REV 3:3, 16:15). The "Full Armor of God" (EPH 6:10-17) is a cumbersome military uniform which submerges individuality, insulates the believer from all but a few approved forms of stimulation, restricts their freedom of movement, and is better for making war than making love.
6. **Bridge Burning.** The gap between the close-knit circles of believers and the non-believer outsiders are widened, such that those who are inside can never escape.
7. **Holy Terror.** Fear is used to ensure compliance, and actions to the contrary are evasions or obfuscations. "Guilt is the cornerstone of the church and fear is its steeple." Christianity only offers the hope of deliverance from its own punishments — "They cut you with knives to sell you bandages." The goal is perpetual submission to the hierarchy, because the hierarchy submits to no one, including God. When the elders betray us through their misconduct, we are given the responsibility to

submit to another elder, who may do the same things to us. [28]

3.5 — Doublespeak

As previously stated, Christians make frequent use of doublespeak to further their agenda. This weaponization of language takes on several forms, which we must explore and understand. Examples include:

- Christians work to redefine words to make the US Constitution match with their own internal legal system of “Christian Principles.” With this, Christians can protect their vested interests, condemn their opponents, and maintain an air of democracy. By assuming control over our history, the validity of the histories of other groups can be denied, and thus the idea that there are other acceptable ways of living and being is also denied. In their rhetoric, there is only one way to be a Christian, and only one way to be an American. [19]
 - Specifically, “liberty” is construed to refer to “religious liberty,” [14] and more specifically, the “liberty” found when one accepts and obeys Jesus Christ, and is thus “liberated” from the world. [19] Alternately, “liberty” has been redefined to mean as “fealty to the Spirit of the Lord.” The process of “liberty” “frees” (i.e., eradicates) different moral codes and belief systems, and introduces a single, uniform, and unquestioned “Christian” orientation. “Liberty” thus becomes a synonym for theocracy. [19]
 - “Faith” is commonly invoked by believers as a thought-terminating cliché to end arguments. [18]
 - “That’s because God wanted it that way” is the ultimate thought-terminating cliché; it allows Christians to cite *literally anything* as evidence for their claims, regardless of what it is, or what it does. However, since this phrase can mean anything, it ultimately means nothing, since it can’t *prove* anything, nor can it even demonstrate a causal link. [27]
 - Censorship is a “selection process.” [29]
 - The Gideons offer “free bibles,” then ask for donations. [14] Likewise, preachers can ignore “No soliciting” signs since they are not selling anything *per se*, they are giving the “free gift” of salvation. [19]
 - “Ethical conduct” simply means supporting and campaigning for their particular agenda. Often to be “moral,” one must oppose gay rights, affirmative action, gun control, stem-cell research, doctor-assisted suicide, abortion, the United Nations, most liberal politicians, and support patriarchy. [30]
 - The term “sin” has been rephrased to remove its collective dimension. Originally sin referred to violations of the natural and economic order, or against the concept of justice itself. This term has been re-framed to refer to personal indiscretions (e.g., adultery, drunkenness, drugs, gambling, and foul language), which are obsessively pursued with the same energy and zeal as the large-scope problems sin once embodied. [31]

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- Additionally, acts which promote individualistic self-consciousness are branded as sinful. Devoting all of one's personal resources to a heroic, principled, and individualistic purpose are contrary to the church's interests; [22] if society's ills were actually cured, then the church's symptomatic treatments would become unnecessary.
- Any act or practice not specifically created for Christians worship is *de facto* sinful, since it doesn't serve God, the church, or the church's agenda. This is why Christians have issued repeated, vocal condemnations on the following:
 - ❖ Yoga, which is derived from Hindu practices, is a "demonic doorway." [32]
 - ❖ Martial arts are "demonic," because the various stances and striking hand positions are interpreted as being *mudra*, making martial arts a *de facto* form of yoga, [32] as do the breathing methods, centering techniques, and Zen-inspired meditation influences. [29] Likewise, a traditional Japanese *dōjō* includes cultural elements, (e.g., bowing to the *kamiza* and to instructors) which can be confused with idolatry. [32]
 - ❖ Mantras are demonic because they induce trance states, which are claimed to allow spirits to enter the body. The fact that prayer operates in an identical fashion is never discussed. [32]
 - ❖ Rock music (in all its forms and derivatives) is evil because it induces hypnotic trances through "mindless chants" and repetition, [32] even though much of the Western musical tradition features a repeating chorus.
 - ❖ "Satanic" meditation is passive (e.g., *zazen*, "zoning out"), whereas Christian meditation is active (e.g., reading, memorizing, etc.). [32] Constantly performing non-productive cognitive tasks prevents independent thought.
 - ❖ Many fundamentalists view the Catholic sacrament of the Eucharist as a form of idolatry, as Jesus' infinite power cannot be contained in a small, man-made object. Ergo, since it is not the true Jesus, it is *de facto* demonic. [32]
- Textbooks used in Christian parochial and homeschooling re-interpret history to serve their agenda. Joseph McCarthy is seen as a patriot, whose "conclusions, although technically unprovable, were drawn from the accumulation of undisputed facts." These books also blame Africa's persistent poverty and political chaos on a lack of faith, ignoring the repressive colonial European regimes that exploited the continent and decimated its population. [19]
- The church imposes itself onto important life experiences, usurping the power of those moments (e.g., "Christian marriage"). [33]
- A combination of framing and phrasing is used to discredit atheists, including:
 - Branding atheists as "arrogant," when many Christians claim to literally have every answer, and certain knowledge of past and future

- events. No evidence of these claims is ever presented, and questioning these claims is considered a shameful act. [27]
- The terms “so-called atheist” or “admitted atheist” are phrased to marginalize or discredit that worldview. In reality, it is no different, and no less common than being a “so-called Presbyterian” or “admitted Southern Baptist.” [14]
 - Atheists are only discussed when they conform to “designated” roles which actively degrade or destroy society (e.g., illegal drug user, prostitutes, “rampant materialists and cultural elitists,” etc.). [27]
 - This is demonstrated by using “atheist” as a scaremongering adjective, most commonly in “atheistic communism.” In reality, atheism does not endorse any economic system. Both the founder of capitalist doctrine (Adam Smith) and its most rabid champion (Ayn Rand) were both non-believers. [14]
 - Christians claim to be marginalized and unjustly persecuted, while unhesitating persecuting any person or organization over any perceived slight. The Southern Baptist Convention and the Catholic League are famous for their attempts to control the secular media through legal threats, public humiliation, letter-writing campaigns, and sponsor boycotts. This behavior is an inarguable part of Catholic dogma, as Canon Law 1369. [14]
 - Those who resist or question the alleged persecution are labeled as “anti-Christian bigots” to rile up the Christian base, even if that claim is demonstrably untrue. [14]
 - Christians frequently complain about a liberal hegemony of the mainstream media, while maintaining their own TV and radio empire. These stations weave theological and political viewpoints together, and are generally unscrutinized or unchallenged by the mainstream media. [14]
 - Christianity relies on intentionally undefined terms, so Christians can make their religion to say whatever they want it to mean at the time. For example:
 - Religion itself is an undefined term, which equally refers to non-deistic “philosophic” religions, like Zen Buddhism and Taoism. [26]
 - God explicitly commanded that his name shall not be taken in vain, but he made literally no effort to explain what that meant. At any given time, this can mean a prohibition on: [29]
 - Calling on God, and/or using his name in profanity and/or filler speech (e.g., “Oh my God!”). This is commonly invoked as a means of limiting personal expression and the freedom of speech.
 - Swearing oaths and contracts in God’s name.
 - Claiming to be a Christian without observing all of the required standards and practices. This can be used to condemn *any* action, since it’s an impossibly vague request with wildly varying requirements.

- Linking God to your personal causes and agendas to grant them legitimacy.
- Christians make frequent use of seemingly-profound statements or “deepities” which appear true on one level, and meaningless on all others. Examples include: [18]
 - Everything Deepak Chopra says.
 - “Having faith is really about seeking something beyond faith itself.”
 - HEB 1:11
 - “Faith is faith in the living God, and God is and remains a mystery beyond human comprehension. Although the ‘object’ of our faith, God never ceases to be the ‘subject.’”

3.6 — Hypnotic Speech

Priests have adopted a manner of speaking which induces hypnotic trances in order to get their parishioners to relax, listen, and ultimately comply. These hypnotic techniques are not explicitly taught as such, but as a series of “best practices,” unconsciously picked up through the emulation of successful preachers. These hypnotic techniques include: [24]

1. **A marked, regular, soothing rhythm.** Abruptness shocks people out of trances.
2. **The use of refrain and frequent repetition.**
3. **Guided imagery in the onset.** This encourages a system of compliance and cooperation, thinking the thoughts that the speaker wishes to convey. Typically, the focus is on an idealized past which never existed. [34]
 - True power is the ability to manipulate symbols and symbolism; this is the language of emotion. This is why myths are so powerful — myths pinpoint and propagate a society’s values, particularly on how to act and what they should be held important. Myths compel a response from us, and cause us to think about the consequences related to that feeling. Myths are always rooted in history, as the past calling out to the present. [35]
4. **Vague imagery once the trance is established.** Omitting details forces the subject to fill them in for themselves, and concentrate further. Overly-descriptive stories cause the listener to get wrapped-up in the details, and they will lose their train of thought (like a Tolkien novel).
5. **Nested stories.** Telling a story-within-a-story requires more concentration to keep everything straight. The resulting mental fatigue enhances the power of trance states. Christians are notorious for this, because of Christ’s frequent use of parables (i.e., Rather than being direct, priests tell the story about the time that Christ told a story, and relate that to a personal story about how they used that story to help a troubled person, and how that experience relates to your personal story.).
6. **Using routines designed to generate emotional responses.** These routines are chained together to reinforce their familiarity. The order of these routines rarely change significantly, mainly because there are a finite number of combinations, and the best ones have already been discovered (which is why few churches ask for cash up front). These

routines are designed to evoke friendly and positive emotions only among their own members (e.g., Muslims don't sing "Onward Christian Soldiers"). [34]

7. **Trance-inducing venues.** Walking into a church triggers rituals (e.g., removing hats, blessing with holy water, kneeling to the tabernacle). Catholic and Orthodox churches commonly use ritual aromas to trigger trance states. Group size and density has a powerful effect; mass is held *en masse* to amplify individual experiences. (This is also why poorly-attended stadiums and bars are boring.) [34]
 - This is why the traditional trappings of authority are de-emphasized in evangelical churches; their buildings must be expanded or abandoned as their congregations grow or shrink in size, which is something that a traditional stone cathedral will not allow. [34]
8. **Using probing questions to stir emotional turmoil and find parishioner's weaknesses.** Coming out of emotionally-charged situations triggers an endorphin release. [9] Priests stir up this distress, to present religion as a solution to the parishioner's weaknesses. ("They cut you, so they can sell bandages.") By riling up parishioners, and then coaxing them to relax and pray, the parishioner will feel better and associate religion with tension relief — despite the fact that the priest *caused* the tension.
 - This is a favorite technique among youth ministers. [34]

3.7 — Double Binds

Totalitarianism is based upon laws which are impossible to obey; this ensures guilt, so punishment is always authorized. ("Damned if you do; damned if you don't.") The resulting tyranny is even more impressive when it is enforced by a zealous error-detecting privileged caste or party. [36] This psychology presupposes the fact that its originators (the priests who led ancient communities) wanted to grant themselves the power to impose punishments – or to indirectly do so by giving God the right to punish. Every action had to be considered willed and originating from the consciousness, so that people could be held culpable, judged, and punished – so they could become guilty. [15] Cultists are notorious for this; they preach perfection and condemn members for perceived imperfection. Cult members then spend years trying to live up to an ideal, and always fail because their standards are beyond human capability. [24]

Christians are thus able to control people via a combination of the "Just World" hypothesis and victim blaming. It is assumed that good things happen to good people, and vice-versa. Therefore, anytime something bad happens to someone, they are assumed to be a moral failure. This is the unfortunate reason why rape victims are blamed instead of rapists, and mugging victims are blamed for being in bad parts of town. At best, American Christians only see four groups of victims as being "legitimate:"

1. Victims of violent crimes.
2. Victims of circumstance (e.g., natural disasters, serious illnesses).

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3. Victims of kidnapers and/or hostages.
4. Victims of civil torts (e.g., personal injury, malpractice) who can address the courts.

A fifth class, for victims of enforced dependency and/or forced behavioral reconstruction (e.g., brainwashing, gaslighting or other manipulation) is common, but has yet to extend itself to the whole of society. [24]

These double-binds are commonly implemented by "predicting" inevitable events, or by implementing "solutions" which either augment or straight-up cause the problem they intend to fix. Some of the more popular versions of this tactic include:

- Christians seek their own persecution. Christ claimed that if he were persecuted, so would his followers (JOH 15:20). Christ was eventually mocked, spit upon, betrayed, beaten, and slowly publicly executed. Therefore, resisting Christian authority validates Christian authority. [32]
- Parochial schools tend to have higher standardized test scores and college acceptance rates than public schools — *because they are allowed to pick and choose their students*. Problematic students are deliberately excluded, and left to the public school districts. Parochial schools maintain their image not by teaching, but by their refusal to educate. [14]
- Contraception failure is the root cause of most abortions. The majority of people want to use contraception as their primary family planning option, and seek abortion as a last resort. Christians misrepresent this fact to further their agenda. **By limiting access to contraception, Christians cause abortions.** [14]
- Christianity uses unconscious fear and hatred to promote its goals. Churches claim to be the only salvation from a world of intrinsic injustice, poverty, cruelty, and misery — despite the fact that these conditions can be cured with sweeping economic, political, and educational reforms. [20]
- Christians believe that "he that increaseth wisdom increaseth sorrow," and they infer that he that increaseth sorrow increaseth wisdom. This is why they will donate money to build playgrounds with so many rules no one can have fun. Likewise, many shops, museums, etc. are closed or have restricted hours on Sundays, so that people can't enjoy them on their days off. [20]
- During the Satanic Panic, Christian leaders claimed that Satanists had allegedly infiltrated every police department, welfare department, and all areas of psychology and psychiatry, which is why their crimes go undetected. [32] While there has never been any direct evidence for these Satanic cults, this lack of evidence was cited as a proof of "cover-up" conspiracies. [29] The indirect evidence cited in cult activity claims was so broad and varied that anything could be construed as a sign of such activity.
- Faith healers blame the inevitable failure of their healing ceremonies on the subject's lack of faith. [9]

3.8 — Satan

While the fear of Satanic cults is far less prevalent now than its 1970's and 1980's heyday, the fearmongering which drove such panics still persists; only the targets have changed. The perceived threat of Satanic ritual abuse conspiracies was the most intense moral panic since McCarthyism. To some degree, it still persists — Halloween candy is still being x-rayed for razors — but no one knows anyone harmed by Halloween candy; and no one has ever been arrested for these crimes, despite the fact they've been allegedly operating in the same neighborhoods, for thirty-plus years. [21]

Rationale

Exploiting the spectacle of Jim Jones and then-popular fad of Multiple Personality Disorder stories (e.g., *Sybil*, *The Three Faces of Eve*, etc.), [21] these cults allegedly operated for years in small towns, completely undetected, as they were so organized and Machiavellian that they could and would do anything to preserve their secret. These cults ran unchecked because the police were frightened into silent compliance, despite their ability and history of competently infiltrating the Ku Klux Klan, the Communist Party, drug syndicates, and Mafia crime families. The slightest skepticism of these claims was seen as the ultimate betrayal — not only to the children allegedly harmed — but to the adult accusers, and their sense of identity as saviors. In this polarized atmosphere, doubters were condemned as part of the patriarchal backlash against the crusade to stop sexual violence. Defense lawyers cried foul at the lack of corroborating evidence — no adult witnesses, no pornography, no scars, no blood stains, no bodies — and no testimony from abused children without relentless pressure from parents and investigators. [21] Historically, this has always been the case [37] — the police can't infiltrate secret criminal covens, *because they simply don't exist*. [23] Without physical evidence, convictions were based on testimony alone, mostly by children, who agreed in monosyllables to the prosecutor's stories. [21]

Like all social movements, many factors drove the "Satanic Panic." These include:

- The hyper-conservative Reagan and Bush I administrations, which was a backlash at a generation's worth of turbulent gender relations changes. Middle-class adolescents became open about their premarital sexual experimentation, abortion was legalized, the number of unwed teenage mothers quadrupled, the divorce rate tripled, women with young children streamed into the workforce, and day-care centers proliferated. [21]
- After the Vietnam War ended, Baby Boomers simply had nothing to be mad at anymore; they became aimless rebels without causes. With no obvious enemies, they became forced to invent some. [21]
 - Satanism became a hot discussion topic on talkshows, which were shown every weekday and thus required 260 topics per year. Hosts quickly ran out of other material, leading to discussions of weirdo fringe topics to fill the time, and to compete with other shows. The

- same argument can be made for movies and TV news magazines, like 20/20. The increased coverage of Satanism was then perceived, and later cited, as evidence that the threat was growing. [38]
- In an unanticipated pincer-like attack, this also coincided with the height of televangelism, and its adaptation of the talkshow format (i.e., the Bakkers).
 - Western philosophy holds the unique notion that people exist to strive for moral perfection, yet are not to blame for failing to attain that ideal. These failures are the result of hidden, inner enemies undermining society. The cognitive structure of this demonology encourages people to psychologically project their fears and guilt (i.e., their “inner demons”) onto convenient scapegoat groups. This strongly appeals to people with authoritarian personalities, as their extremely rigid thought patterns demand complete conformity and allegiance to the social norms imposed by an official ideology or religious belief system. [23] Satan and Satanic cults were the ideal choice for an enemy-stereotype scapegoat because:
 - No other scapegoat was available at the time.
 - This allowed Americans to maintain their sentimental historical delusion of being more morally righteous than the rest of the world's people. [23]
 - “Satanic Cult” is a loaded phrase which combines two powerful images: Satan and cults.
 - Americans do not use the term “cult,” in its anthropological sense (i.e., as a new religious group which is distinctively different from the society's previous religious groups). Instead, “cult” is a loaded word which implies that a group is dangerous, manipulative, secretive, and conspiratorial. Moreover, cults are seen as *de facto* heresy, and an intrinsic threat to all decent, traditional cultural values. [23]
 - The term “Satanic Cult activity” is vague enough to apply to a wide variety of social deviants: e.g., child molesters, violent teenage gangs, psychopathic serial murderers, teenagers involved in makeshift occultism, and harmless practitioners of unconventional religions. [23]
 - Satan and Satanism played a large role in the pop culture of that era; it was the golden age of low-budget horror movies, and many films desperately tried to cash in on the success of The Exorcist, Rosemary's Baby, and The Omen. [21]
 - Satan symbolizes losing faith in legitimate authority. Fighting Satanic cults is what anthropologists call a “revitalization movement” — a social movement aimed at restoring an idealized society to its past greatness and moral purity. These social movements typically blame the subversion of dominant cultural values upon an evil internal enemy. [23]
 - The economic downturns of the era escalated poverty, which in turn, attracted more people to religion.
 - Fearing competition, Satanic cult myths allowed fundamentalist churches to literally demonize New Age religions, which were growing in popularity at the time. [21]

- Religious people are paradoxically pleased and relieved by news of Satanic crimes — confirming the existence of Satan, by proxy, confirms the existence of God. [23]

Groupthink is instrumental in all of this. Groupthink is a collective response to conformity pressures operating within communication networks and groups which are somewhat closed to external influences and alternate beliefs. Groupthink occurs in any group requiring cooperative interaction between members, which create social pressures to conform. These pressures suppress critical thinking and reality testing, in favor of group solidarity. Members with deviating viewpoints can cause internal conflicts and bickering, so they are subtly ostracized or chastised for their disloyalty. Eventually, the process alters each member's perception of reality, and those who might privately disagree start to doubt themselves, changing their beliefs to comply with the group's conception of reality. [23]

When a society perceives an external enemy — even one which poses no genuine credible threat — the society responds by collectively manufacturing an evil enemy image. This image is a stereotype of the enemy group, which possesses whatever qualities are considered to be the most immoral at the time; it is a reversed mirror image of the society which creates it. The image-creating society thus becomes a contrasting stereotype, to allow its members to exaggerate their own virtue, while silencing critics and dissenters by labeling them as traitors (e.g., "Red fanatics" from the "evil empire" of Communism; the "Japs;" "Huns;" and "Indian savages"). Eventually, this becomes a "moral crusade" and/or "witch hunt" for the perceived social deviants, which may or may not actually even exist. Eventually, rumor-inspired copycat crimes create a self-fulfilling prophecy, since a "deviant ideology" is needed to rationalize deviant behavior. [23]

These completely-absurd rumors took off and became accepted because of the zeitgeist, which consistently provided all three forms of rumor fuel to many towns and cities: [23]

1. An ambiguous event which causes many people to enter a stressful situation (e.g., economic downturn, unexplained crimes).
2. Drawing attention to a previously-unconsidered fact and/or aspect of a common, ongoing activity (e.g., dual-income families placing their children in daycare).
3. Symbolic urban legends or folktales which are reworked for the modern world by integrating the above two items. In particular, Satanic cult rumors are derived from the:
 - "Blood ritual myth," where conspirators kidnap and murder children, to use their blood and body parts in religious rituals. This is an enduring myth because it universally frightens every parent. [23]
 - "Surprisers Surprised legend," where those planning a surprise party enter the guest-of-honor's home, only to find them doing something embarrassing. [21]
 - Many "Satanic cult activities" were just teenagers on legend-trips and/or were derived from their legend-trip stories. [38]

Legitimizing Factors

- Satanic cult rumors were considered to be legitimate because: [23]
- They were conveyed by authority figures (e.g., parents, teachers, ministers, police officers, etc.).
 - People don't question the statistics given by authority figures, especially when communicated via a one-way media (e.g., radio, television, sermons). Senator McCarthy sent America into a Red Scare with his list of Communist infiltrators in the US State Department — *but he never showed anyone the list.* [39] No one asked for it — and no one *could* ask for it. Likewise, Geraldo Rivera stated on his then-popular show that there were 1,000,000 Satanists in the US — 1 in every 230 people — and no one ever noticed it until that broadcast.
 - Certain groups (e.g., fundamentalist churches, small town police forces) are more ideologically receptive to Satanic cult rumors, and more likely to actively disseminate them. When spread on the local level via personal, face-to-face relations, these bizarre claims attained more credibility than the media could ever grant. The most convincing way of communicating an outrageous or frightening story is hearing it from “a-friend-of-a-friend” who “really knows,” [23] because this has a built-in reason-suppressing mechanism — questioning these claims requires questioning your friendship and sense of community. [21]
 - Religious-based threats allowed clergymen to leverage their expertise and gain credibility in the secular world. The National Education Association permitted religious evangelists to speak to public school students about the psychological dangers of Satanism, since they were the “experts.” The fear and spectacle drew large audiences to information seminars, which charged admission fees of \$70/person (\$170, adjusted for inflation). [23] The exaggerated crime statistics provided at these seminars (e.g., Satanists commit 50,000 human sacrifices per year) went unchallenged, since the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting system does not compile occult crime data. These proselytizing seminars emphasized that satanic beliefs lead to monstrous crimes and pernicious thinking, requiring a suspension of disbelief and critical judgement when hearing the self-proclaimed cult survivors' incredible tales. This suspension of critical faculties leads audiences to ignore inconsistencies and not question evidence. Debates were uncommon, as to emphasize their pro-conspiracy view. [38]
 - The rumors were repeated many times, from different sources, resulting in a “consensual validation of reality” (i.e., wikiality). *Rumormongers are not propagandists*; propagandists are small cliques that actively promote stories to a passive, fact-ignoring audience. Rumors are a social process of collaborative (tandem) story-telling set on finding consensual explanations for ambiguous circumstances. [23]

- Rumors spread because people assume that their friends won't lie to them. Likewise, friends-of-friends are also thought to always speak the truth, by proxy. This testimony is unjustly accepted as absolute evidence, even in the absence of corroborating physical evidence.
- A rumor is "only just a rumor" once it has been proven false. However, rumors usually contain some seed of truth, which is blown out of proportion by misperception, distortion, and embellishment. Legends, like rumors, are primarily oral; the line between "as if it were true" and "is true" become blurred and shaded. The Satanic cult myths were based on the following seeds of truth, listed in order of prevalence: [23]
 - A murder or suicide.
 - "Satanic" graffiti.
 - Cemetery vandalism.
 - A violent crime in an otherwise peaceful small town.
 - Church meetings or police conferences concerning the dangers of Satanic cults.
 - Mass-media presentation about Satanism cults.
 - Accusations made as part of conflicts between local youth groups.
 - The discovery of mutilated animals. [23] (It should be noted that many of these animal mutilations were merely roadkill. [21])
- Rumors can't be stopped with denials, refutations, or by remaining silent: [23]
 - Since rumors are constantly being repeated; failing to act only enables them to spread.
 - Denials are ignored, since they are not interesting or newsworthy enough to repeat.
 - Rumormongers will distort denials or refutations made by authority figures into confirming the rumor's validity.
- Even poorly educated, un-skeptical people will disbelieve rumors if they have specialized knowledge about the rumor subject. Stories of cattle mutilations by UFOs or Satanists were widely accepted by their respective conspiracy theorists, but never believed by the ranchers. [23]
- Experimental evidence shows that fear-provoking rumors paradoxically satisfy people's need for information, while increasing their collective anxiety. People suffering from anxiety due to stressful life situations seek explanations for that anxiety. If the reasons for the anxiety are unclear, then people will grasp rumor stories for an explanation. [23]
 - People will thus half-believe any rumor story as a "better-safe-than-sorry" precaution.
 - The most successful rumor stories typically involve the teller knowing an eyewitness. Rumormongers can easily invent this testimony to legitimize their fabrications and satisfy a variety of personal motives, such as: [23]
 - Obtaining attention and prestige.

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- Expressing their fantasy fears.
- Attacking a group they hate.
- Amusing themselves or others.
- Expressing some mental delusion. Most of the reported Satanic cult survivors suffered from Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD).
- The rumors were personally relevant to many people.
 - These rumors keyed into the common “stranger danger” fear, since their politicians were fed the false statistic of 50,000 child kidnappings by strangers each year.
 - If that statistic were true, then every school would have one missing student.
 - In reality, only a few hundred children are taken by strangers each year. Most child kidnappings are perpetrated by their divorced, non-custodial parents. [21]
 - The police officers, social workers, and clergymen who were the primary myth promoters were primarily focused on teenage pseudo-Satanism. Finding these behaviors in any community is always a self-fulfilling prophecy since:
 - Teens have always rebelled against police officers, social workers, and clergymen.
 - Teenagers in their piss-and-vinegar stages embrace Satanic imagery, and its “scare your parents” aesthetic as a means to circumvent authority and establish their independence.
 - Pseudo-Satanists are commonly teens rebelling from an overly restrictive, traditional religious family background which emphasizes that the world is an evil place. These young people misbehave because they actually perceive themselves as being bad people, and they prefer this label to having an ambiguous, ill-defined, or pre-determined identity.
 - These rumor stories comforted the parents of delinquents, drug users, and suicide victims. It’s easier to blame heavy metal bands and secret cults than to admit to being shitty parents.

3.9 — Inerrant Bible

Modern translations, such as the New International Version (NIV), have smoothed over many theological problems by cleverly re-interpreting many problematic texts and editing out many contradictions. [14] While there are many theological objections to these modern translations, the popularity of the King James Version (KJV) endures for a more practical reason — *it in the public domain*. Translations are the intellectual property of their translator — reading a modern Biblical translation in mass could be construed as a public performance, and the translator could be entitled to royalties. The KJV was completed in 1611, and can be used freely by all, since it pre-dates the notion of copyright.

Reading the Bible is a tricky endeavor, regardless of the version, since there are several different types of stories and lessons interlaced throughout. These stories fall into four categories: [22]

1. **Explicit Devotional Program Instructions.** Explicit commands to perform concrete acts (e.g. "Thou shalt not steal").
2. **Implicit Devotional Program Instructions.** Commands given in figurative, non-literal terms (e.g., "turn the other cheek").
3. **Direct Suggestions.** Explanation of the expected mindset via allegories. These are especially important; as the crux of Protestantism is that all Biblical events are allegories for the reader's inner life.
4. **Reverse Suggestions.** Biblical allegories which reinforce the negative psychological consequence of belief (e.g., those involving animals, demons, and disasters). These provide the believer with feedback to make sure they are "on target."

However, it is unclear how to determine which passages fall into which category. While some passages are literal, others can be explained away to make the stories more believable — but what drives this "selective literalism"? [40] How can anyone tell what is real, and what is a metaphor? For example, some Christians take the story of Noah's Ark literally, while others view the story figuratively. Which group is correct? — and what criteria do priests and biblical scholars use to determine the status of a given passage or story? [27]

This is why apologists act with such zeal — they aren't trying to convince others; *they are trying to convince themselves*. [18] Witnessing does not convince outsiders to join; it convinces the witness to stay. To meet this end, apologists exploit a number of cognitive biases to influence decision making in lieu of arguments.

In particular:

- Apologists frequently invoke the confirmation bias to make extreme logical leaps that "prove" the accuracy of scriptural events. [18]
 - This is especially true with the New Testament, as Paul was merely a narrator, who spoke in vague generalities. The only factual statement which Paul ever took a strong position on was, ironically, the Liar's Paradox (TIT 1:12), which is an unverifiable statement. [22]
 - The Trinity is often invoked for this purpose, as it allows Christians to be effectively polytheistic without having to resort to polytheism [27] Depending on the situation; God can be an all-powerful, all-knowing creator deity; a regular tradesman; or an ill-defined spiritual force.
- Pastors frequently tell their doubting parishioners to read the Bible and pray about it. When you ask someone to start with a belief and see what happens, that's not an argument — that's just giving an order. [18]
- The Bible directly commands Christians to police their own thoughts (2COR 10:5) and to be "obedient as children." (2PET 1:14). [14] The peace, joy, and calm that Christianity provides is just a side effect of disassociating from the world. This isn't a bolstering of self-esteem; it's an evasion of the conscience. [22]

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- “The good advertiser is not the one who makes people think, but the one who makes people think they are thinking.” Christianity does not ask people to think; it asks them to accept. While Christians still think, many do not think deeply enough. [14]
- Christianity indoctrinates its members into a pseudo-psychology which misrepresents human nature as being more empty and inadequate than it really is. [22] The church castrates life to make itself look more appealing. [15]
 - This is why gory and wrathful Bible verses are popular in conservative churches; they give believers an outlet for otherwise forbidden emotions (e.g., anger, hostility, sadism, masochism, etc.). [22]
- For the brain to correctly process information, it must be presented in a linear progression of small, manageable chunks. Anything not presented in this format will become mysterious and seemingly deep. [22]
 - This is why priests are so fond of quoting many different passages from different speakers and stories, and tying them together.

Chapter 4

The Church's Weaknesses

The church's greatest weakness is that it requires priests.

Despite their many strengths and advantages, most pastors are in precarious situations. Essentially, they are being set up to fail, and do so at astonishing rates. **The great majority of pastors will have short careers.** Only 10% of pastors will last until retirement, and 50-80% of ministers won't last 5 years [41] — and surveys indicate that this has been a consistent, ongoing trend since 1975. The average Protestant priest (of any denomination) quits after an average of 2.5 years, and there is no evidence that this will change. [42] As of 2001, the average tenure of an American pastor (of all faiths, sects, and denominations) was 3.8 years. Only 40% of church employees feel that they have any real impact on their community or the world itself, [43] and **50% priests report that they want to quit, yet remain priests simply because they have no other way to make a living.** [41] In particular, the Catholic Church has suffered greatly from a want of vocations: [44]

- Between 1965 and 2002, the population of Catholic priests in the US dropped 22%, from 59,000 to 46,000.
- In 1965, the number of ordinations exceeded the number of priests lost through death or departure, for a net gain of 725 priests. In 1998, ordinations dropped and deaths or departures increased to such a degree that there was a net loss of 810 priests that year.
- In 1965, 3% of churches had no resident priest; in 2002, it was 15%.
- In 1965, there were 7.87 diocesan priests per 10,000 Catholics. In 2002, this number decreased to 4.6, a 41% decline.
- In 1999, there number of diocesan priests in the 80-84 age group exceeded the number of priest in the 30-34 age group.
- In 1965, there were 49,000 seminarians in the US; in 2002, there were only 4,700 — a 90.4% decrease — despite a population increase of 20 million Catholics.
- In 1965, there were 180,000 nuns in the US. By 2002, there were 75,500 — half of whom were over age 75.

As a result, **American pastors are quitting at a rate of 1,500-1,700 per month, despite having no other means of supporting themselves.** [41] There are many, many more pastors who want to leave their posts, but cannot due to the social stigmas they would face. It is difficult for clergy to leave the ministry and pursue another vocation without owing people explanations or apologies. Former priests are assumed to have: [41]

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- Committed a terrible sin, leading to their firing or resignation.
- Been too weak to handle the pressure.
- Rejected their “true” calling for secular work.

In addition to priests who quit, many priests will be fired by their own congregations. Between 23% [46] and 50% [47] of pastors will experience a forced termination. 91% of pastors know a pastor who was terminated [46], usually due to the actions of 3-4 of their parish’s leaders. [47] Many of these clergymen will apply to become the pastors of a different church; for most of them, this is the only lifestyle they knew. Among those who are forced out 29% will take 10-15 months to find their new positions, and 40% never will. [47] However, 25% of these re-employed pastors failed to grow, learn, or correct their bad habits after their ordeal, so they will eventually fail at their new church. [47] As a result, pastors with fifteen years of experience often have only three years of experience, five times over. [42]

Personality conflicts	43%
Conflicting long-term goals	17%
Financially strained congregations	7%
Theological differences	5%
Moral wrongdoings	5%
Unrealistic expectations	4%
Other reasons	19%

Priests are severely weakened by burnout, indifferent or hostile congregations, the alienating environments they create for themselves, spiritual dilution, over-reliance on the Bible, their personal perception as being unmanly, and the difficult questions they keep ignoring.

4.1 — Burnout

Burnout has always plagued the clergy; not even Paul was safe from its effects (2COR 1:8). Despite their special relationship with the divine and its unearthly power, clergymen are mortals who are susceptible to all human frailties. In particular, relatively few pastors can withstand their job stress. Most of the clergy’s work-related problems cannot be outsourced or delegated to others — they are personal issues, which the priest must face alone. Because of this, the clergy are more prone to burnout (15%) than the general population (8-12%). [45]

Burnout is technical term, used in forestry. Severe forest fires char the humus, rendering the soil infertile, and the gutted forest cannot renew itself. Analogous to this is psychological burnout, which is caused when a person becomes exhausted with by major life activity to the point of malfunction. [48] Symptoms of this “erosion of the soul” [47] include:

- Chronic fatigue. Sleep cannot repair this, and vacations only temporarily alleviate it. [48] 90% of pastors are frequently fatigued a weekly and/or daily basis. [49]
- Persistent low-level depression, [48] from mourning the death of their hopes and ideals. [50] 70% of priests suffer from depression. [41]
- Insomnia. [48] [50] 62% of clergy only sleep for 5-6 hours per night. [47]
- Weight loss/gain. [48] [50]

- Loss of appetite. [48]
- Headaches. [48] [50]
- Gastrointestinal trouble. [48]
- Nagging boredom. [48]
- Angry and/or resentful outbursts. [48] [50]
- Spiritual emptiness (i.e., lacking the desire to pray or study scripture). [50]
Only 26% of pastors maintain regular personal devotions and feel spiritually fed. [49]
- Avoiding accountability in relationships. [50]
- Negativity. [50]
- Cynicism. [50]
- Paranoia. [50]
- Lack of self-worth. [50]
- Lack of satisfaction from achievements. [50]
- Anxiety/worry. [50]
- Panic attacks. [50]
- Vice, as a means of escapism. [50]
 - Alcoholism is prevalent among the Catholic clergy, since drinking is often the only legal and ecclesiastically acceptable way to dull the emotional pain and loneliness of celibacy imposes. [51]
- Social anxiety, leading to a craving for isolation and seclusion, leading to a withdrawal from friends and family. [50]
 - Isolation and loneliness are different from aloneness, because you can feel lonely in a crowd. Loneliness is a feeling of seclusion and separateness, sometimes accompanied by feelings of abandonment, rejection, and insecurity. [47]

It should be noted that not all of these symptoms are all part of the human condition to some degree. These symptoms only become problematic when they are persistent. [52] **Pastors will often burnout several times before quitting or getting fired.** Each bout of despair is eventually countered with a re-dedication and commitment to push themselves harder, fueling their downward spiral. [50] The clergy burnout for a number of interrelated and overlapping reasons:

Overwork

Pastors confuse their ministry with their identity, and lose their sense of self; they literally become their job. [41] [50] The perceived importance and responsibility of their work, and its eternal consequences, causes priests to work harder or longer than they should. There is no real way to gauge how many hours priests are “on the clock,” and they are always on-call. [42] This is why **90% of pastors report working 55-75 hours per week** [41], and **80% of pastors take no days off.** [47] **Despite this, 50% of pastors still feel unable to meet their job demands,** [41] or to even meet its most basic

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criterion of being a “holy man” — because the average pastor only prays for 39 minutes per day, and 15% of pastors pray for <15 minutes a day. [50]

Priests become overloaded with tasks, since they typically lack formal job descriptions. Fatigue compromises efficiency, so compensating by working longer hours actually accomplishes less. Many clergy will work even longer hours to compensate for these productivity losses, only to turn the vicious circle, leaving them ragged and unaccomplished. These long nights eventually take their toll on the clergyman; inadequate sleep strongly correlates with depression, anxiety, and other emotional problems. [42] [53] [54] The priests are unable to renew themselves, because they have little leisure time to do so. Since there is always something going on, their rest is often disturbed, and interrupting relaxation requires starting over again. [48] Constantly burning the midnight oil soon leaves them with no oil. [52]

A pastor’s work is rarely acknowledged because they mostly work alone, and typical parishioners have no idea how pastors spend that time. This is true even if the pastor has a group of staff members, since these helpers usually work independently on their own tasks. Most pastors make no large moral failures, but from the cumulative effect of many small, unchecked failures. Each minor failure pushes the boundary a little further towards a catastrophic failure. [42]

Lack of Closure

Ministry produces no tangible products. Carpenters can take pride in completed houses, and doctors can see patients improve. The clergy exists to maintain traditions; there is never anything new or changing in their job. Priests face an endless, Sisyphean cycle of masses, weddings funerals, crises, holidays, sick people, etc. One sick person dies, only to be replaced by another. A minister’s job is endlessly repetitive and never done. Holidays come and go, and masses take on the same form. This lack of creativity leads to boredom and exhaustion once the novelty wears off.

The immaterial nature of priestly work provides no metric for the clergy to gauge their results; a pastor can guide their flocks for months or years without knowing if they have been moved spiritually. There are several reasons for this: [42]

1. The effects of pastoral work are mostly indirect. Administration and programs do play a role in spiritual development, but its unclear clear how.
2. Many factors controlling a church's success or failure is outside of their control.
3. Expectations and success criteria vary from church to church; there is no standard to measure success by.

The need to create something of lasting value typically manifests itself as an obsession over capital building projects. [48] This ongoing thirst for legacy is a persistent trend which is not confined to any one denomination; 10% of all American charitable giving has been spent building church facilities, leading churches to own more land than the five largest corporations combined. [11] When a pastor begins to feel that they have little to no effect on their world, they begin to detach from the decision-making process, they

develop feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and feelings of benign resignation, since “that’s the way it goes.” The resulting powerlessness is a precursor to weariness, anger, and despair. [47]

Unsustainable Image

Clergy serve in the holy office of the ministry; it is the office that is holy, not the person. [13] Regardless, people have unrealistic assumptions, and expect clergymen to be extraordinarily gifted and holy. Priests are expected to be great teachers, pastors, counselors, financial wizards, and maintainers of the old traditions. Clergy are expected to possess and use all of these talents to call on their parishioners and the sick; attend community events and social functions; to champion the poor and the fight for civil rights; and to serve as a personal counselor and advisor to anyone who asks. No one has the power, talent, or energy to meet all of these expectations; yet priests must constantly fight to meet these unrealistic demands, because it is the parishioners who pay the priest’s bills via tithing ultimately determine if they stay. [48] Pastors were trained to live up to God’s expectations, but not the thousands of expectations their parishioners impose, because they’re mostly based on projections: [47]

- Current pastors are always discussed in comparison to the previous pastors, especially regarding the knowledge and/or ability to meet the parish-specific unwritten social rules and expectations.
- The charisma of megachurch pastors and/or television ministries is expected from mediocre small church pastors, who cannot compete because they are literally in a different league.

Image issues are a root cause of overwork. Since clergy exist to serve God and man, denying any request is perceived as selfishness, leading to inadequate rest or leisure. This problem is compounded by the common misconception that priests only work a few days a week. People have great expectations of the clergy, and will react extremely negatively to any of their pastor’s failures or mistakes. This causes priests to live in cultivated personas, hiding their true selves under a metaphorical mask. Priests are expected to be a sort of third gender which is asexual, sinless, and shielded from corrupting influences; they are paid not to have problems of their own. [42] Priests must constantly look and act the part to everyone; they cannot appear tired or unhappy in public. Wearing this mask requires great energy and generates lots of negative feelings; this requires the priest to mask themselves further, establishing a vicious circle. Eventually, the priest loses touch with their true selves, resulting in an identity crisis, or reducing themselves to a bland, humorous, and unlikable plastic caricature. [48] Humor and lightheartedness are notoriously difficult for clergymen, since their role requires solemnity, dignity, decorum, and piety — all of which exclude humor, by definition. [45] As such, 70% of pastors claim to have a poor self-image as a direct result of their time as a pastor. [13]

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Defending one's image is to defend the ego, and a ministering person cannot serve both God and their own egocentricity. The problem of the persona strikes at the heart of spiritual development. Jesus' main focus was not against stealing, sexual sins, or even violence — it was against hypocrisy (i.e., identification with a false persona which prevents one from being genuine or real). While this was an originally attack at the Pharisees, Christ also issued this as a general blanket statement. Since the parishioners require clergyman to assume a persona, priests are in constant danger of losing themselves. This is especially damning because creativity is a product of the real self, and catering to the ego is to abandon one's creative gifts. [48]

Lack of Support Networks

Pastors are essentially professional Christians. Since they spend so much time at work, most of their friends are congregation members — their social life is their profession. Since most people are not clergy, they don't understand what their job entails, so the clergy lacks a common ground with their community members. This sharply contrasts with restaurant workers or tradesmen, whose common plights allow deep friendships to quickly form with coworkers and competitors alike. A pastor's professional and personal lives are further complicated because they often live and work in the communities which they support, [53] so priests can never "cut loose." [42]

Because of this, 70% of pastors report having no close friends. [41] [13] While priests are expected to be friends to everyone, few are people are friends to them. This is because no one feels comfortable about "letting their hair down" in front of a priest, and because priests are frequently called upon to love intrinsically unlovable people. [42] Without ordinary human relationships, people will become disconnected from their darker sides and become humorless, plastic caricatures of people. [48] This isolation results in subjectivity, which in turn leads to self-pity and poor decisions. The self-pitying perspectives born from isolation often breed further isolation and greater self-pity; creating a vicious circle. [42]

Without close friends, no one gives priests honest feedback and constructive criticism. As a result, priests have little accountability, and they cannot see their weakness or blind spots. Accountability is the only defense against mediocrity. **Most parishioners won't hold priests accountable for their actions, out of politeness or other social obligation.** Without corrective criticism, priests will never reach excellence, because they will think they have already achieved it. Pastors will lose satisfaction in their work from the lack of challenge, and the church will suffer from their poor performance. [42]

Pastors have accountability issues because they mostly work alone, and most parishioners have no idea how they spend that time. Even when provided a group of staff members, these helpers work independently on their own tasks. Most pastors make no large moral failures, but from the cumulative effect of many small, unchecked failures. Each of these minor failures will push the boundary a little further until there is a catastrophic failure. [42]

Inadequate Training

Despite the fact that >50% of pastors have master's degrees, and 10% have doctorates, [42] **90% of pastors feel they were inadequately trained, [41] [13] to the point where 50% of pastors feel unable to meet their job demands.** [13] This is because pastors must serve two masters — they must be both spiritual teachers, and corporate administrators. [53]

While seminaries and bible colleges offer specialized training for clergy, there is no “lab” or “practicum” component to their studies. Instead, they concentrate on hermeneutics, homiletics, liturgics, isagogics, exegesis, apologetics, hymnology, and classical languages (e.g., Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic). Few seminaries teach the skills needed for the actual day-to-day operations of a parish (e.g., accounting, psychology, project management) — and even fewer cover these subjects in sufficient detail. Seminaries teach everything *except* what priests need, and much of what they learn must be unlearned in order to succeed — and the shock and frustration of this fact drives many pastors to quit. Seminaries teach how to be true to one's faith, but not how to communicate that faith in a turbulent world. Seminaries resist change to avoid the inevitable theological implications of change — but as a result, they prepare their students for a long-forgotten Victorian world. [42]

The reformation or revival of seminaries needed to correct these issues is unlikely to occur any time soon. During the Great Recession of 2007-2010, cash-strapped parishes were forced to downsize thousands of seminary-trained pastors. This flooded the already-competitive market for parish priests; the intensity of this competition for jobs leads half of seminary graduates to enter parachurch options or other career paths. This market shift caused Bible College and seminary enrollments dropped by ~60%. Unlike secular universities, there is no public funding, and they have smaller endowments (because their graduates make less money, they donate less). 40% of institutions comprising the Association of Theological Schools reported being “financially stressed,” i.e., having only a year's worth of spendable assets. American seminaries have thus been forced to reduce programs, lay-off staff and instructors, decrease salaries and benefits, reorganize, merge, or close. [55]

The clergy rarely turn to secular universities to address their training deficiencies, due in part to Christianity's turbulent relationship with academia. While the churches originated the concept of universities for training their clerks and future leaders, this has historically backfired, as the exchange of ideas inevitably creates new heresies. [14]

Contrary to popular belief, research has definitively proven that college does not cause deconversion; while 69% of college students between ages 18-22 stop attending church for at least one year, so do 71% of non-college attending 18-22 year olds. College does not cause young people to quit their churches; it is the result of ineffective churches failing to instill spiritual habits. It's easy for young adults to abandon their churches, and faith itself, since it was never a part of their lives to begin with. [43] Nevertheless,

academia remains a convenient scapegoat, and the Christian aversion to higher learning persists in the following forms:

- Formal religious training is considerably expensive. In the United States, religious schools must charge exorbitant tuition, since the government can only fund secular schools. [14]
- Religious schools tend to recruit subpar instructors. The academic elite prefer to work at secular schools, where freedom from church interference is guaranteed. [14]
 - Liberty University went 30 years without granting tenure to *anyone*, so that the administration could retain full control over *all* lesson material. [56]
- To preserve faith, seminary students often learn from cherry-picked anthologies and readers to prevent the divergence of thought that could arise from independently reading source materials. For this reason, Liberty University had no library until their regional accreditation board mandated one. [56]
- Fundamentalists are discouraged from attending college, as they believe that higher education causes people to lose their faith. [57] Interestingly, this claim has no basis in reality. 90% of the evangelical twenty-somethings who deconverted did so *before* entering college; and 40% *lost their faith before entering high school*. [31]
 - However, this false notion of universities as liberal propaganda centers endures because much of critical thinking, general science, biology, psychology, prehistory, ancient history, biblical literature, linguistics (especially concerning the origins of language), philosophy (especially, ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, and the philosophy of science) and physics (especially cosmology) directly contradict the conservative Christian worldview, which requires denigrating literacy, logic, and learning (1COR 1:20). Only foolish behavior leads to wisdom (1COR 3:18), since philosophy is vain (COL 2:8). [58]
 - Additionally, world literature challenges their perspectives. These include: [58]
 - Facts do not require theistic interpretations. Faith cannot answer questions; it can only satisfy the believer.
 - Science and history can proceed as modes of inquiry without assuming or relying on the divine purpose of human affairs. Cosmic and historical teleologies are *optional*.
 - The Bible is too riddled with contradictions, misstatements, and conflicting interpretations to make any definitive claims, or be cited as decisive evidence (see §6).
 - Humans lack the criteria to needed determine divinely-engineered events from rare, unprecedented, or currently-unexplainable natural phenomena. Therefore, miracles cannot be cited as evidence because there is no criteria for determining what constitutes a miracle (see §7.8).
- There is a Christian tendency to view social science as subversive and morally compromising. [29]

- Christianity has long and stormy past with evolution, largely because of its strong parallels to Hinduism, and because Darwinism inspired Marxism. [20]
- Christian (especially Catholic) theological arguments are based on Aristotelian logic, and ignore all of the advances in that field. [59]
- Christian homeschooling persists in the US, despite its obvious shortcomings. Because Christian homeschooling is intrinsically nonconformist and individualized, there is no way to quantify its efficacy. The performance of homeschooled students is intrinsically skewed because there is no basis for comparison. [57] However:
 - 19% of homeschooling parents lack a high school diploma or GED; only 10 states require homeschooling parents to do so. [57]
 - Polling data indicates that school choice (i.e., public, parochial, or homeschooling) does not correlate with deconversion. [31]

Stress-induced Maladies

Burnout is not caused by stress and frustration, *per se*; it is caused by how *one responds* to stress and frustration. [42] 75% of pastors report going through a significant, ministry-related stress-induced crisis, and 40% of pastors have at least one serious conflict with a parishioner per month. [13]

Excessive stress causes muscle tension, indigestion, headaches, and lowered immune function. Stress decreases productivity, since stress excites the limbic system and suppresses frontal lobe activity; emotions hinder problem-solving. Physically speaking, most pastors are train wrecks:

- Only 50% of pastors receive the recommended minimum amount of exercise (i.e., 30 minutes a day, thrice a week). [50]
 - 28% of pastors do not exercise at all. [50]
- 68-76% of pastors are overweight or obese, which is higher than the general population (61%). [11]
 - 15% of pastors are >50 lbs. (~22.5 kg) overweight. [50]
- ~66% of pastors skip meals at least once per week. [50]
 - 39% of pastors skip 3+ meals per week. [50]
- 88% of pastors eat fast food on a weekly basis. [50]
 - 33% of pastors eat fast food 3+ times per week. [50]
- ~39% of pastors experience weekly digestive troubles. [50]
 - 14% of pastors experience digestive trouble 3+ times per week. [50]
- Only 16% of the clergy gets enough sleep. [50]
 - 87% of clergy have insufficient sleep once per week. [50]
 - 47% of clergy have insufficient sleep 3+ times per week. [50]
- ~60% of pastors feel that their jobs keep them away from their families. [50]
- Interestingly, the youngest clergymen are the unhealthiest. This is likely due to the overwork needed further their careers and make name for themselves. [50]

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- Pastors are more likely to suffer from depression. The exact figures vary greatly between surveys; between 16% [50] and 80% [46] of pastors are depressed. While this is too much variation to draw a definitive conclusion, all of these surveys agree that pastors suffer from depression far more frequently than the general population (~10%). [50]
 - 40% of pastors have occasional bouts of depression or are feel “worn out.” [46]

The clergy often use a sort of eschatological fatalism to justify their lack of self-care. They feel that if they expend themselves completely in the Lord's work, God will look after them — body, mind, and spirit. Because their final goal is to be with the Lord, it's alright to mortgage one's body against this final eventuality. [54]

These stress effects are compounded by their effects on the priest's family. 80% of pastors believe the ministry has a negative effect on their families, and 33% of pastors will clearly state that outright. 94% of minister's wives, and 91% of their children feel they are under extra pressure; and 54% of the wives and 46% of the children strongly feel this way. [13] The resulting depression leads 80% of pastor's children to seek professional help as adults. [47] 95% of pastors say they would abandon their calling and seek another, if it would save their marriage, [60] and 10% of the pastors who quit cite the inability to cope with these unwritten expectations as their reason for leaving. [41] 30-50% of clergy marriages end in divorce; while a pastor might avoid burnout, their wife might burnout because: [47]

- 80% of pastor's wives feel left out and unappreciated by their congregation.
- 80% of pastor's wives feel wish their spouses chose a different profession.
- 80% of pastor's wives feel pressured to do things and/or be someone they are not.
- 95% of pastors do not pray with their wives.
- 40% of pastors will enter inappropriate relationships with other women.

Inadequate Funding

Despite what was said in §3.1, the church has a little liquidity and dire cashflow problems. While religious institutions possess great wealth, this money is tied up in investments and assets (i.e., real estate). Christianity lives off of the dwindling capital and clout it earned in the Constantinian Era. Christianity lost its political power when the monarchs were overthrown, lost its social position in the Enlightenment, and lost its psychological power by the worldliness of the modern age. As a result, Christianity limps along with its ancient metaphysical baggage, and the egotistic notion of its own importance acquired from when it was the empire's official ideology. [14]

As a result, pastors constantly struggle to stretch and optimize extremely limited resources, on both institutional and personal levels. Despite all of their tax advantages, most churches struggle to keep the lights on.

70% of typical church revenues go to overhead. This why churches are always planning, engaged in, or wrapping up capital drives, in order to: [11]

1. Build an entirely “new, modern, and adequate church plant” at a recently acquired site.
2. Extensively renovating an existing facility; e.g., by installing a new organ, central air conditioning, Sunday school facilities, and/or parking complexes.
3. Raising money for earlier multi-stage projects whose “last stage” has now arrived.

While the modern megachurches and elegant cathedrals are used to convey the image of Christianity’s earthly power and influence, this exemplar role conceals a harsh truth -- **99% of all churches are not megachurches.** [55] The average American church only has 85-100 parishioners, [42] and a total annual operating budget of \$165,000. American Christians, on average, donate roughly \$1,000 per year to churches. However, that statistic is skewed by wealthy people who make large donations to buy their community’s admiration. **The median American donates about \$100 per year to their church, and half of Americans donate less than that.** [55] This is why less than half of even the most liberal churches are capable of engaging in charity of *any* kind — and this figure includes even the simplest things, like having children collect pennies for the poor. [46] This is why:

- 80-85% of US churches are plateauing or declining, [42] and 100,000 churches are caught in death spirals. [61]
- Churches are closing at a rate of ~2800 per year. [11] [42] Based on the approximation of 350,000 churches in the US [62], and assuming a linear extrapolation, religion in the US will be completely extinct by 2135 CE. However, since linear trends are often confused for the beginning of exponential trends, [63] this extinction date could come sooner, and at an ever-accelerating rate.
- \$14.8 million (adjusted for inflation) worth of dissolved church property is either sold or given away annually. [42] Many dissolved churches are forced to sell their buildings, where they are converted into town halls (Auburn, NH) and dōjōs (Bedford, NH). [31]
- The outflow of worshipers greatly exceeds the inflow. The majority of the “inflow” is actually “re-circulation” — most new churchgoers *are not* converts; they are existing Christians who have recently quit some other church. [42]

In addition to these institutional-level struggles, pastors also equally struggle on a personal level. 70% of pastors feel grossly underpaid, and 30% of pastors will quit for this reason, because **priests make less than garbagemen.** [41] Many priests must pay “the costs of employment” (e.g., Social Security, insurance, retirement, etc.) out-of-pocket; this can comprise as much as 40% of their salary, since the self-employed must pay Social Security tax at a higher rate. Granted, these costs are usually factored into their salaries, but this still gives a false impression of how much pastors really earn. The most experienced pastors make a median salary which is 30% more than a new priest, and much less than other professionals. 1 in 8 priests work two jobs. Cost-of-living increases do not keep up with inflation, giving priests less

purchasing power each year. Many priest wind up on government assistance programs (e.g., food stamps, etc.). The wives of priests have a cultural expectation to do lots of unpaid volunteer work for the church, which is not factored into the pastor's compensation package. The church essentially hires a pastoral couple, which is typically forced into a single-income lifestyle. [42]

4.2 — The Indifference of Youth

Like all cultures and institutions, Christianity is always one generation away from evaporation, [31] since every generation of teenagers is essentially a “barbarian invasion” which must be domesticated, or they will overthrow society. Strangely, most religious communities face no problem with teenage rebellion. Instead, they are overwhelmed by *teenage apathy*. [64]

Faith formerly played a large role in daily, largely because Western culture was engineered to cultivate Christianity through community-wide religious indoctrination (e.g., mandatory Bible readings in public schools; nuclear families; popular entertainment based on a biblical worldview). These power structures have since eroded, [65] leading to our current “post-Christian era,” where Christianity still exists, but plays no significant role in shaping our culture. Many of the old ways were born from a time of Christian dominance (or at least of favored status), and they cannot counter the counterculture. Church services are now a temporary respite from daily burdens, where one can experience safety and a holy presence. [13] **Churches, by nature, are having difficulty adapting to a changing world because they exist to resist change**, and reinforce this with: [42]

- Confusing form with function, leading to a focus on the institution, rather than its reason-for-being.
- A socially self-perpetuating nature.
- A tendency to yield to minority rule.
- Excessive reverence for “yesterday’s innovators.”
- Risk-aversion and the unwillingness to suffer pain.

47% of US teens feel that the church is irrelevant due to its hypocrisy, inflexibility in the face of cultural change, and a general “watering-down” of the religion itself to attract new members. While 50% of young people regularly attend church, it is mostly because they enjoy the music, because **there is no correlation between church attendance and devotion**. **Many young people who go to church only do so out of social obligation or force-of-habit**. [31] The theological foundations of even the most faithful youth are at risk because: [65]

- They are skeptical about the original biblical manuscripts.
- They read the Bible through the lens of pluralism.
- Changing media behaviors and shorter attention spans make scripture a less effective medium.
- They are less convinced of scripture’s commands for obedience.
- Secular culture interferes with religious commitments and obligations.

- Questions of the role which faith plays in politics, sexuality, science, media, technology, etc. are usually framed in a way that makes faith irrelevant.
- Modern youths have more religiously diverse friends.
- Clergymen are seen as interchangeable and disposable. Even the most popular and influential Christian leaders within living memory (i.e., Fulton Sheen) are unknown to the vast majority of modern Christians.
- Young people will consult the internet long before consulting their pastors.
- Relativism (i.e., "what's right for you might not be right for me") is more-or-less an accepted cultural norm.
- Peers serve as moral and spiritual compasses.
- Young Christians are exposed to a variety of religious content with no means of evaluating it.
- Young people are interested in exploring spirituality on their own terms.
 - It should be noted that many of the people claiming to be "spiritual" are just use the term as a dodge, as they don't want to open their beliefs to scrutiny. [66]

This trend is unlikely to end in the near future, as <20% of twenty-somethings regularly attend mass. 61% of American twenty-somethings were churchgoers as teens, but they have since become "spiritually disengaged" (i.e., they do not actively attending a church, read the Bible, or pray). While 65% of American youth makes a commitment to Jesus Christ at some point in their lives, only 3% of youths actually hold a biblical worldview. [67] This is due in part, to the facts that 6% of Americans can't remember when they last read the Bible, and 24% of Americans have *never* read the bible. [68] While 51% of twenty-somethings attend mass as "CEOs" (Christmas-Easter Only) to meet their family obligations, >30% of twenty-somethings report that attending mass never crosses their mind. This may be because they were never introduced to faith, as *19% of twenty-somethings were never reached by the Christian community during their upbringing.* [31]

The National Study of Youth Religion (NSYR) Study from 2002-2005 highlighted a number of other interesting/disturbing trends: [64]

- Most American teenagers have a positive view of religion — but only because they don't give it much thought. They don't approve *per se*; they are simply too indifferent to be hostile.
- Most US teens simply mirror their parent's faith.
- Religion education in America is so shoddy that teens simply don't have the theological language skills necessary to discuss religious feelings or issues.
 - Church attendance *does not* correlate with improved theological language skills.
- Teens don't see faith as being too deep for words, but as too vapid to require its own jargon.

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- A significant minority (8%) of American teenagers feel that faith is both important, and that faith makes a difference in their lives. The teenagers are objectively doing better in life when compared to their less-religious peers, according to several metrics. However, it should be noted that:
 - Participating in *any* identity-bearing community — religious or otherwise — improves a young person’s likelihood to thrive.
 - While religious teens seem to do better by every metric, this is *an effect*, and not a *cause*. People in worse-off homes don’t take their kids to church, because they are disinvolved. Not going to church won’t make a kid a delinquent; but being a delinquent will make them not want to go to church. [69]
 - Religion frequently anesthetizes young people into compliance, which is mainly responsible for their “doing well.” For the most part, compliance is all that is asked of teenagers, and those who are “doing well” in a broad sense are usually just conforming to social norms.
 - It should be noted that compliance with social norms occasionally contravenes with religious teachings, which is why these 8% who are “doing well” often have reputations as troublemakers within their spiritual community.
 - These 8% view faith as a “way of life” rather than a “belief system.”
 - These high-devoted Christian teenagers have operationalized Christian hope as a generalized trust that God has the future under control, without showing much familiarity with (or interest in) traditional Christian teachings. Hope, for the most part, provides highly-devoted teenagers with a tool for dealing with present problems — which in turn gave them confidence that they have the necessary tools for facing future hardships.
- When pressed about their faith, most of these teenagers are actually Moralistic Therapeutic Deists (see §4.5), and are not Christians *per se*.

Unlike other generations, the current youth is unlikely to ever return to the church when they get older, because: [67]

1. The youth deconversion rate has increased sixfold. Even if some return, it may still not be enough for most churches to remain stable.
2. The turbulent, late-stage capitalist world keeps people from settling down. Additionally, extending adolescence until the late 20’s gives people more time to experiment with new ideas before settling down.
3. People are not having children until later in life. Typically, those who return to church do so in order to be perceived as being good parents.

The longer church attendance is interrupted/discontinued, the less likely that person ever is to return to religious life. [67] 60% of church dropouts >65 will not even consider returning to the church, whereas 60% of 18-35 year olds would consider returning if their friends ask them to. [43]

4.3 — Churches Create an Alienating Environment

Young people aren't going to church, because they are abandoning the concept of religion altogether. 73% of non-religious people were raised in religious homes, [67] making the biggest danger to Christianity is the Christians themselves. In all, **11% of US Christians — 1 in 9 — will eventually deconvert.** [65] Among those who leave:

- 32% cited intellectual skepticism as the cause of their deconversion. [70]
 - **Many of these people actually leave the faith for emotional reasons, and later find intellectual reasons to back up their decision.** [67]
- 58% left due to pastor-related or church-related reasons. [43]
 - 15% directly cited the moral or ethical failure of church leaders as their reason for quitting. While scandals are a significant cause of attrition, their effect is overhyped. [43]
- 52% of church dropouts left because they developed conflicting religious, ethical or political beliefs. [43]
- 97% of church dropouts left because of lifestyle changes. [43]
 - Many churchgoers quit simply because they wanted to take a break. 70% of church dropouts saw church as a chore or time-waster, which made it the first item to eliminate when optimizing their to-do lists. [43]
- 69% consider the Bible to be important, but see churches as irrelevant. These people eventually to return to church after having children, but as members of a different sect. [65] Among those who return: [31]
 - 24% of those who return still do not believe; they just want to look like good parents.
 - 7% of those who return still do not believe; they only come because they like the music.
 - **0%** of those who returned did so because they missed going to Sunday school.
 - 56% said that their science classes led them to doubt the Bible.
- 31% consider both the Bible and the church to be irrelevant. These people will *never* return. [31]
 - 61% attended Sunday school regularly. A lack of faith is *not* the result of inadequate religious education; Sunday school simply has no impact on belief. If anything, Sunday school *causes* deconversions, since it only teaches on an inspirational or moral level. [31]

Throughout the US, religion is on a downward trend by every metric, as demonstrated by the following facts:

- 80% of mainline denominations are dying, mostly from how these churches treat outsiders, and from their polarizing rhetoric. [71]
- Between 1978 and 2008 church membership dropped from 70% to 65% of the population. [72]

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- Bible literalists decreased from 40% to 30% of the population, and Bible skeptics grew from 10% to 20% of the population. [72]
- As few as 1 in 4 Americans will actually attend mass on a typical Sunday [72], and only 22% have a positive view of church. [73]
- 50% of US churches did not convert a single person in 2009. [74]
- 1 in 3 Americans who were raised Catholic will eventually stop identifying as one. [74]
- The Southern Baptists, the largest born-again sect, are baptizing at the same rate as they did 50 years ago, when the US population was half of what it is now. [72]
- This ecclesiastical decline is an international phenomenon. Only 6.3% of the UK population are regular churchgoers, with only 2.5% of UK the population participating in Bible-based worship. The average British congregation consists of 84 people, despite a parishioner-to-parish ratio of 1340:1. [31]
- 82% Evangelical church leaders begrudgingly admit that their movement is losing steam. [49]
- The Evangelical church lost 10% of its population between 2003-2013, and actuarial tables indicate that the majority of American conservative Christians will die by 2030. This will cause the Evangelicals to drop to 4% of the population. [49]
- Roughly 6,000 American Christians, and 1,000 evangelicals, leave the faith each day. [75]

Many people leave because they were never believers in the first place. The style, venue, programs, and locations or worship services are irrelevant, because people don't believe in the doctrine itself. [43] While there are a number of growing churches, the majority of these "new" members are not converts, but existing Christians who transfer to a new church. Most "growth" is actually "recirculation." [49] In general, church membership is a meaningless statistic since membership rolls are rarely ever verified or updated. Many members who have died, moved away, or joined new churches are still counted. [43] 30% of the people which megachurches count in their attendance figures are marginally committed to the church, and 10% are merely casual return visitors. Since these people attend infrequently and may also attend other churches, their total number might be 80-100% higher than the number counted on a typical Sunday. Megachurches get little money or time from these people, but they help create big crowds, which boosts the church's reputation. Megachurches also offer a good home for the minimally committed, because senior pastors tailor their messages to a large crowd. [75] It should be noted that church attendance figure are always overstated because: [49]

- Most religiosity polls are conducted by religious organizations, who seek to improve their own self-image.
- People tend to skew their survey responses to avoid feeling judged by the pollster. This is a persistent problem in sociology and political science.

There are as many reasons for deconversion as there are deconverts, but the abandonment of faith typically stems from the church being perceived as:

Overprotective

The notion of youth itself is coupled with impulses towards creative and cultural engagement. The young have a drive to reimagine, rethink, and reinvent. Churches stifle creativity in favor of tradition, and with it, they stifle their own cultural relevance. Unwilling to simply preserve the *status quo*, creative youths are inadvertently driven out, as they search for a venue for their creative talents and urges. In particular, Christians tend to demonize everything and everyone which is not explicitly labeled as Christian; [65] **the church castrates life to make itself look more appealing.** [15] There is a Christian tendency to fear pop-culture, which is viewed as a slippery slope into vice, homosexuality, abortion, DUI, suicide, drunk driving, and general damnation. [76]

As the Cold War ended, Americans collectively suffered an existential crisis once there were no longer any Soviets to demonize. Since most Americans define themselves as being “not like them,” there was a desperate search for a new enemy — a new “them” — to fill this void. In the resulting “Culture War” [14] many young Christians were told to fear “the world.” However, upon exploration, most of these youths found that “the world” isn’t so bad, and it is often better at explaining and expressing the human condition. These experiences cast doubt on every previous teaching. Examples of commonly overturned teachings include:

- Yoga, which was derived from Hindu practices, is a “demonic doorway.” [32]
- Passive forms of meditation (e.g., *zazen*, “zoning out”), are “Satanic” whereas Christian meditation is active (e.g., reading, memorizing, etc.). [32] Christianity encourages constant performance of non-productive cognitive tasks as a means to prevent independent thought.
- Martial arts are “demonic,” because the various stances and striking hand positions are interpreted as being *mudra*, making martial arts a *de facto* form of yoga, [32] as do the breathing methods, centering techniques, and Zen-inspired meditation influences. [29] Likewise, a traditional Japanese *dōjō* includes cultural elements (e.g., bowing to the *kamiza*, and to instructors) which are commonly confused with idolatry. [32]
 - One particularly-entertaining Christian author claimed to be attacked by nunchaku-wielding Satanic martial artists. This is a dubious claim at best, since the author’s description of the event indicates that they obviously have *never seen* nunchaku before, since they describe “num-chucks [sic]” as “a steel bar with steel balls on strings on each end.” [77] Still, as a result of the 1980s Ninja Craze coinciding with the Satanic Panic, the possession and use of nunchaku are illegal in many US states.

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- Rock music (in all its forms and derivatives) is considered evil because it induces hypnotic trances through “mindless chants” and repetition, [32] ignoring how much of the Western musical tradition features repeating a chorus. While Christians have historically targeted Metal music, their ire touches all genres. For example, John Denver was once considered “Satanic,” for his claim that there was some degree of truth to every religion. [23] Billy Joel received repeated death threats for the perceived anti-Catholicism in his “Only the Good Die Young.”
 - This is a high-value target, since denouncing music rapidly devolves into lunacy. Some of the funnier examples include:
 - Claims that the entire rock genre is one “massive cult dedicated to” Pan, which is “[r]ooted in the Druid demon worship of Celtic England and baptized in voodoo ceremonies of Africa and the Caribbean.”
 - Rock music is powered by “Satan’s special beat,” which allegedly originated with Voodoo practitioners. The beat’s hypnotic power results in “an instant loss of two-thirds of...normal muscle strength” while similar weakening occurs “[a]bove a certain decibel level.” [76]
 - ❖ If anything, Satanic power was already an established part of Western music theory since the 1700s. Fiddles were branded as “the devil’s instrument” in the 1800s, and 1920s jazz saxophonists were accused of playing the “devil’s flute.” [76]
 - The 1998 Crime Prevention Resource Center Conference in Ft. Worth, TX, suggested that Marilyn Manson fans be involuntarily hospitalized, thus creating “a computerized database for law enforcement agencies that would monitor the Internet traffic, and musical proclivities, of suspicious youth.” [76]
 - Metal has borne most of the burden of Christian outrage, though this was largely by design:
 - The dress and décor of Metal musicians are intentionally silly and/or extreme, because concerts are a form of theatre. [78]
 - While early Metal bands (e.g., Venom, Coven, Slayer) explicitly sung about Satan, this was just a gimmick they stumbled into; they had no philosophy other than juvenile rebellion, which they achieved through blasphemy. [78]
 - ❖ Christians frequently directed their attacks at Black Sabbath, and their original frontman, Ozzy Osbourne. While their music frequently mentions the occult, their lyrics contain no serious Satanic philosophy; if anything, they share a *Christian-like fear of demons and sorcery*. [78]
 - ❖ The Christian backlash against Metal music only improved the genre’s popularity by cementing its edgy, rebellious reputation.

- Satanists and metal fans tend to be different groups. The average teenage Satanists are creative, intelligent white males from upper/middle class homes, [29] who rebels against an overly restrictive, traditional religious family background and its emphasis that the world is an evil place. However, Metal music fans tend to be white working-class teens with diminished opportunities and no desire to attend college. [23]
- It is interesting to note that from our experience, the typical metal-denouncing Christian cites information which is 30 years out of date. While Metal originated as a harder exaggeration of rock (e.g., louder; more distorted, intricate, and shocking), [23] the genre has exploded and splintered into hundreds of distinct subgenres.
- Movies were a disruptive technology, since religious services were a form of theatre. Movies are easily portable and require no specific skills or education to watch. Movies have a wide appeal to all ages, genders, and social classes; they are cheap and profitable, even after the expense of building theatres. Americans attended movie theatres weekly by the 1920's, mostly on Sundays. The movie-going audiences were thrice that of all churchgoers in 1937, despite this being the height of the Great Depression. [16]
 - The Hays Code, which regulated early Hollywood, impeded the production of movies that could have addressed social issues. In particular, one of the greatest and most-honored films in cinematic history — De Sica's The Bicycle Thief — was nearly banned in the US for its non-explicit portrayals of public urination and the inside of a bordello. [16]
 - Christian scorn has been disproportionately focused on the horror genre. This is ironic, because it was the mundane tranquility and abundance which defined 1950s Christian America is what fueled the demand for the genre, since there was no other way for audiences to express their Cold War anxieties. [76]
 - Evangelical Christians make frequent use of horror (e.g., Chick Tracts, Hell Houses, the Left Behind novels) to express their complicated experience of existing in a culture which feels politically and religiously embattled. [76]

The irony of Christian outrage is that is inadvertent free advertising for what they sought to suppress. **By declaring something to be offensive to traditional values, it becomes a *de facto* counter-culture element, and is therefore perceived as being edgy, dangerous, and/or cool. This is a variant of the Streisand Effect — prohibiting or censoring information creates an artificial demand for that information. These prohibitions then compel people to do things they would never otherwise consider, for no other reason than to break the rules.**

Additionally, the things which parents try to shelter children from become available as soon as parents shift their focus to the next moral outrage. The authors have met many Christians who cite the 1980s campaign

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against playing *Dungeons & Dragons* as an example of their ability to influence and shape culture. However, *Dungeons & Dragons* still exists, and it is more popular than ever; every major bookstore has a section dedicated to this game. However, the moral crusaders were too busy campaigning against Marilyn Manson and Harry Potter to notice. (Marilyn Manson continues to produce new albums.)

Sheltered

Christians are perceived as being old-fashioned, boring, and out-of-touch with reality. Many American pastors don't realize that they are essentially missionaries in a foreign land. They open churches without understanding the needs, language, and people of those whom they wish to minister to. [79] Most pastors are too busy inside their churches to know what's going on outside the church. They are divorced from the actual needs of young people, which is why the clergy can't convert them. If the old methods like solid preaching and altar calls worked, then there would be no problem. [80]

This view is shared by ~66% of non-believers, and ~25% of churchgoing Christians. [81] Christians are seen as unwilling or unable to respond to the grisliness of reality in appropriately complex ways, preferring simplistic solutions and answers. [81] They are seen as unable to collaborate, compromise, or find lasting solutions due to their rigid, black-or-white worldviews [81] and the fact they primarily communicate via an obfuscating jargon deliberately designed to alienate outsiders. The world has so profoundly changed in the last 50 years that linguistic drift has rendered much religious language unintelligible. [70]

Christians enjoy being in their own community — though the more they seclude themselves, the less they can function in the outside world. [81] Thus, many churches have refined denial into an artform, responding to harsh truths with the thought-terminating line "Don't talk like that" as a means of escaping the pain that always comes coupled with the truth. [13] For this reason, Christians need to witness extreme, transparent, and blatant enmity before taking any action. American Christians quickly became anti-Communist after watching the show trials and executions of Soviet clergymen. By contrast, German Christians were reluctant to become anti-Nazi, since the profoundly anti-communist Hitler never proclaimed to be anti-Christian. Thus, Christians easily convinced themselves that Hitler and Nazism were not the enemies of their religion, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. [44]

Shallow

While churches bill themselves as communities, but their gatherings and meetings involve little more than literally gathering and meeting somewhere. Churches are boring, and only offer slogans and platitudes in lieu of opportunities for young people to apply their individual gifts. Young people leave their churches because they offer no challenges. Church is largely a spectator sport, and the only participation is in supporting roles, since all positions of responsibility are reserved for the clergy. [43] According to a 2011

Barna Group survey, 23% of American Christians, ages 18-29 feel that the church does not help them find their purpose, or prepare them for life. [65]

In particular, youth ministry is seen as “a holding tank with pizza,” because it is only a matter of time before even the least cynical youths realize that it’s all just a ploy to keep them from getting into mischief. [43] While there are popular Christian youth groups, these groups are also deliberately setup to provide social interaction and entertainment, and the majority of youths attend for these reasons alone; they are just another venue. Even then, half of all churches have <75 members, and only the top 10% of churches can afford full-time youth ministers. [70]

One of the reasons why people leave their churches is because it is far easier to leave a church than to join one. Joining often requires initiation, classes, and having to build networks from scratch. Leaving just requires not showing up, which is even easier when no one notices that you are gone. Most church dropouts did not feel connected with the parishioners, and felt more connected with people outside of the church. [43]

Anti-science

A 2011 Barna Group survey of revealed that 25% of American Christians, ages 18-29, believe that their church is an anti-science organization; and 18% believe their church is an anti-intellectual organization. These are difficult labels for Christians to shed, especially since Paul explicitly conducted book burnings (ACT 19:19). [82] In particular, 23% of young Christians have been turned off by the creationists. This is especially critical, because 52% of young Christians wish to pursue science-related careers, and only 1% of youth pastors ever address scientific issues. [65]

Churches maintain an anti-science air from necessity; science grants a better quality-of-life than anything the Bible, and its outdated work ethic could ever provide. The Bible assumes that all work is toil and labor, and makes no provisions for enjoyable or spiritually rewarding jobs. The Bible never considers the idea of efficiency, of doing more with less, or building labor-saving machines. [14] Additionally, science trivializes the Bible’s most fantastic claims: When Jesus healed a leper, it was miraculous; but when the pharmaceutical industry cured every leper, it was business.

Repressive

Religious rules (especially sexual rules) stifle young people, and are seen as “tyrannical” [65] especially since these rules were violated in Christianity’s historical crimes. [67] The Baby Boomer’s fringe activities and viewpoints now define Generation X, the Millennials, and Generation Z. [81] 21% of young people seek more freedom in life, which they cannot find in the church. 12% of young people cannot rectify the church’s desires with the world around them, forcing them to “live a double life.” [65] 29% of young people feel forced to choose between their faith and their friends. [65] Feeling

concerned for marginalized people is a frequent root cause of deconversions. [67]

The church treats sex as though it were a street drug which first appeared in 1991, and until they change this view, people can never feel completely open or at ease when dealing with religious people. This is especially true for Catholics (ages 18-29), 40% of whom [65] feel that the Catholic Church's chastity-over-prudence teachings are outdated. [44] According to studies by Yale and Columbia, 89% of teens who enter chastity pledges will break them before marriage. [56] Few, if any people leave the Catholic Church because they reject the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception; it is usually due to personal reasons. [65] Catholics are forced to leave the church if they disagree with it, as they have no other means of recourse — the Church is the very opposite of a democracy; it is the last absolute monarchy. [44]

As a result, Christians are known for what they *oppose*, rather than what they are *for*. [81] This further compromises Christian credibility, since the average American church only has varying degrees of influence over 85-100 people, [42] and thus lacks the power to persecute anyone for any perceived infractions. [44] As such, the harshest punishments which churches can deal are empty threats, which can be shrugged aside. This is demonstrated by the fact that most deconverts and dechurched people do not have a victim mentality, and take responsibility for their decisions. [43]

Exclusive

The Millennials and Generation Z were raised in a culture that embraced open-mindedness, tolerance, and acceptance. [65] This led them to be aware that every religion in history has made the same unverifiable claims: "Our god(s) will protect and heal you if you pray to them and help support their priests." **Faith cannot validate religious claims, because faith is non-exclusive, and faith can equally validate any other religion.** Likewise, miracles cannot be cited as evidence, since most religions feature miracle-performing gods and cite unexplained phenomena to validate their faiths. Claiming to practice the one, true faith will is a hard sell — even if a pastor successfully disproved or wrote-off the rest of the world's religions, they must still contend with the 41,000 different Christian denominations. [27]

Young people see Christians as obsessed with conveying an unreal, polished image; that churches are cliques reserved for the most virtuous and morally-pure people. [81] 22% of young people claim that church is "like a country club, only for insiders" that "ignores the problems of the real world."

This is demonstrated by the Christian obsession to label things as being Christian or secular. This leads to specialized Christian music, fiction, television, magazines, artwork, schools, recreational sports leagues, cruises, investment portfolios, and GodTube, the Christian YouTube alternative. By doing so, these Christians exclude themselves from the world, building walls to keep the outside world out to focus on their own community, like in M. Night Shyamalan's The Village. [79]

Doubtless

A generation of young Christians finds no sanctuary in the church they were raised in, for they are unsafe and inhospitable places to express doubts. Many youths feel that they were offered slick or half-baked answers to their thorny, honest questions, and they rejecting the “talking heads” and “talking points” which satisfy older generations. [65] Frequently, the church’s response is trivial and fact-focused, as though people could be talked out of doubting. This is not so; 36% of people ages 18-29 don’t feel that they can even ask their most pressing life questions in church, and 20% say that faith offers no help with their depression or other emotional problems. [65]

The church’s failure to address doubt is the leading cause of deconversion. Those who abandon Christianity altogether typically do so because their pastors were unable to provide answers to the “big questions,” such as: [65]

- The Problem of Evil (see §8.1).
- The fact that they were only Christian by default, as a result of geography and culture (i.e., that they would’ve been Hindus had they been born in India).
- What to believe in the Bible, and why (see §8.7).
- The relevance of Christianity when all religions converge on the same basic messages (see §8.8).

This doubtlessness borders on hubris, which will eventually become the Christians’ undoing. The Christians are so convinced of Christ’s return and triumph that they have lulled themselves into a sense of complacency. **The Christians have become so assured in their assumption of being the final victors that they forego the necessary actions to ensure their victory**, like a pompous wannabe athlete who thinks he is “too good to practice.” [44]

Overly-focused on Winning Converts

Young people are skeptical as to whether Christians genuinely care about them. The continual push to get non-believers to accept Christ and “become saved” continually fails because **the majority (82%) of non-Christian Americans (ages 16-29) was once church-going Christians**. Evangelism fails to impress those who’ve seen their movie before. Most non-believers quit the church because they accepted, contemplated, and understood the church’s teachings, and then consciously rejected them. [81]

Christians persist in their elaborate and costly mass evangelism efforts, despite the fact they are ineffective and counterproductive. Television, radio, and tracts combined are only responsible for 0.5% of converts, while generating a negative response which exceeds their positive response by a factor of 3-10. Moreover, mass evangelism efforts mostly reach marginally-churched adults; mass evangelists only “save” those who were “saved” once upon a time. [81] All research indicates that televangelists are vying for the

same donor pool, consisting of the same ~5 million people, who are mostly widowed women over age 49. [68]

However, Christians have no alternative, because the “greying” of church populations poses an existential threat to them. Elderly people (i.e., those over age 65) comprise 19% of the Evangelical population, but account for 46% of their donations. Actuarial charts indicate that 68% of these Evangelical donors will die before 2040 CE, and 50% of these donors will die before 2030 CE. **The number of donors to churches and religious causes will soon permanently decrease.** Surveys indicate that 69-80% of Christians now become “disengaged” or “dechurching” between ages 18-29. (While the magnitude of this trend is debated, its existence is agreed upon.) LifeWay researchers have shown that only 35% of these young people who leave the church will eventually return like prodigal sons -- the other 65% will *never* return. Even if the number of donors were to magically increase, their generosity will likely not, since the amount donated at the same age has decreased with each subsequent generation (i.e., a 30-year old Millennial donates less than the GenXer’s did at age 30’s, who donated less than the Baby Boomers did at age 30, etc.). This is accelerated by the fact that the amount donated has dropped 20-30% each year since the Great Recession of 2007-2010. [49]

In 2010, Pat Robertson’s Regent University required a \$95 million “booster shot” from CBN to remain operating; such collapses will soon become commonplace due to the 70% across-the-board drop in donations by the early 2040’s. While church leaders are right to worry about this, there is nothing that they can do, as this national trend is outside their locus of control. [49]

Anti-LGBT

38% of young people view Christianity as an anti-LGBT organization [65] which is fixated on “curing” homosexuals and leveraging political solutions against them. [81]

Modern youth ignore the frequent claim that homosexuality is “unnatural”, since they are fully aware that birds and primates engage in homosexual play, and that homosexuality exists in all societies. Furthermore, **young people fail to see why the clergy is qualified to declare what is and is not natural.** [36] Clothing is unnatural, and it must be further supplemented by other unnatural practices (i.e., washing) to prevent disease. Yet, those two unnatural synergistic practices make people healthier than those who go without. [83]

The Millennials and Generation Z came of age when “religion” was signified by the Religious Right, when its leaders placed repressing homosexuality and gay marriage at the top of their agenda, and at the core of their communal identity. Among the Millennials who have abandoned their religion, 31% say that their church’s negative treatment of gays and lesbians were an important causal factor in their decision — roughly twice the rate (15%) of seniors who said the same. Moreover, 72% of Millennials agreed that religious groups estrange young people by being too judgmental about gay and lesbian issues. Seniors are the only group where a minority (44%) agrees with this sentiment. Churches now face a dilemma since they are anchored,

both financially and in terms of lay support, by older Americans, who are less likely to perceive a problem that concerns the overwhelming majority of younger Americans. [84]

It should be noted that the Bible never states nor implies that the “sin of Sodom” was homosexuality. If anything, it is implied to be inhospitality and a failure to aid the poor (EZE 16:48-49). While 1COR 6:9 and 1TIM 1:10 appear to admonish homosexuality, it is only because scholars have trouble translating the word *arsenokoitai*; these passages are likely condemnations of hiring gay prostitutes, and not homosexuals themselves. While LEV 18:22; 20:13 explicitly condemn homosexuality, the majority of mainstream Christians freely ignore Leviticus’ numerous admonishments against haircuts, tattoos, working on the Sabbath, wearing garments of mixed fabrics, or touching pigs. [80]

Overly-political

Christians are perceived as the promoters of politically conservative agendas. [81] Despite Christ’s liberal and groovy teachings, Christians tend to be conservative, because authoritarian personalities are attracted to the hierarchy and dogma which the church provides. [44]

Additionally, churches serve as fertile ground for extremism, since their reason-for-being is conditioning people to accept dogmatism. [20] This is why most dangerous features of Communism were reminiscent of the medieval church (e.g., the fanatical acceptance of doctrines embodied in a sacred book; an unwillingness to examine those doctrines critically; and the savage persecution of those who rejected the doctrines). [59]

Judgmental

Among those who have quit attending their church, there is a common theme of “we did not leave the church, but rather, *the church left us.*” [65] Fundamentalists love the Bible more than they love Christ [85], which leads Christians to be seen as quick to judge others, and dishonest about their attitudes and perspectives about other people. As such, their claim to “love thy neighbor” is doubted. This, when combined with the other listed items, cause young people to view Christians as hypocrites, and meet their moral superiority with skepticism. While theological ignorance is on the rise, it still remains intuitive that making statements about what God thinks, or what God would or would not do, creates a graven image of a God which suits those individual tastes. [86] This is insidious and ironic. This is insidious because 2/3 of outsiders think that Christians do not act authentically towards them. This is ironic, because 2/3 of Christians are convinced that outsiders think that they are authentic. [71]

Case and point, “born-again” Christians adamantly believe homosexuality is sinful, and 61% of “born-again” Christians believe divorce is *not sinful*, despite Jesus Christ explicitly forbidding divorces for reasons other than adultery (MAT 5:32). [81] This is reinforced by the Christian tendency to

reserve judgement against their own moral transgressions, writing off their own wrongdoings with a variety of stock platitudes (e.g., “Christians aren’t perfect, just forgiven”). [27] This hypocrisy is rational given the fact that only 53% of young churchgoing adults have beliefs which align with their church. In particular, among born-again Christians ages 23-41: [43]

- 60% believe that cohabitation is morally acceptable.
- 40% believe that pre-marital sex is acceptable.
- 30% believe that pornography is acceptable.

4.4 — Hostile Parishioners

Frustrated parishioners are a perpetual source of stress; 40% of pastors experience serious conflicts with parishioners on a monthly basis. [41] 90% of pastors believe that dealing with problematic people is the hardest part of ministry. [47] Churches are magnets for weirdos and troublemakers, since unlike other professionals (e.g., doctors, lawyers, psychotherapists), priests cannot dismiss problematic patrons without being seen as cruel. Priests must stroke these parishioner’s egos, lest they become resentful and problematic from a lack of attention. This constant, fruitless work bleeds priests of their energy and willpower, which they are required to supply, even when there is no one there for to supply them. [48]

There are as many reasons for parishioner hostility as there are hostile parishioners. It should be noted that these people are usually not troublesome unless they are ignored or put down; they only cause problems for pastors when their needs go unattended. [45] Some of the more common hostile parishioners include:

- Bored, floundering, underused, or unrecognized church members. [45]
- Older people who are unable to influence the congregation’s agenda as much as they would like. [45]
- Older people who seek a traditional church experience, because it’s one of the few remaining things from their youth. This includes requests for pastors to regularly visit parishioner’s homes. [42]
- Younger people seeking services (e.g., day care, youth groups, etc.). Since younger people choose churches based on the services they provide, they view pastors not as community center managers instead of holy men. [42]
- New members who are eager to make their mark. [45]
- Deeply dedicated and energetic members who have not found adequate outlets for their need to serve.
- Straight-up troublemakers who enjoy drama. [45]
- Rugged individualists who make poor “team-players.” [45]
- Hyper-devout members who see heresy where none exists. [44]

- Troubled people who assume that they can go to any ministering person, at any time, and expect to be helped with their troubles — even if they are not a member of that congregation. [87] While people expect psychologists to charge for their services, they also expect priests to perform similar services for free. [48]
 - This sets up unequal, one-way relationships which makes the client feel guilty, and impedes their healing. [48]
 - Since the client doesn't pay, they won't take their counseling seriously. [48]
 - Some people (e.g., paranoid delusionals, psychopaths, sociopaths) simply cannot be saved, since they lack the requisite sense of moral values and/or the desire to change. [48]
 - Some people are “clinging vines” who demand to be propped up by other people or institutions, using the strength of others exclusively, rather than cultivate any of their own. This is usually achieved via using guilt to manipulate others into helping them. [48]

Each hostile parishioner drains a portion the priest's time, forcing the pastor to work a little harder and little longer — and burnout a little quicker. While the actions of individual hostile parishioners are trivial, their cumulative effect is profound. **63% of ex-pastors said that the resistance to their leadership is what drove them to quit; it is the leading cause of clergy attrition.** [41] Likewise, **43% of people who leave their church do so because of issues with their pastor.** [46] Stone's meta-analysis of Lifeway and Barna Group data reveals that parishioners are frequently unaware of leadership, directional, and relational issues. [46] Many hostile parishioners cause trouble inadvertently; 40% of parishioners have no clue what frustrates their pastors — and 12% of parishioners think that nothing does. [46] Even if the pastor does everything right, it is literally a thankless job — only 4% of congregants will affirm their clergyman in anyway — and 46% of those who do merely call or write to say “thank you.” [46]

Much of these struggles are based around the harsh fact that **priests have no authority beyond their ability to persuade people.** [42] Priests are leaders, but not bosses. In the typical parish, the ministers aren't the permanent fixture; the congregation is. Priestly promotions and demotions typically are not determined by the higher church echelons, but by organization-minded laymen who have been entrusted with some degree of leadership because of their community status or business know-how. Priests are forced to outsource the business aspects of their parish's operations to the congregation, since priests receive little to no business training in seminary. As a result, congregations can't be led in directions that they don't want to go — they'll only rebel, and replace the plucky minister another, and another, until they find one that agrees with them. **Economic and political pressure supersedes ecclesiastic pressure.** [53] Even Catholics, who do not select their own priests, can still rebel against them. When priests do not respond to parishioner's actions, they can appeal by petitioning their bishop — and if the bishop does not respond, the parishioner can petition the Congregation for the

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Doctrine of the Faith and/or the pope directly, to address the bishop's heresy. [44]

The parish's prime motivation is to ensure its own survival, and then to ensure its own security; these are the metrics which determine a pastor's success and career survival. As such, churches and their pastors are under constant pressure to increase their membership; growth signifies success. Additionally, churches and pastors must periodically expand or renovate their buildings, to signify progress. These acts require funding, and an enormous consumption of the minister's time, energy, and supervision, at the expense of other goals. [53] This is complicated by the fact that churches grow rapidly, but slowly erode over time; parishioners often unaware of the need for change, even when it's in their best interest. [61]

Hostile parishioners are allowed to prosper because of: [45]

- Both volunteer and paid leaders undergo little or no pre-hire screening.
- Secondary channels are used to work outside of established procedures. This confers special privileges to individuals, robbing the existing political structure of its power.
- Failed attempts to quell a parishioner's anger which did not address the root cause.
- Support systems failing to address issues and/or defend the pastor.
 - Allowing the "collateral damage" of drama/conflict to compromise a support system.
- The denomination and/or bishop failing to intervene, because their limited power and/or situational involvement. However, even if these authorities can't directly intervene, they should still be able to assert their authority and/or mandate compliance.
- A failure to understand how unresolved past issues continue to influence the present.
- A failure to quell gossip.
- Seminaries fail to teach their students how to deal with hostility.
- Pastors fail to explore other options and opportunities.
- Pastors often have no other pastors to turn too or collaborate with.
 - This does not apply to Catholic priests, who are procedurally required to have their own designated confessor.
- Pastors who fail to assert their authority.
 - Pastors are unusually prone to guilt, which makes them more vulnerable to manipulation from con artists or others who wish to extort money and/or services.
- Pastors who fail to employ a "good-vs.-evil" mentality. Pastors often delude themselves into thinking that Christian love can overcome all; and will deny, pamper, or excuse subversive actions. Likewise, this mentality renders pastors completely unable to deal with the mentally ill, or with the truly evil.
 - Rational arguments, love, and negotiations are ineffective against the truly evil.
 - The mentally ill become completely predictable once they've been diagnosed.

- An uninformed and theologically-illiterate laity is vulnerable to the threats, flattery, cajolery, misrepresentation, etc. of those who are trying to undermine their pastors.
- Harmful or toxic pastors undermine themselves. This typically occurs with misfit pastors, whose personality, style, and conviction does not match those of their congregation.
- Well-adjusted and successful Christians at the top of their fields eventually quit attending church services because they lose interest, or consider mass to be a waste of time. [46]
- Meetings to alter the church's political structure often just let parishioners vent, and the church quickly returns to the *status quo*. Such meetings accomplish less than nothing to alter the structure of a system; they only give the deceptive appearance that change is really happening. [14]
- Devoted Christians are reluctant to stop their own persecution. Christ taught that their allegiance to him will result in persecution (MAT 5:10-11, 22; 13:13, LUK 6:22; 21:17, 1COR 1:18); thus, negative treatment is considered confirmation of living correctly. [81]

4.5 — Spiritual Dilution

The world has changed and the churches have not, despite the foundations of American society undergoing changes as drastic as the Exodus was to the Jews — and this has happened *twice*. In 1900, 33% Americans worked in agriculture, as of 1998, only 3% were. (This is why Sunday mass is held in the late morning; because it's between milking times.) In 1956, most Americans were worked in manufacturing; as of 1998, only 13% were, while 60-70% of people worked in information-related jobs. [42]

Our culture is not merely different; it is *discontinuously different*.

Modern culture is far different than the culture the Millennials were raised in — which in turn was far different than the culture the Baby Boomers were raised in — which in turn was far different than the culture the WWII Generation was raised in. No group has lived through such a rapidly-changing world. While Christians face far less persecution, the cultural changes are far greater and more daunting: [65]

- Teachers and pastors can be fact-checked in real-time.
- Young people expect to participate as well as consume.
- The phenomena of “learning piracy,” where the church is not seen as the sole arbiter of spiritual content.
- A new expectation of flattened hierarchies.
- A globally connection to, and awareness of, others.
- A desire to stay connected at all times.

Christians apply a static theology to an age of accelerating change — and since “rapid social change” is just a euphemism for “revolution” — they are trying to live in revolutionary times without a theology of revolution. This is

especially problematic, as Christian ideology makes no provisions for revolutions, or counter-revolutions. While the action of God sometimes occurs through what theologians call “historical events,” this is just a euphemism for “social change.” The church’s doctrines are infected with the ideology of preservation and permanence. Almost entirely past-oriented, churches derive their authority from various classical periods; from an alleged resemblance to an earlier form of church life; or from a theory of historical continuity. [14]

While the American conservatives were preoccupied with threat of secular humanists encroaching on their hegemony, they ignored their own secularization — science, technology, politics, and wealth have become the means used to justify their ends. [29] This is because “secular” really means “non-religious,” instead of “anti-religious.” Everything that is not a church or church-related — e.g., restaurants, public libraries, roads, parks, shopping plazas, parking garages, etc. — are, by definition, secular institutions. [44] Secularization forces have no serious interest in persecuting *any* religion; secularization simply bypasses and undercuts religions, and goes on to do other things. Secularization merely relativized religious worldviews, rendering them innocuous. Religion has been privatized; it now one’s particular prerogative and point of view. Secularization has merely convinced people that they *could* be wrong, and that there are more important things than dying for one’s faith. The traditional gods aren’t needed to play their role in the public life of the secular metropolis. [14]

Because of this, religious orders are gradually being replaced by organizations, which are: [14]

- **Flexible.** These groups make no claim to ultimate origin, and change to meet their current needs — reorganizing, merging, and disbanding on a whim. While traditions can form, they are of secondary importance.
- **Future-oriented.** Religious orders views the present in terms of the past; whereas organizations work towards established goals.
- **Secularized.** Tradition, ceremony, and taboo are replaced with procedures, which are criticized and refined. Traditions can exist, but these are frills which do not define the group. Organizations are non-exclusive; members can join many other organizations, and are free to come and go as they please.
- **Making limited membership claims.** Since the organization’s authority is relative and not absolute, it only influence small portions of the member’s life. Organizations are like labor unions, whereas religious orders are like trade guilds.

The only way the clergy can ever compete is to change the way that the world perceives them, and refuse to play the role of antiquarian and medicine man — but this is difficult, because *that is their job*. The only hope of achieving this fact is to address the three key problems facing modern city life, which neither the Christians, nor anyone else, have a standardized solution for: [14]

1. **The decentralization of authority.** There is a lack of political structures to address each and every issue, causing some problems to go ignored or improperly treated.

2. **Dealing with problems on a society-wide basis.** The city's problems are actually society's problems; they just seem more prevalent in cities because of their larger population.
3. **The powerlessness of oppressed peoples.** The poor and/or minorities are voiceless, since they lack the readiness, capacity, or channels needed to voice their legitimate needs.

Christians are unlikely to address these issues since their basis, pragmatism and worldliness, have historically been the church's worst events. Even the much-touted weekend service projects only aggravates these problems, by establishing a sense of co-dependency, and a dichotomy of "those-who-do" and "those-who-have-things-done-for-them." [14]

Christianity can only compete with cultural change though being assimilated by it; while it will dissolve in the process, the surviving part might influence culture once again. While this is unpalatable to most Christians, it is also unstoppable. Even conservatism — which by definition is the resistance to cultural changes — falters in the face of change.

Since conservatives act be contrary to change, those who make changes also define the direction that conservatism will follow. [29] Even the Catholic Church, which stood stalwart through centuries of falling empires and countless wars, faltered before the "perfect storm" of Baby Boomer social upheavals: [44]

1. **Vatican II** was a groundbreaking upheaval not because of the changes it made — but *because it allowed changes*, and established a precedent for future changes.
2. **The end of the "Catholic ghetto."** Like many other faiths, American Catholics were once relegated to cloistered enclaves of ethnic neighborhoods, which reinforced their own cultural norms. American culture is now more homogenized and pluralistic. [64]
3. **The American counter-cultural revolution of the 1960-70's.** The Civil Rights movement was really an anti-authority movement — it challenged the state's authority to enact Jim Crow laws, and was a rebellion against political, social, business, and education leaders for their failure to stand up against Jim Crow.

This is why Pope Pius X tried and failed to stop the modernization of the church with his 1907 encyclical letter, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*. [44] However, this failed to prevent Baby Boomer's social upheavals, and it will falter even further before the discontinuous changes induced by global warming and the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The only alternative to assimilation — a traditionalist victory across the entire American church landscape — would still only be a Pyrrhic victory. This saving remnant of the church will be pessimistic from their legacy of failure, and the realization that they will never again play an important role in the thoroughly-secularized dominant culture to come; much like the Amish or the Hasidic Jews. [44] "In the age of video games, Middle-town-whenever will always be closer to Mars than Jerusalem." [29]

Secularization made Christianity seem less real, privatization turned it into a personal preference, and cultural pluralization made the Christian

religion into one among many. Religion has been so deeply relegated to the private sphere that its disappearance from the public sphere goes largely unnoticed. To combat this, Christians attempt to re-enter the public sphere by uncritically reduplicating the stances and styles of the public sphere itself (e.g., Christian rock, Christian superheroes, etc.). However, by using the secular world's tools on the secular world's terms only holds the Christians captive to whims of pop-culture. [29]

The American church-state separation broke up the state church's monopolies, forcing churches to compete on the free market for parishioners. Churches thus had to market themselves. [29] This is a unique situation; even the various national churches of Europe viewed themselves as parts of one, larger collective church; national churches were just the only valid ones within the confines of their political borders. [44] In the US, all 41,000 denominations of Christianity [27] are at odds with each other, and with every other faith. This struggle is compounded by the fact the average American church has 85-100 parishioners, [42] limiting their resources to a degree that leaves most churches struggling to maintain their overhead, let alone their hegemony.

Churches in the US are forming their own organizations, in response to the threat posed by flexible, future-oriented, secularized, membership-limited organizations. This cooperation requires churches to ignore the theological differences between one another (especially the subtle differences), and only focus on what unites them — to focus on what they have in common, instead of what divides or defines them. However, this is flatly incompatible with the notion of dogmatism. The end result is a generic Christian faith; a diluted form of Protestantism, which makes pithy attacks at Catholics, and no makes claims of Christ's divinity to please Unitarians and Jews. It merely consists of the notion of God's providence, the afterlife, the Ten Commandments, and an ambiguously-interpreted Bible. This denominational consensus erodes loyalty, since no one church — and no one religion — has any real advantage over another. These "Cafeteria Christians" then freely pick and choose which dogma to follow, like they were dishes on an *à la carte* line. This is generally accepted to be a recipe for a gradual ecclesial suicide via disintegration. Denominational consensus is the first step on the slippery slope to skepticism. By conceding their claim to a monopoly on the truth, these churches grow increasingly tolerant until they are incapable of opposing unorthodox beliefs, even inside their own church walls. In the end, they are not even able to outright oppose outright agnosticism and atheism, or to oppose Christianity's historically condemned practices (e.g., abortion, homosexuality, and suicide). They will be left with no means for combating secularism, since the only non-denominationalist dogma is anti-dogmatism; they tolerate all religious viewpoints as being equal, except for those which say otherwise. [44]

One example of these organizations would be the seemingly-powerful Southern Baptist Convention, which is actually a loose confederation of independent churches, which send "messengers," who represent themselves, instead of delegates representing their church. These messengers tend to be the more conservative members of their congregations, because those are the only ones willing to attend conventions. The decisions made at Southern Baptist Conventions are non-binding resolutions which state what the majority

of attendees believed on that particular day. This is rarely explained in news stories, because it would show that the power of the convention is overrated. The lack of representational power is magnified at the National Association of Evangelicals, where there are no delegates, and a board decides all policies. [75]

4.5.1 — Moralistic Therapeutic Deism

The younger a person is, the less they understand the Christian faith. When it comes to faith, people mostly parrot what their parents taught them. The mass-media has assumed much of this role, [82] pitching a bland, non-denominational Christianity as though it were toothpaste, laundry detergent, or any other consumer product. [29] As a result, many Americans are only tenuously Christian in any historical, traditional sense. Christianity is successfully resisting secularization, but only through degenerating into weaker versions of itself, until it is ultimately replaced by Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, a pseudo-philosophy based on the following notions: [67]

1. A god exists, who created and ordered the world, and watches over human life on earth.
2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible by most world religions.
3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life, except when God is explicitly needed to resolve a problem.
5. Good people go to heaven when they die.

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is an “alternative faith that co-opts if not devours” established religious traditions, as it “generally does not, and cannot stand on its own.” Moralistic Therapeutic Deism has little to do with God or a sense of divine mission in the world. It offers comfort, bolsters self-esteem, helps solve problems, and lubricates interpersonal relationships by encouraging a mutually-bland common ground. Moralistic Therapeutic Deism makes no pretense at changing lives; churches are seen only as useful communities to help people feel good about themselves via communicating a sanitized, culturally-cooperative, but wildly truncated version of Christianity. Moralistic Therapeutic Deism disrupts the faith of young people. Even if teenagers fully participate in youth ministry programs and churches, while avoiding distractions, trauma, and counter-influences, they are unlikely to grasp a “god” who is too limp to grasp them. As such, apart from “being nice,” teenagers do not think that religion influences their decisions, choice of friends, or behaviors. Religion is only used to justify the decisions that they were going to make anyway. [64]

Young people practice Moralistic Therapeutic Deism not because they have misunderstood what they were taught at church, *but because it was what they were taught at church*. Preaching and evangelism are ineffective against Moralistic Therapeutic Deism because calls to worship are also generalized and non-specific. Besides, the events being preached about (e.g.,

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Christ's death and resurrection) happened so long ago that they no longer offer anything new or exciting. [14] As a result, young people lack an articulate faith, because they see faith as too spineless to merit discussion. They don't see faith as being too deep for words, but as too rapid to require its own jargon. [64]

Even parochial schools and religiously-affiliated colleges cannot stop Moralistic Therapeutic Deism from spreading, because maintaining orthodoxy assumes that orthodox doctrines are taught, and that their students will never discover or experiment with doctrine on their own. Religiously-affiliated schools and colleges have become more secularized to compete and survive in the academic free market. [44] Catholic schools, in particular, have rebranded themselves into affluent college prep academies for the affluent. In 1970, 2.3% of Catholic school students were non-Catholic; in 2003, it was 13.5%, which was enough of a demographic change to cause schools to shift their mission from religious development to academic development. Currently 95% of US Catholic school teachers are laity — and often non-Catholic, trained in secular universities, and use secular textbooks and other resources. [69] Clergy are mostly relegated to administrative and counseling roles at parochial colleges and universities; even theology has been secularized into "religious studies," [44] which teaches about Christianity via its documents, doctrines, history, and moral codes. [88] The individual churches are no better at teaching, since Christian education has been reduced to ritual preparations (e.g., pre-baptism counseling, first communion classes, confirmation classes, pre-marriage classes). This develops cliques instead of communities — cliques which disband and disappear following the ritual. [88] As a result, only 9% of Americans holds a Biblical worldview. Born-again Christians are only twice as likely to do so, but that's still only 1 in 5. In particular: [55]

- 54% of born-again do not believe in the existence of an absolute moral truth.
- 60% of born-again do not believe in the existence of Satan.
- 53% of born-again do not believe it is impossible to enter heaven via good behavior alone.
- 56% of adults, and 67% of Catholics, deny the existence of the Holy Spirit, and believe it to be symbolic.

Interestingly, standardized tests from the Nehemiah Institute show that only 6% of Christian school students embrace a Biblical worldview, which is only slightly higher than public school attendees. In particular: [70]

- 63% Christian school students do not believe Jesus is the son of the one true God.
- 65% Christian school students do not believe Satan is a real entity.
- 68% Christian school students do not believe that the Holy Spirit is a real entity.

A sudden revival of traditional religious education would still prove ineffective. The word "catechism" is derived from "catechize," meaning "to echo back" — it's rote learning, and that's problematic since the modern youth was raised in a participatory culture, which seeks: [64]

- Low barriers to artistic and civic engagement.
- Strong support for creative collaborations.
- Informal mentorships that pass on experience to newcomers.
- Confidence that their contributions will matter.
- Social connection between group members, if only through appreciating their contributions.

Additionally, if important and/or influential church positions are only open to men, or to the upper socioeconomic classes, or if particular races are either implicitly or explicitly excluded from membership, a different lesson is taught. [88]

4.6 — Reliance on the Bible

The overwhelming challenge of modernity — and the chronically divided Christian response to it — has rendered a credible, united Christianity impossible. [29] Christianity can survive as a personal religion based on individuals reading the Bible — but this is a stumbling block for many [26] because the Bible is not credible (see §8.7). Christianity, in nearly all of its varied forms, depends upon the authority of a divinely-inspired Bible — and without this the Christians suddenly have no means to control others. [32] This is easily achieved by accepting the Christians' claims of biblical authority, and using it to frame them into adopting absurd and indefensible positions. [22] For example:

- The writers of the New Testament had the opportunity to fix the errors in the Old Testament and in earlier gospels by drawing bullseye's around the arrows they shot — but they still didn't.
- Christians cannot write off, ignore, or rationalize their way out of any of the Old Testament laws, or the horrors which they have spawned, since Christ explicitly mentioned several times that every character of the old law is true and correct, and must be obeyed (MAT 5:17-19; JOH 7:19; LUK 16:17). To do otherwise defies Christ's direct teachings. [27]
- Many of God's laws are presented without *any* justification or explanation. The Bible tells us, via a revelation, that it's against God's law to boil a baby goat in its mother's milk — *but the Bible never explains why that's a problem*, or why it would offend God. [20]
- **There is a large burden of proof on the resurrection. This is crucial, because if the resurrection is untrue, then the entire Christian religion is automatically invalidated (1COR 15:17).** [27]
- Christians must abandon the entire concept of jurisprudence in order to comply with Christ's maxim of "judge not lest ye be judged." [20]
- The Gospel of Luke claims to be an eyewitness account (LUK 1:1-4), in contrast with basically the entire corpus of Biblical history studies. [26]
- While ancient slavery was more like indentured servitude, and did not involve the literal ownership of humans like the "chattel" slavery of the

American South, the Bible was still used to endorse and rationalize that unforgivable practice, despite its clear prohibitions on kidnapping (1TIM 1:9-11) and slave trafficking (DEU 24:7). [26]

- Many, many, many more examples can be found in §6.1-6.7, and §8.1-8.4.

4.7 — The Clergy are "Unmanly"

While this article makes many traditional/stereotypical generalizations of gender traits and roles, it does not endorse this particular worldview. However, churches have historically catered to those who *do* hold these views on gender traits and roles, and they are now failing miserably at it.

Churches are like baby showers; even if men are invited, they don't want to be there. Church services are primarily attended by women, children, and the elderly; churches now cater to those demographics to such a degree that they have become associated with childhood. As a result, **many men fear going to church — not because they fear God — but because they fear it will damage their reputation.** Churchgoing men are viewed as bland, milquetoast pushovers, like Ned Flanders. Granted there is a "Mafia exception" to this rule; mobsters attend church services without losing their street cred, but only because their actions and lifestyle are contrary to the Christian lifestyle. It's the buy-in which makes church attendees unmanly. A random sampling of 100 non-churchgoing men all replied they didn't attend mass because churches are for "kids, women, and wimps. [89]

While the clergy is a men's club, every other aspect of the church is run and dominated by women; "churches are women's clubs with male officers," and based on the rolls of old New England churches, this has been an ongoing trend since the 1600s. This is because: [89]

- Women tend to produce more serotonin, which calms them and prevents the expression of anger. (This is why women tend to bottle up their anger until they snap.) Church aggressions must be handled in an overly-polite manner; men can't ask their priest if he wants to step outside.
- Women's brains tend to have larger language centers; which in turn, allows them to be better at reading, singing, speaking, networking, etc. — in short, to be better at what churches require.

There are a number of differences in the male brain which drive their desires, shape their cultures and are being largely unmet by the modern church:

- Men tend to have larger amygdala, resulting in stronger fight-or-flight responses, and a greater tendency for flashbacks. Men have extreme difficulty overcoming *any* unpleasant, painful, or humiliating past experiences, because of the influence of this region of the brain, and the fact that it does not reason — *it responds*. [89]
- Men tend to have a smaller corpus collosum, which causes less traffic between hemispheres of the brain. As a result, men have greater difficulty with verbal learning methods (e.g., sermons, bible studies, etc.) [89]

- Men need to be able to ask questions and challenge the *status quo*. **If their input is not valued, then they are not valued. Men need dialogue, not monologue.** There needs to be give and take, and a chance to argue.
- Men enjoy learning through personal discovery; they tend to be active, hands-on learners who learn by doing, and through interacting with objects.
- The average male attention span is 6-8 minutes, but the average sermon is 30 minutes. Lesson plans must focus on a single point or concept, because what is not concise is lost.
- Men require visually-explained plans towards a pre-defined goal, so they can measure their progress. Otherwise, they will feel aimless and run aground. [89]
- Christian sermons and monologues never present any novel or useful ideas. Even at their most intense, they are rehashes of clichéd macho posturing (e.g., the “baptize in fire!” from MAR 9:49-50). [32]
 - “If we have authority over the devil in Jesus’ name, how many times do we have to bind him before it works? If it does work, why does the devil keep getting free?” [90]
- Modern preaching is ineffective because it relies on generalized, non-specific terms to discuss events which happened so long ago that they no longer offer a new worldview or anything else to get excited about. [13]
 - Modern people judge what they encounter through the lenses of pragmatism and profanity — meaning that is profane in the classical sense of the world (literally meaning “outside the temple”). For something to be relevant, it must contain a sense of “this-worldness.” [13]
- Catholic sermons tend to be of low-quality because they are literally filler material. Catholics see the Eucharist as the means to achieve grace, as opposed to Protestantism, where the sermon is the means to achieve grace. Poor sermons signal that a Catholic priest is a disappointment, and that a Protestant priest is a failure. [44]
- Men are made uncomfortable by the modern terminology used in modern worship:
 - “A personal relationship with Christ,” “a passionate relationship with Christ,” and “intimacy with God” all carry sexual connotations which welcome women and repel men. [89]
 - There is a tendency for Christians to assume Elizabethan speech patterns when talking to God (“We beseech thee, O Lord...”) and/or the mantra-like repetition of God’s name (“Lord, we thank you for this day, Lord.” These are both perceived as grandstanding to create an illusion of holiness, and are not considered to be genuine devotion, [89] which is why this “god-talk” has little or no resonance outside of religious communities. [91]
 - “Being saved” makes men feel like a damsel in distress. [89]

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- “Sharing” how you feel makes men feel like they’re in kindergarten. [89]
- The “Lord” is meaningless and unrelatable outside of a monarchy; if anything men are now conditioned to rebel against anyone demanding to be called “Lord.” [89]
- Men’s ministries fail because they’re essentially women’s ministries for men. They sit around read, weep, hold hands, sing, hug, listen, and share. While these events are not designed for women *per se*, they only attract soft men:
 - The masculine spirit is regarded as unholy because it is uncouth. [89]
 - Guilt, duty, and obligation tend to be poor motivators for men. [89]
 - Men have difficulty with gathering, praying, and the laying-of-hands because they associate personal space with safety, whereas women tend to associate closeness with safety. [89]
 - Men fear psychic regression (i.e., returning to a second infancy to evade reality), because the men who regress (e.g., those who run back to their mommies) are perceived as failures. Men *must* move out, and they *can’t* return home. [89]
 - Christianity repels men because it’s based on risk-avoidance; it’s all about “don’t do this” and “play it safe.” Men *must* play for keeps; without a *real* threat from a *real* enemy, they cannot fight, and lose interest. [89]
 - Christianity only caught on because it was originally seen as subversive, thrilling, dangerous, and exciting; the risk of being fed to lions was an appealing selling point. Why would anyone get excited about going to a sanctuary [89]
 - Men fear Heaven, because it sounds so boring. There are no challenges, no uncertainties, and no fun activities other than singing for billions of years. [89]
- Men have an urge to constantly prove themselves in their own way, according to their own skill. “Real manhood differs from simple anatomical maleness, that it is not a natural condition that comes about spontaneously through biological maturation but rather is a precarious or artificial state that boys must win against power odds.” **Manhood is something you earn.** [89]
 - Men don’t just want to be great; they want to be recognized as being great. Therefore, they won’t do anything unless it offers them a shot at greatness. Their constant posturing and one-upmanship benefits society through its by-products: bravery, heroism, generosity, self-sacrifice, and innovation. [89]
 - The modern church has no need for the traditionally masculine skills and traits, especially since they would disrupt the church’s predominately “soft skill”-based tasks (e.g., child care, teaching children, preparing soup, etc.). Men have a need to be needed, but other than ushers, all of the traditionally “male” jobs are reserved for the clergy. [89]

- Male volunteers are prone to burnout from failing to see the fruits of their labors (see §4.1). This is commonly due churches with too many ministry programs, many of which have little effect. Since churches attract passivity activists who expend most of their energy on fighting change, most churches are unwilling to cull their unproductive programs and their divert resources towards the better programs. [89]
 - Men's greatest desire is reproduction, but churches are failing to grow. Even the fastest growing churches only show a 1.17% increase. [89]
- Clergy tend to exhibit more "feminine" personality traits than men of other professions, and produce less testosterone. [89]
 - Homosexuals are disproportionately attracted to religious vocations, because the church is one of the society's few institutions where there is no expectation for men to conform to traditional male roles; it is the only place where men are praised for displaying feminine traits. [89] Priests are expected to be a sort of asexual, sinless "third gender," which is shielded from the world and its myriad of corrupting influences. [42]
 - **Priests wield no power or authority beyond their persuasive abilities.** [42] While clergy serve in the holy office of ministry, it is the *office* that is holy, not the person. [54]
 - Priests must be perfect pacifists and avoid conflict, lest they be hypocrites. While some Christians argue that "turning the other cheek" is a figure of speech, the context of MAT 5:40-42 reveals that Jesus literally advocated the invitation of mistreatment. [92]
 - The Cubans could have staged a counter-revolution at any time, but their Christian ideology prevented them from doing so, as it does not allow for either revolutions or counter-revolutions. [13]

As a result, some (mostly fundamentalist) Christians overcompensate by fostering a culture of toxic masculinity. The emasculation which results from submission to the church authority is offset by the further surrender of their conscience, accountability, and empathy. The domination which men are encouraged to practice over women and children is a reflection of the domination they are taught to endure outside of the home. [19]

Control and force is used to raise obedient, unquestioning, and fearful children who will not be tempted to challenge powerful male figures as adults. These children are conditioned to rely on external authority for moral choice. They obey out of fear, as the refusal to submit to authority is heresy. The child learns to distrust outsiders, until their benign and trivial differences are exaggerated to Satanic proportions. [19] This process perpetuates childhood, allowing adult to bask in the protection of an all-powerful father, masking themselves from their shortcomings, weaknesses, and frailties. This also makes mature, loving relationships impossible to build, since everything revolves around the believer, and their needs, desires, protection, and advancement. Relationships — even within families — splinter and fracture in

the face of what the church and its leaders dictate in their binary world of right and wrong. People are judged not by their intrinsic qualities, actions, self-sacrifice, or compassion, but by the rigidity of their obedience. This obedience is vital, because in many ways, these toxic leaders fear love the most, for it is love that unleashes passions and breaks bonds that can defy the carefully constructed hierarchies which keep followers trapped and enclosed. [19]

- Fundamentalism correlates with right-wing authoritarian personalities, which in turn correlates with racism, homophobia, ethnocentrism, and punitiveness. The aggression, prejudice, and schadenfreude-coupled vindictive mean-spiritedness directed against out-groups *is what defines* the in-group. [14]
- Fundamentalists target women, homosexuals, Jews, atheists, blacks, and a host of other groups when confronted with the imperfections of our culture, because scapegoats act as a safety valve against the pressure of disappointment. This is why religious leaders point blame at outsiders as a means to prevent malcontent among their own members. [14]
- Rigid sex role socialization is one of the propagators of rape. Women are taught not to show interest, while men are taught to take a leading role, which establishes a rape culture. [14]
 - Misogyny (the hatred of women) is another cause of rape. The majority of rapists seek power, not sex. They seek to humiliate, degrade, subordinate, and injure women. Fundamentalists will even go as far as to tell rape victims that “it is good to suffer,” because their suffering will “earn them God’s special favor.” As a result, nothing is done to protect the innocent. The attack is written off as being God’s will, and the victim is told to forget the incident; to move on; and most importantly — forgive their unrepentant attacker. [14]
 - Among the general population, sex abuse is mostly perpetrated by step-fathers, and not fathers. This is not true for fundamentalist Christians, who have an out-of-proportion incest rate. Fundamentalism correlates with incest, but this probability decreases with increasing degree of community involvement. Only those who don’t get out often will turn to incest. [14]
 - Conservatives have historically deplored welfare initiatives because they give abused women a means to escape, which challenges an absolute patriarchy. Contrary to popular belief, there are no incentives for welfare mothers to have additional children, as additional benefits mostly come in non-cash forms (e.g., food stamps, Medicaid, and housing and daycare allowances which are paid directly to the providers). [14]

4.8 — Difficult Theological Problems are Piling Up

Theological advancements are produced at a glacial pace, if at all. Many topics have been debated for centuries without progress. Technological progress moves at a much faster rate, and society has had to, and soon will, completely reform itself to cope with the changes which technology will bring. As a result, theological conundrums are being generated

faster than they can ever be resolved, since theologians are too busy resolving questions which no one is asking [79]; this both highlights and hastens the irrelevance of Christianity. These high-value questions include:

- Would human clones have souls?
- Would human-animal hybrids (e.g., humanzees) have souls?
- Would self-aware androids have souls?
 - If Data from Star Trek: The Next Generation doesn't have a soul, then no one deserves one.
- Would intelligent extraterrestrial lifeforms have souls?
 - The Catholic Church has been playing with this idea since c.2005. It is generally accepted in Catholic circles that intelligent extraterrestrial lifeforms have souls, which were also corrupted by Original Sin, and were also redeemed via Jesus' crucifixion. However, this *is not* a Catholic dogma, and the issue has gone virtually unnoticed by other Christian sects.
- If you were to gradually replace all your organs and body parts with transplanted and/or cloned body parts, are you still the same person?
- What happens to the souls of the cryopreserved? In the unlikely event that these people were to be resurrected with future science, would their souls return to their preserved bodies, like the Ba of ancient Egypt? If not, were their souls frozen too?
 - Would placing a live person into cryogenic suspension be murder? [93]
 - Would failing to reanimate them be murder? [93]
- If suicide bombers go to heaven for killing the enemy, what happens when the two sides make peace? [25]
- If "there is nothing is new under the sun," (ECC 1:7) then how can the Apollo moon landings be explained? [67]

Chapter 5 Our Strategy

“...smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered...”

– Zechariah 13:17

This guide is a training manual for non-violent subversives to engage in an asymmetric conflict against their particular house of worship. This guide is primarily intended for a Catholic and Protestant audiences. This is not meant to exclude people trapped in other faiths; the author is just the most familiar with that particular tradition. Readers of different backgrounds are encouraged to use this guide as a template for writing follow-up guides to address other religions.

The plan is simple. ***Waste your priest's time. Every hour of their time which you consume is an hour they can't spend indoctrinating a young person.*** If we (justifiably) assume a priest works a full shift every day, then they would produce a total of 2,912 man-hours of priestcraft per year. **56 people wasting one hour of their local priest's time each week has the net global effect of having one priest renounce their vows for a full year. A subversive nonbeliever-to-priest ratio of 56:1 would thus render the entire clergy inert. This is realizable, since the current nonbeliever-to-priest ratio in the US is 81:1, [94] [62] [95] and every extra hour wasted per week has the next effect of recruiting another subversive. Domination is unnecessary to overcome challenges; victory only requires a slight advantage. This is why bringing the worst out in your opponent has the same net effect as bringing out the best in you.**

Additionally, priests are already overworked, underpaid, and lead tumultuous personal lives. With all of their standing responsibilities, any wasted time cuts into the already-small amount of leisure which their life allows them. Each little time delay holding up their operations is like a grain of sand in a gearbox. [96] Many priests are teetering on the brink of burnout as it is; while no one pestering question will persuade a priest to leave their position, no one raindrop causes the flood. Having a priest leave for any reason will have a traumatic impact on their church; on average, 28% of worshipers will seek another parish, *and 19% will cease going to any church altogether.* Their replacements are often required to schedule fewer services, to maintain the appearance of full seats. Up to 40% of the remaining parishioners will tithe less, and many church programs will be eliminated as the church enters survival mode. [97]

By just asking questions and wasting their time, you can subtly stress and eventually burnout your priest. Every hour spent talking to you about a feigned spiritual crisis is an hour where the clergyman cannot perform any other work. This approach is ideal, since you can act against your priest and church without legal recourse or repercussions. [97] Likewise, following this approach leaves these subversive

actor free from retribution, since they are not rebelling *per se*; they are desperately trying to obey and follow. [40]

This strategy has been proven to work; it is a variation of the popular sit-in strike and administrative overload techniques — the meatspace analogues of a Directed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack. The sit-in occupies an area and renders it useable for its intended purpose. This was used to great effect in the Civil Rights movement to place economic pressure on segregated restaurants and other businesses, by preventing racist store owners from completing transactions until they changed their policies. Administrative overload was used by Vietnam War protesters in the 1960's to great effect. The Selective Service required draft-age males to submit a 10-day written notification whenever they moved. Protesters then wrote to inform Selective Service about every trip to the store; every time they moved into another room; or that they planned on moving, only to change their minds a few days later. This overwhelmed the Selective Service offices with meaningless work, impeding their productivity. [98]

The methodology is simple, and has been outlined below:

5.1 — Get the Clergy's Attention

Winning an audience with a priest is simple — just ask for help. You must phrase it like that. By asking people for help, they cannot resist without seeming like an unhelpful person. [99] Additionally, this forces a role upon the priest, and once a person has accepted the helper role, it is usually awkward and/or difficult to back out from helping further. [100] Helping people with spiritual problems or crises is the priest's reason-for-being; it is literally their function in society to hear you out. The issue needs to be of a spiritual concern, so that they cannot turn you away — it must be something which only they can help you with. This will make the priest feel important, and by feeding their ego, they will become more compliant and willing to work with you. [101]

Start out by asking a number of innocuous questions before starting in. This will catch them up in a “momentum of compliance,” and they will drop their defenses and become more likely to answer further questions. [100]

Then, tell the priest that you've had a crisis of faith, causing you to lapse as a Christian because of your inability to reconcile your questions about Christianity, or even about faith itself. Act depressed and distraught by this, especially upon your first meeting. The younger you are, the more likely this scheme will work. It is normal for young people to be confused and questioning, as those are both normal parts of the growth and maturation processes. Even if a young person is revealed to be a subversive, their deviant behavior can be written off as part of a rebellious “piss and vinegar” phase; a certain amount of deviance is expected from the young, as another normal part of their growth and maturation. Adults can also implement this strategy, but they must face the full consequences if they are found out, unless they have earned a reputation as a successful eccentric. Deviant behavior is tolerated from successful eccentrics — not because they are eccentric, but because they are successful — and thus too valuable to get rid of. [102]

You Cannot Seem Hostile

Hostility is doubly unproductive. A direct, frontal attack will push the priest away, [101] closing the lines of communication, and minimizing your results. Even worse though, is that Christians expect to be persecuted — it was one of Christ’s promises to them (JOH 15:20) — so your hostility will just be cited as proof that the Bible is true. [32] For best results you need to have some familiarity or rapport, but these are both easy to develop. By merely hanging around an area long enough, people will assume that you belong there. [100] Giving a receptionist a \$5 bill, and telling them “I found this on the floor. Did anyone say they lost money?” will imbue you with the qualities of honesty and trustworthiness. [100] This is important, since it exploits the Fundamental Attribution Error — the human brain tends to overestimate the importance of character traits, and underestimate the importance of situations and contexts. [63]

Take a Soft, Long-Term Approach

Burnout is a process of erosion, not a display of force. Non-believers are expected to be angry and hostile, relying on overt, in-your-face tactics. The clergy’s standard responses do not apply to the indirect sneak attacks we advocate; they will literally be blind-sided. Even if you are called out or directly proven to be a subversive, you will still have some degree of protection from what psychologist Philip Zimbardo termed “Not-Me Syndrome” (The Illusion of Personal Invulnerability). People tend to ignore direct evidence that they’ve been cheated simply to avoid the pain and shame that comes with admitting that they’ve been cheated. [103]

Furthermore, there is no way for priests to stop these time-wasting conversations without alienating the spiritual community which they exist to serve. By maintaining a soft approach, you can subvert your church while maintaining a safe, unassailable position as an active and valued participant. A hardline approach can defeat opponents, but soft power will conquer them. Soft power is borne from a sensitivity to changing forces, fluidly and flexibly redirecting them as needed.

5.2 — Maintain a Good Rapport

You must use soft approaches to maintain power over others; you must work with — not against — human nature. [101] To ensure this, you must follow the following guidelines:

Start on a Positive Note

Never begin with an apology. [104] Always make your most important comments first, and be specific. [105] Do not let the priest suspect you are there to waste his time.

Don't Argue or Debate

The problems associated with this approach do not come from the subversive's weaknesses, but from the overuse of their strengths. Citing lots of data makes the whole conversation seem rehearsed, which will raise suspicion. Most priests have already encountered confrontational "firebrand" atheists, and they will quickly write you off as being one you lay it on too thick or too strong. As such, don't go all-out — only give it 60-70%. Additionally, keep the following points in mind:

- **Christianity protects itself by being inherently non-disprovable.**
There is no way to confirm or deny any of Christianity's claims; they only appear strong because Christians frame non-belief as passive and noncommittal. Rather than trying to disprove religious claims, hold your priest to them. This creates the illusion of mutual agreement, but you can use this to corner your pastor, and force them to take on absurd, indefensible positions. [22]
- **Entering religious debates only sets yourself up to fail.** Religious debates are unwinnable, since there is no way to definitively verify anyone's claims; theologians have no labs. [106] No one is totally competent in a religious debate, because it spans history, philosophy, psychology, morality, biblical criticism, medicine, astronomy, biology, linguistics, economics, and politics. [87]
- **The "thou shalt not debate" rule does not apply to "creation scientists."** Creationists actively seek out debates at every opportunity, because by simply agreeing to debate them, you automatically grant them a partial victory by acknowledging that their views contain some quantum of merit. [18] Even non-scientists can lock creationists up for hours by just asking them to explain creationism to you. If you want to engage them on a follow-up visit, you can visit the Talk.Origins website for highly-polished refutations to creationist talking points, written by scientists for you to use at no cost. Alternately, reading basic astronomy, geology, and biology textbooks from your local public library will give you the scientific background to keep the creationist intellectually engaged in fruitless activity for days. (While reading three introductory-level textbooks may sound like an insufficient science education, it doesn't take much to throw creationists into a spin).
 - Additionally, meta-discussions of creationism are also fair debates. Ask what constitutes a science, and debate the philosophy of science with them, because this is a favorite topic among creationists. Evolution is frequently dismissed as being "just a theory," which sets up a number of fun and time-consuming discussions, namely: [87]
 - What is the definition of a theory?
 - Why is the Theory of Creationism is not equally discredited?
 - How does this affect other disciplines? (e.g., does music theory imply the non-existence of music?)

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Don't Read from a Script

Do not read prepared statements. Instead, try your best to remember what you've previously read. In general, being well-read is what makes you credible. [107] Reading from a script will come across as inauthentic, and will reveal yourself as a troublemaker. Additionally, if you make an error, or if the conversation goes off on a tangent, your whole routine unravels. Instead, just be comfortable about the topic and have a general idea of what to say, and improvise. [104] Clergymen can pick up on the fact you are working from a script in part, because evangelist training is mostly based on memorizing scripts of idealized social interactions which cover basic arguments and talking points. [86]

Don't Try to Impress or Persuade

Never try to convince people that you're smart, or that you're trying to get them to change their minds — these will be taken as challenges, since most Christians automatically assume that curiosity and doubt are equivalent to ridicule and rage. Christians have rigged discourse so even questioning their beliefs is branded as extremely rude; all questioning must be indirect. [27] Only use soft approaches and focus on long-term goals. [108]

Don't Discuss Political Issues

Involving politics will only compound and complicate things, and it will out you as a troublemaker. If the priest goes off onto a political tangent, it is only because they are trying to divert you from the topic at hand, likely to escape the discomfort of your questioning. Try to direct the priest back onto some faith-based discussion. Focus on faith; by targeting faith, you will simultaneously target *all* faith-based political topics (e.g., LGBTQ issues, school prayer, stem cell research, abortion, etc.). [18]

Avoid Simplistic Persuasive Techniques

You are not trying to persuade anyone; you are talking for talking's sake. Additionally, most of these simplistic techniques will undermine your credibility. These include: [105]

- Name-calling.
- Glittering generalities (e.g., appeals to patriotism, being a good mother, etc.).
- Testimonials (i.e., the viewpoints of actors, athletes, etc.).
- The “plain folks” approach (e.g., “...you should do this because I'm just like you...”).

Maintain Intellectual Rigor and Integrity

If you act like a fool, people will treat you like one. So, if you feel compelled to use one of the following techniques — don't:

- Making arguments based on false premises. [109]
- Making *a priori* (circular) arguments, which “beg the question” by using the desired conclusion as a premise. [109]
- Putting a spin on a negative thing. [109]
- Lashing out and taking the offensive when trapped by facts. [109]
- Intimidating and/or making accusations. [109]
- Focusing on irrelevant points or minutia. [109]
- Using invalid analogies. [109] C. S. Lewis was notorious for this, frequently using analogies in place of structured arguments. [106]
- Demanding proof of self-evident facts (e.g., 1+2=3, Reagan winning re-election in 1984, etc.). [109]
- Making excessive use of intellectual and/or esoteric language to feign intelligence.
- Failing to define the terms you discuss. [110]
- Assuming that the nature of the thing is a result of its definition. [110]
- Assigning physical properties to the immaterial. [110]
- Assigning broad general properties to an entire class of things. [110] C. S. Lewis was notorious for this, working only in absolutes and making no room for special cases and/or situational ethics. [106]

Avoid Direct Eye Contact

Finally, although it sounds strange, do not look in the priest's eyes. Looking anyone in the eyes gives them an opportunity to mesmerize you, creating a sensation of losing yourself and melding into one being. Instead, look at their chin or neck.

5.3 — Maximize *Muda* in a Non-obvious Way

The efficiency and high productivity of Japanese manufacturing plants *is not* the result of working harder, but of working *better*. Efficiency is optimized by identifying and eliminating each of the 8 forms of waste and inefficiency, or *muda* (無駄, literally: “futility/uselessness/wastefulness”). Unlike “value-added work,” which describes any process that adds value by helping to produce/provide goods or services that a customer is willing to pay for, *muda* is any process that unnecessarily consumes resources, causing waste to occur. The 8 forms of *muda* are: [111]

1. **Overproduction.** Producing products without a demand for them creates overstaffing, storage, and transportation problems. Additionally, overproduction renders productive tasks unaffordable, since available capital becomes tied up in unsaleable products.

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2. **Waiting.** Anything which is not being improved, worked on, or generating value is wasteful. Storage is an expense, and idled workers still draw wages.
3. **Transportation.** In addition to shipping and handling costs, transportation introduces additional time delays for loading, unloading, and transit.
4. **Over-processing or incorrect processing.** Introducing extra steps into a process increases the time needed to complete the process. Additionally, these additional tasks create the possibility for additional defects, and require additional transportation to their unnecessary workstations.
5. **Excess inventory.** This applies to raw materials, work-in-progress, and finished goods. This includes losses from obsolescence, damaged goods, and transportation and storage costs. Extra inventory hides the effects of other process inefficiencies, such as: production imbalances, late deliveries, defects, equipment downtime, and long setup times.
6. **Unnecessary movement.** Inefficient processes cause unnecessary wear-and-tear on both machines and on workers.
7. **Defects.** Inspection and rework introduces extra steps into a process. Scrapping and replacement production consume additional resources.
8. **Unused creativity.** Those who are intimately familiar with a process are aware of its shortcomings; their insight is invaluable to process improvement.

The goal of a secular subversive is to increase *muda* with your church whenever possible. This is best achieved by wasting your priest's time — and thus removing his time, focus, and expertise away from value-add activities. This is achievable via the following process:

Let the Priest Completely State Their Case, Without Interruption

This gratifies their ego, and it's harder for them to build a defense once they've laid their cards out on the table. Soft power is still power. If you keep quiet, people will think that you're a philosopher.

Pause Before Answering

This creates the illusion of considering their talking points, further gratifying their ego.

Use Three-point Communication

Once you get an opportunity to speak, say "let me sure I have this right," then paraphrase what the priest just said, and allow them to confirm that you heard everything right. Not only does this prolong the conversation by redundantly repeating everything they say, it has a psychological impact that pulls the clergyman further in to the conversation: [112]

- This automatically hooks other person, forcing them to assume a listening role, and allowing you to dominate the conversation.

- This allows for communication errors to be corrected. This clarifies the situation, and prevents others from twisting your words, or claiming that you said something which you did not.
- This priest's perspective changes; now he must listen to his own words.
- This process allows for the re-inclusion of any omitted details.
- This induces a modeling behavior, which will cause people to paraphrase you, and thus granting you the time and repetition needed to etch your facts into their mind.

State Your Case Moderately and Accurately

Do not repeat the same thing over and over. If it didn't sink in the first time, it won't sink in the second time; you must approach the situation from a different angle. **If your point did not sink in, rephrase it.**

Speak Through Third Persons

Invoking and quoting others prevents others from arguing, since they must argue against people who are not there.

Priests are notorious for exploiting this trick, quoting scriptures or eminent theologians as a "hit and run" tactic, using biblical authority to end tricky conversations. Priests also invoke biblical authority to dismiss any non-priests from using scripture to endorse their particular views; by claiming the Bible is being quoted out of context. If your priest does either of these, use it as a jumping-off point for follow-up questions: [87]

- Who wrote the verse, and how do you know? Scholars continue to debate much of the Bible's authorship.
- Why was the verse written, and to whom?
- When was it written?
- Is the translation accurate?
- Does the author offer any clues to the meaning, or is this just a personal interpretation?
- Are there any literary allusions or parallels involved?
- If liberal scholars are blind to the "true" context, then why would an intelligent God have a chosen book that he knew could be so easily misunderstood?
- Remember that Christians cannot write off, ignore, or rationalize their way out of any of the Old Testament laws, or the horrors which they have spawned, since Christ explicitly mentions on several occasions that every character of the old law is true and correct, and must be obeyed (MAT 5:17-19; JOH 7:19; LUK 16:17). Any attempt to dance around this problem defies Christ's direct teachings. [27]

Give the Priest an Opportunity to Save Face

Give the priest a loophole that allows a safe escape via their own logic. When applied cleverly, this can be used as smooth transition from their mode of thinking into yours. When left with no means to escape, priests will become hostile when their arguments fail. This will make the priest reluctant to talk with you further, limiting the amount of their time which you can waste. You must concede to succeed, sacrificing a pawn to lure them into checkmate.

- All arguments can be turned back on themselves, and a good argument must be able to survive this test. Make the priest defend their own beliefs against their own logic — give them enough rope, and they'll hang themselves. [87]
 - Rather than attacking the priest's premises and evidences, accept their arguments at face value, and discuss their unintended consequences. [87]
 - It's easier to find flaws and contradictions in certain or absolute statements than from ambiguous ones. [18]
 - This technique cannot be used on a questioning or non-believing person, since they make no assertions. The burden of proof lays on those who make the claim; the skeptic is not required to say anything. [87]
 - If the priest asks you to display knowledge, dismiss this by saying that you are interested in following their lead. [87]
- The religious have no evidence to back up any of their claims. As such, apologists are trained to argue about the criteria necessary for something to constitute evidence. [18] Asking for evidence will never result in evidence, but it can eat their time. Please note that:
 - If we allow miracles as evidence, then we should also allow the miracles of other religions. [87]
 - There is no evidence for any of Christ's miracles outside of the Bible. [87]
 - Stories are not evidence. [27]
- If your priest has you completely stumped, ask them to define the terms they used. [87] Not only will this consume time, but defining things limits them, which will create new avenues for discussion.

5.4 — Get Invited Back, and Induce Faith-Breaking Processes in the Sheltered, Isolated, or Overprotected

Do not expect immediate, dramatic, or tangible results. Victory is not getting your priest to burnout; victory is the *process* of burnout. It is the process, not the outcome that is crucial. Progress is always incremental; this is why the persistent always beat the talented. The summation of numerous small forces acts the same as a large force, just as how no single raindrop causes the flood. [98] **You must be welcomed back to have many, many further discussions for this strategy to work.**

Hostility kills all hope of succeeding; while people will forget what you did for them or what you gave them — but they will never forget how you made them

feel. It is therefore essential that you give partial concessions and find mutual agreements, simply to allow egos to go undamaged, and to allow open lines of communication for later conversations. There are no unrealistic goals, just unrealistic deadlines, [113] but **every hour you consume of your priest's time is an hour they can't spend indoctrinating some kid.**

By being invited back, you integrate yourself deeper into their community. This is of the utmost importance, since then — and only then — can you befriend the most sheltered and overprotected members of your community. The church's fellowship and the many summer camps available to Christian youths can isolate them from society as a whole, while providing them with enough friends to not feel isolated. While hosts of non-theist books have been written in the past 20 years, they have done nothing for those who cannot (or would not) access them. [18] This is rebellion in its purest form, which awakens the hearts and passions of everyone involved — and it's easier than you could possibly imagine. Parents are so overly-focused on shielding their children from vice, that the conversations which actually induce spiritual dissolution will go unnoticed.

It's not uncommon for outsiders to attend church functions (e.g., youth groups) just to be social; many of these activities are designed with the intention of drawing such people in. Local recreational sports leagues or music lessons are other ways to befriend the isolated or overprotected.

Older teens make the best subversives, because they can easily win the respect and rapport of the younger teens which disproportionately comprise church youth groups. Older teens are close enough age-wise to have many mutual commonalities, while their additional life experience grants them an aura of expertise. While the latter part seems inconsequential, it isn't for young people — a 16 year-old has significantly more life experience than a 14 year-old (12.5%). Additionally, since older teens can drive, they are sought after for rides — and car rides give the subversive a captive audience. The physically gifted can create inadvertent audiences via infatuation. While it may seem improper to use the prospect of love (or lust) as a motivator, people have no say in who they are or are not attracted to, and teenagers will be driven by love (or lust) regardless of how you or anyone else acts. The quest to find a suitable mate is a huge motivation for unattached young people to attend any social function.

If you have the opportunity to speak with a sheltered, isolated, or overprotected person, do not “witness” or otherwise sell non-belief to them. Christ prophesized the suppression of Christianity, so such efforts will only validate their faith. Instead, faith must be devalued as a concept, until people eventually discredit and discard faith on their own. [76] Religious debates only confirm the “atheists are angry people, and they are angry at god” talking point. Disproving the “atheist anger” myth will itself introduce a tiny crack into their faith. Do not try to change people's beliefs; instead, change the way they form beliefs, because if a person was not reasoned into their faith, they cannot be reasoned out of it. This is the basis behind the popular affective “street epistemology” tactic. [18] No amount of logic can shatter a faith consciously based on a lie; [103] if anything, it causes deeper belief, because faith allows

emotion to be used in lieu for evidence. [27] This is a sore spot for many Christians, who already face sleeping giant of doubt in their inner thoughts and quiet moments. This insecurity leads preachers to constantly reiterate that their parishioners must keep their faith strong. [87] Secularizing forces do not directly confront religion; instead, they bypass and undercut religion, and then move on to other things, [13] like water flowing around a rock.

This is why **the process of deconversion is wholly unlike conversion**. Non-believers who become Christians usually do so after experiencing a sudden, highly-emotional event, be it personal (e.g., death of a loved one) or societal (e.g., the 9/11 terror attacks). Those who deconvert do not "lose their faith," it crumbles before being discarded. Deconversion is a slow path, which occurs after several years of reading, conversing, and personal reflection. While many claim that abrupt life changes causes the loss of faith (e.g., death, divorce, job relocation), deconversion is actually caused by the secondary effects of these events, which exposes people to new friends and ideas (e.g., moving to a new town, attending a new church, starting at a new school, or from the general shuffling and rebuilding of cliques which occurs in 7th grade). Our interviews and personal conversations have revealed no single root cause for deconversion; they are all unique, personal experiences. However, deconversion stories touch upon a few re-occurring themes:

Discovering Small, Disconcerting Cracks Within Religious Teachings [18]

Typically, this occurs in adolescence, [57] upon re-hearing a childhood Bible story which now seems so outrageous that it defies credibility (e.g., Jonah and the Whale), leading the young person to scrutinize religious claims from then on. This pushes the snowball down the hill, leading to further scrutiny and discovering additional cracks in their religion. These cracks tend to widen upon gaining additional life experience, and over late-night conversations with friends.

This is particularly vicious, because **Sunday school is a leading cause of deconversion**. The more devout a person is, the more closely they examine scriptures, and are thus more likely to discover one of these cracks. If their priest is unable to answer these questions, the parishioner will be forced to seek answers elsewhere, exposing themselves to alternate theologies and worldviews to fill the gaps. Stand-up comedians (e.g., George Carlin, Ricky Gervais, Sam Kinison) are excellent vectors for these messages, since they can pose confrontational ideas and alternate worldviews under the façade of joking around. While overprotective parents are likely to censor these bawdry acts, this often goes undetected due to the strange phenomena where the most profane and vulgar comedians eventually become children's entertainers (e.g., George Carlin, Richard Pryor, Bob Saget).

The Realization of Religious Manipulation Within Their Life or Family [34]

Religion was historically used to subjugate populations by convincing them that suffering is a blessing, while maintaining that the social elite have some divine right to their positions. **People respect priests because their priests tell them they should.** The crux of every religion is selling the need for religion. Priests only act in self-beneficial ways [87] because **priests have no power of their own. They must convince, cajole, coax, or condemn others into acting on their behalf.** Priests maintain their illusion of power through the following mechanisms: [114]

1. Fear of sanctions (e.g., social pressure).
2. Moral obligation, due to:
 - The belief that obedience contributes to the common good of society.
 - The belief the priest has superpowers (e.g., granting sacraments, being “a holy man,” or a cult of personality).
 - Legitimacy, as defined by law, tradition, or a constitution.
 - Conformity to accepted norms.
3. Self-interest (i.e., rewards of money, power, and prestige on Earth and/or in the afterlife.)
4. Psychological identification with the priest (i.e., charisma, hero-worship, idealization).
5. Indifference of the parishioners to stand against the priest.
6. Parishioners lacking the self-confidence needed to stand against the priest.

These manipulations have a profound, but delayed effect on maintaining faith, and realizing one has been manipulated requires the acquisition and contemplation of life experience, which is why most people who leave their churches do so between ages 17-19. [43]

The Inability to Reconcile Science with Religion

Contrary to popular belief, school science classes are not the vector for faith-compromising scientific ideas. These ideas are typically transmitted by a popular science authors (e.g., Carl Sagan, Steven Hawking, Desmond Morris, Gary Zhukav, etc.) or TV hosts (e.g., Carl Sagan, Neil DeGrasse Tyson, Bill Nye), who proposed challenging questions and ideas in a non-threatening manner.

Frustration with the Ineffectiveness of God and the Church

Modern life is characterized by two motifs: worldliness and pragmatism (i.e., “Will it work?”), because the world constantly imposes unique challenges. [13] Churches addresses neither of these motifs, because they tend to be filled with passivity activists who devote most of their energy fighting

change, [89] and every unanswered prayer causes young people to question the efficacy of prayer.

Ineffective Indoctrination

This is not a cause *per se*, but many people who've "lost their faith" never had much faith to lose. Modern preaching is ineffective because the call to worship is in general, non-specific terms, and the "good news" of Christ's death and resurrection happened so long ago that it can't be considered "news." [13]

While many people have had positive experiences at religious retreats, these events tend to take on standard "cookie-cutter" formats, causing the waning effectiveness of each subsequent retreat as they become "old hat." This boredom leads to troublemaking, mostly for a want of stimulus, and not actual malice. Any subversive act or discussion gives permission for others to join in, resulting in a Butterfly Effect that evokes change. [98] This is magnified by the fact that most Sunday school classes have no system or means of enforcing discipline. Outside of a parochial school setting, religious education has no grading, and no one can be failed or held back, to prevent the student from joining another denomination.

Discussion topics can be easily derailed by invoking a relevant scriptural inconsistency (typically, a conflict between the New and Old Testaments, or with the New Testament and itself) or some thought-experiment. This is effective because it conceals subversion as a thoughtful discussion. Students can easily assume control of the class this way because Sunday school teachers and youth group mentors are typically lay volunteers driven by a personal agendas (usually, to overcompensate for a perceived shortcoming, or to repay a debt of honor); they tend to be poorly trained in theology and/or its presentation.

Another effective way to subvert a Sunday school class is to steer the discussion into how to deal with non-believers, and their worldviews. This manipulates the teachers into introducing our ideas into their classes, spreading our message to closeted or potential non-believers. [87] Getting Sunday School teachers to talk about atheism is not unrealistic — it's the Rumspringa Principle — even the most isolated people must be provided knowledge of the outside world and its influences, so that they know what to avoid.

Additionally, expressing faith requires expression, which requires an artistic medium — be it fine art, writing, theatre, or music. Cultivating artistic skill requires meeting artists, who have widely-varying perspective and worldviews, and expertise in challenging disciplines with rich, deep lore components that have already grabbed the young person's interest. Exposure to the arts provides young people an outlet to explore emotions which Christianity provides no outlet (e.g., anger, lust)

Santa Claus

When many children found out that Santa Claus isn't real, they asked about the other invisible characters in their lives — the Easter Bunny, the

Tooth Fairy — and God. Unprepared parents then had to awkwardly explain how everything they said about Santa Claus was false, but everything they said about God was true. While this sounds silly, our interviews indicate that ~5% of non-theists were set on the path to non-belief this way.

5.5 — Enable and Enlist Existing Malcontents

Getting rid of your pastor is easier than it seems, because churches are rife with malcontents who already want them gone. 43% of people who leave their church do so because of issues with their pastor. [45] While the pastors seem to be in charge of their churches, like modern Pharisees who uphold religious laws and traditions, [115] this is an illusion. **Priests are leaders, but not bosses; priests have no authority beyond their ability to persuade people.** [42]

Malcontents evoke the most damage to their churches not through direct opposition, but indirectly via destroying the enthusiasm necessary for church health and growth. The tension caused by the malcontent's "us-vs.-them" dichotomy keeps people from wanting to invite their friends to worship services. [40]

Enlisting the malcontents to serve your hidden agenda is easy, because they are first-and-foremost reactionaries, who can be infinitely distracted with silly non-issues. Ideally, these issues should have some bearing on the following, which controls a priest's ability to run their parish: [114]

1. The parishioner's desire to listen to their pastor.
2. The strength of the pastor's independent support organizations and institutions.
3. The parishioner's ability to withhold their consent and assistance.

Drama will inevitably result, and drama begets drama! Humans are drawn to drama, seeking it and creating it as an alternative to the monotony and boredom of their lives. Drama is the cause of all human suffering. Drama is unavoidable, because drama is the prelude to conflict, and conflict cannot be avoided — it can be delayed to alter the balance of power. Drama appears anytime resources must be distributed; wherever there is scarcity, drama follows.

When pastors become preoccupied with avoiding drama, minimizing the malcontent's challenges, and "only fighting the battles that need to be fought," then they will lose their spontaneity and creativity. Church growth is stunted, and the ministry follows the path of least resistance — which is what makes rivers crooked. Outreach falters, because when a pastor places damage control over spreading Christianity, then the ministry fails its mission. However, churches will continue to enable these malcontents to thrive, prosper, and assume critical operational roles because of: [45]

- Little or no pre-hire screening for both volunteer and paid leaders.

Smiting Shepherds

- Using secondary channels to work outside of established procedures. This confers special privileges to individuals, robbing the existing political structure of its power.
- Failed attempts to quell a parishioner's anger, typically by failing to address root causes.
- Support systems failing to address issues and/or defend the pastor.
 - Allowing the "collateral damage" of drama/conflict to compromise a support system.
- A failure of the denomination and/or bishop to intervene, because of their limited power and/or situational involvement. Even if these authorities can't intervene directly, they should be able to assert their authority and/or mandate compliance.
- A failure to understand how unresolved past issues continue to influence the present.
- A failure to quell gossip.
- Seminaries failing to teach their students how to deal with hostility.
- Pastors failing to explore other options and opportunities.
- Pastors often have no other pastors to turn too or collaborate with.
 - This does not apply to Catholic priests, who are procedurally required to have a designated confessor.
- Pastors failing to assert their authority.
 - Pastors are unusually prone to guilt, which makes them more vulnerable to manipulation from con artists or others who wish to extort money and/or services.
- Pastors failing to employ a "good-vs.-evil" mentality. Pastors often delude themselves into thinking that Christian love can overcome all, and will deny, pamper, or excuse subversive actions. Likewise, this mentality renders pastors completely unable to deal with the mentally ill, or with the truly evil.
 - Rational arguments, love, and negotiations are ineffective against the truly evil.
 - The mentally ill become completely predictable once they've been diagnosed.

Church-disrupting malcontents tend to be those who exhibit several of the following traits:

Powerlessness

All malcontents display a sense of frustration stemming from their inability to act or invoke change. These poignantly frustrated individuals are condemned by their circumstances to rust away in idleness, despite having the talents and temperament needed to equip them for a life of action. As such, disaffected malcontents tend to come from the following groups: [116]

- **The *recently impoverished*.** Those who have been poor their entire lives feel no frustration — they don't want to challenge the *status quo* because they crave order; they have no grievances because they have no dreams. It is only the *recently* destitute who are frustrated, since they have recent memories of better things. It's the taste of better things which excites people to revolt; not the avoidance of actual suffering.
- **Misfits.** Misfits are too self-aware to be zealots; since they can conceive purposeful and hopeful autonomous existences, they will never fully buy-in to anyone's message.
- **Outcasts.** The barbarians who overthrew Rome were few in number, but they were joined by the oppressed and dissatisfied from all walks of life once they invaded a country: "it was a social revolution started and masked by a superficial foreign conquest." As such, immigrants can be easily recruited, since they were already frustrated for want of a new beginning.
- **Minorities.** The least and most successful (economically and culturally) are more likely to be frustrated than those in-between. Unsuccessful people see themselves as outsiders, especially among minority group members who want to blend in with the majority. Likewise, minority members who attain fortune and fame find it difficult to enter the majority's exclusive circles, making them conscious of their foreignness. Furthermore, having evidence of their individual superiority, they resent the admission of inferiority which is implied in the assimilation process.
- **Adolescents.** Movies and comics have pre-conditioned young people to overthrow *any* perceived tyrant.
- **The ambitious.** This applies to those who are ambitious in the face of insurmountable obstacles, as well as those who are ambitious in the face of unlimited choice.
- **Those in the grip of vice or obsession.** They are predictably unpredictable.
- **The impotent (in body or mind).** Those who want to write a great book, paint a great picture, create an architectural masterpiece, become a great scientist, etc., and knows that they never be able to realize this innermost desire, will never be able to find peace in any social order. They will view their life as irrevocably spoiled and the world perpetually out of joint, and they will only feel at home in a state of chaos.
- **The selfish.** The fiercest fanatics are often selfish people who were forced, by innate shortcomings or external circumstances, to lose faith in themselves. They separate their sense of selfishness from their ineffectual selves and attach it to the service of some noble cause. This is why the persuasive champions of love and humility tend to be neither loving nor humble.
- **The bored.** Dollar for dollar, trouble-making is the best form of entertainment.
- **Sinners.** Who else is guaranteed to revolt against the church?

Religious Zealotry

Zealots overcompensate for their own lost faith. The less justified someone is in claiming personal excellence, the more ready they are to claim excellence for their group (e.g., nation, religion, race, etc.), so they can become great by proxy. **Apologists aren't trying to convince others; they are trying to convince themselves.** [18] Proselytizing fanatics convert others to strengthen their own faith; to justify themselves, rather than to convince others. Therefore, those who hold easily-challenged creeds are the most likely to develop this impulse. [116]

Past Middle-Age or Elderly

Older people seek traditional church experiences, because they are one of the few things remaining from their youth. [42] These childhood religious influences are imprinted on their minds, permanently influencing their thinking. [34] The joy and calm that they associate with their religious practice is actually just from completely disassociating themselves from the world around them. [22]

A Life of Self-denial

Self-denial seemly confers the right to be harsh and merciless toward others. [116] This is likely related to self-righteous behavior; the self-righteous have a need to condemn others as immoral, to make themselves seem moral by default. Such people rationalize the disapproval caused by their earthly actions by convincing themselves of the approval it will win them in the afterlife. [117]

"Sunset Values"

"Sunset values" are passionate, highly-prized values that gain intensity from the fact that they are about to disappear or change forever. Like a brilliant sunset, these values are overlooked until they make a flamboyant show at their end. [31] The belief that homosexuals should not marry is one example of a sunset value.

Those still clinging to these values after their sunset will be overlooked and marginalized by everyone in their church, because religions must change whenever culture changes or the religion loses its influence and its ability to propagate. No moral issue is so large that it cannot disappear in the face of cultural change (which is why no one preaches against racial integration anymore). [34]

Not Lazy

Lazy people are never mischievous, because mischief takes effort. Laziness is just an extreme means of avoiding disapproval. [117]

A Fear of the Future

Invalids and those who are past middle-age adopt conservative worldviews which constantly search for signs of decay, simply because they have nothing left to look forward to — any changes in their lives are usually for the worse. Likewise, the abjectly poor tend to be conservatives because they have no faith in the future, which they see as an unending series of boobytraps that they must walk through. [116]

Those with power will always resist growth; growth always upsets the established balance of power, and threatens their position. [97]

Previously Slighted or Overlooked

There is a “we should have let Hitler into art school” moment in every fault-finder’s career where a deferential or conciliatory gesture from those in power would have won them over to their side. Jesus might have preached a different Gospel had the Pharisees listened to him. [116]

A Low Sense of Self-esteem and Self-worth

This manifests itself as fear and extreme pettiness, because the malcontent’s self-image is so low that one blow will destroy it altogether. Every remark poses an existential threat, leading them to preemptively attack anyone capable of delivering that one undermining blow. [99]

Culturally Short-sighted

These people are often unable to tell where their Christian principles end and where their cultural perspective begins. This leaves the malcontents vulnerable to manipulation via cultural assimilation. Conservatism defines itself as the resistance to cultural change, but culture is neither uniform nor monolithic, and it can change to push conservatism into any direction. American conservatives are so preoccupied with the alleged corrupting influence of secular humanists that they have ignored their own secularization — politics and wealth are now the tools the Christians use to achieve their ends. [31]

This is especially germane because our culture is discontinuously different from those of earlier generations; no group of Christians has lived through a world that has changed so quickly. While there is less physical persecution, the cultural changes are more daunting (e.g., because of mobile devices with internet access, teachers and pastors can be fact-checked in real-time). [65] There can be no old-time revival, since most groups abandon their culture upon moving to a new one (While recent immigrants will continue to speak their native languages, their children will be bilingual, and their grandchildren will have lost all of their old-world language and traditions). [65]

Follows a Consistent *Modus Operandi*

Observations from pastor-support groups have noted that the malcontents within parishes tend to act in a similar fashion: [40]

- At first, they are some of a new pastor's strongest supporters, and they work excessively to befriend them.
- They frequently compare the new pastor to the old pastor.
- Malcontents thrive when the church's formal authority (bureaucracy) does not match the actual internal power structure (due to nepotism, etc.).
- Malcontents are bred in counseling; they were loyal parishioners who were made resentful by a counselor's failure to solve problems.
- Again, malcontents exhibit higher degrees of religious zeal than other parishioners. They considered a religious vocation at one time, but did not follow through for some reason; therefore, they believe that they know how the pastor's job is supposed to be done.

5.6 — Counter-manipulate the Use of Language

Priests use loaded language, and you need to protect yourself from falling into this trap. There are several subtle ways to go about this:

Only Use "Faith" in a Religious Context

Use acceptable synonyms (e.g., "hope," "trust," "confidence") in all other contexts to subtract from the power of faith, which clergy frequently invoke to justify their knowledge claims. (e.g., Christians do not have *hope* in Jesus' miracles). [18]

Challenge Faith Invocations

Faith is often invoked as a thought-terminating cliché to quickly sidestep or end arguments. Religion does not need to be attacked; only faith. Faith is the critical load-bearing member propping religion up. Attacks on religion are always perceived as attacks on friends, family, communities, and relationships. This is why directly attacking religion has an alienating effect. Indirect attacks against the notion of faith are more fruitful. Always remember that faith is: [18]

- **Belief without evidence.** If there were evidence to support religious claims, then there would be no need for faith. As such, all faith is blind faith. Faith is invoked when beliefs wish to be retained, but cannot be justified.
- **Pretending to know unknown things.** "Faith" can be interchanged with "pretending to know something I don't know" without any loss of fidelity. This is why modern apologists use euphemisms for faith (e.g., promise, confidence, trust).
- **Not universal.** By framing faith as a personal thing, it can be quietly coaxed into a corner from which it will never emerge. [31]

- **Not hope.** Hope makes no knowledge claims, nor do its euphemisms (e.g., promise, confidence, trust). Hope implies that the desired outcome might not occur, and implicitly admits the possibility for failure. Hope is not certain; it is the desire for certainty. (Christians believe that Jesus walked on water; they don't *hope* he did.)
- **Not a body of knowledge.** Faith is an epistemology; a method and process used to understand reality. Faith allows for subjective claims of personal experience to be admitted as objective facts, and faith contains no error-correcting or filtering mechanisms to separate the two.
- **Not an argument.** Faith requires accepting statements as true in spite of insufficient or contradictory evidence, making faith inconsistent with reason. Faith, at its very invocation, is a transparent admission that a claim lacks merit. [87]

Refer to Scripture as “Bible Stories”

This is intrinsically derogatory because it automatically assumes they are fairy tales. However, this is a commonly-accepted form of speech, [57] allowing you to discretely frame the dialogue.

Abstain from Idiomatic References to God

While religious language will never completely disappear (e.g., the “daemon” in computer science), its use and relevance can be mitigated by avoiding the following: [18]

Examples of Idiomatic References to Avoid		
God bless you!	Lord, have mercy!	The devil's in the details
Thank God!	Soul-searching	For God's sake!
God only helps those who help themselves	God only knows	God willing
Thank God for...	God's gift to...	Godspeed
Our thoughts and prayers are with you	Thank you God!	God damn it!
Leap of faith	Article of faith	Act of God
Count your blessings	Match made in heaven	

5.6.5 — Remain Unfazed by Scripture

Christians believe that reading the Bible grants them an edge over “natural men” (1COR 2:12-14), [87] and thus act as though Bible verses are magical words which can dispel evil and win people’s hearts and minds, by simply being read aloud. Acting unfazed by them leads priests to double-down and read more verses in a more dramatic tone. While this can continue indefinitely, their morale will slowly erode over time.

Smiting Shepherds

Use Charisma-Generating Words

Salesmen have empirically determined that the following words grant their users charismatic power: [118]

Charisma-Generating Words						
advantage	save	benefit	security	comfort	money	you
trust	profit	results	value	exciting	dessert	health
fun	safety	guarantee	new	free	love	proven
right	powerful	improved	proud	investment	easy	vital
discovery	truth	joy	happy			

Use Language to Frame People and Viewpoints

The following words should be used to place things in a positive light, augmenting the power of your message: [119]

Words for Positive Framing					
prosperity	listen	pristine	active(ly)	dream	freedom
children	moral	liberty	common sense	activist	peace
family	proud/pride	principle(d)	candid(ly)	citizen	rights
fair	change	precious	humane	lead	truth
we/us/our	opportunity	care(ing)	empowerment	vision	share
hard work	incentive	pro-(issue)	strength	preserve	help
challenge	protect	reform	courage		

The following words should be used to place things in a negative light, or to define an opponent and their positions by establishing a contrast, augmenting the power of your message: [119]

Words for Negative Framing					
decay	radical	corrupt(ion)	devour	steal	sick
waste	status quo	insensitive	crisis	lie	cheat
traitors	destructive	collapse(ing)	disgrace	deeper	impose
punish	pathetic	self-serving	bizarre	greed	cynicism
liberal	criminal rights	ideological	permissive attitude	red tape	anti-(issue)
taxes	incompetent	spend(ing)	hypocrisy	welfare	they/them
fail(ure)	machine	destroy	bosses	shame	

Use Doublespeak (or "Alternate Phrasing")

Doublespeak (or “alternate phrasing”) can soften any harsh points that may come across while addressing your concerns (e.g., a “zero-sum game” should be called a “fixed-pie situation”). [102]

Say “Because”

This is how parents speak to their children, which adds a subtle, covert, authoritative weight to anything you say. [118]

Avoid Saying “You”

Avoid using the word “you,” when questioning others, since it turns simple questions into personal attacks. [18]

You Might Want to Consider Speaking in the Passive Voice

Speaking in the passive voice allows you to verbally attack people without their realization. [18]

Impose Ideas with the Word “Don’t”

Using “don’t” language patterns forces people to think what you told them *not* to think of. This exploits the fact that people cannot visualize the word “don’t”, since it isn’t a noun. Examples include: [118]

- “Don’t feel as though you have to buy something today.”
- “Don’t decide now. You can do it later if you are comfortable.”
- “You don’t have to help me clean the house, really.”
- “Don’t make up your mind to quickly.”

Use “Leading Language” to Induce Compliance

Language patterns which infer assuming the obvious will make people feel as though they should should’ve already accepted what you are about to say: [118]

- “You probably already know that...”
- “People can, you know...”
- “You will realize how...”
- “Sooner or later you will be...”
- “Eventually, you will....”

Salesmen have empirically determined that people will agree with a statement if you precede it with three other statements which they already agree to. By getting someone to say “yes” three times, they will fall into a rut and become more likely to say “yes” a fourth time. [118]

Everyone Loves to Hear Secrets

By sharing secrets, you establish a trust and rapport. However, you do not need to actually reveal your secrets to exploit this effect; you just need to predicate your statements with one of the following: [118]

- “I shouldn’t be telling you this, but...”
- “Can you promise me you won’t say anything to anyone about what I’m going to tell you?”
- “Off the record, I think you should know...”

Not Communicating *is* Communication

The silent treatment is a form of communication, since it sends a message. Communication is largely nonverbal; and attitudes have been determined to be 7% based on the actual verbal message, 38% based on vocal intonation, and 55% based on facial expression.

Establish Credibility

You can establish your credibility when speaking by being: [118]

- **Objective.** Point out a negative aspect about your position. Satisfying your critics leaves them with no talking points. (This is the “8-Mile Strategy.”) You gain great credibility whenever you look at your own products, services ideas, and opinions objectively.)
- **Precise.** Quantity-based claims are more believable when they are not multiples of 5. (“I lost 17 lbs.” is more believable than “I lost 20 lbs.”)
- **Reinforced with written documentation from an objective, independent third-party.** If anything you say is suspect, then invoke someone else to speak for you.
- **Open-ended.** The first person to act is typically the one with the most to gain. You must directly state your openness to any outcome to relieve any pressure or tension your conversations might cause.

Give Orders Indirectly

People dislike being told what *to do*, and they dislike being told *what not to do* — so avoid statements like: [118]

- “I wouldn’t tell you to ask, because...”
- “I could tell you that you make a mistake but I won’t. You want to figure it out for yourself.”
- “I can tell you that X is far superior to Y, but I won’t. You’ll realize that after you’ve done Y for a few years.”

If you need the clergyman to act, phrase your sentences to use the words “might” and “maybe.” Most individuals are too explosive, authoritarian, or demanding when persuading others; using “might” and “maybe” allows you to persuade people without giving direct orders, which they may resent. [118]

Be aware that the use of “maybe” can cause unintended miscommunication; there is a tendency among men to parse “maybe” as “maybe-yes,” and a tendency among women for “maybe” to imply “maybe-no.”

Avoid Some Phrases Altogether

Phrases to Avoid, How to Avoid Them, and How to Best Respond to Them [112]			
Phrase to Avoid	Reason	Alternative Phrase	Best Response
“Come here!”	Threatening order to comply.	Invite them over.	“Why?”
“You wouldn’t understand!”	Implies that the other party is stupid.	“I don’t want to answer that.”	“Yes, I would. Try me, I want to help.”
“Because those are the rules!”	It makes you look like a tool, and more concerned with the system than with people.		“Why was that rule made?”
“It’s none of your business”	Demonstrates that you have no good reasoning.	Explain why information cannot be revealed.	“It is my business, and this is why...”
“I’m not going to say this again...”	Destroys credibility with a lie, since it is always immediately followed by what you weren’t going to say.	“It’s important that you understand this, so let me say it again, and please listen carefully.”	“Ok, got it.”
“What do you want me to do about it?”	Evasion of responsibility.	“I can’t help.”	“I want you to listen and help me.”
“You never/always...”	Indicates a loss of perspective.	Try to see their point.	
“Calm down!”	Contradictory; criticizes behavior. <i>This phrase always makes people angrier.</i> [120]	“It’s going to be all right. Talk to me, what’s the trouble?”	“I’m not calm for these reasons, which I will talk about.”
“What’s your problem?”	Makes it a “you vs. me” problem rather than an “us” problem.	“What’s the matter, how can I help?”	“It’s not a problem, It’s just something I need to discuss.”
“I’m doing this for your own good.”	No one buys it, and it makes you look manipulative.		“I know what’s best for me.”
“Why don’t you be reasonable?”	Insulting, since no one thinks themselves to be irrational.	Use paraphrasing.	“I am being reasonable...” then explain why.

5.7 — The Need for Non-Violent Action

Our movement must always remain non-violent, for both pragmatic and moral reasons. We must remain non-violent because, quite simply, we do not have other options— we don't have an army, nor can we raise one anytime soon. Violent action only distracts the focus from an oppressor's actions to your actions, and the root cause for fighting soon becomes lost. [121] However, choosing peace allows us to take the moral high ground, and win the hearts of the young. We must set an example of calm, collected behavior — this will enrage the clergy, as their narratives largely depend on the popular perception of nonbelievers as being misanthropes.

Do not be fooled — nonviolent action is not passive, and it is not inaction — it is action that is non-violent. **Non-violent action is not pacifism.** Strategy, skill, and strength are all requisite; [114] this book will provide you with the first two, but you must look into yourself to find the third. Non-violent action is not merely psychological or rhetorical; it is a culturally-independent tool that exploits social, political, and economic power to gain leverage under any political system or climate. Non-violent action even works against violent opponents, [114] since violent people have never been able to counter the sort of power that non-violent actors wield; Gandhi said it was "like trying to cut water with a sword." [122] Opponents who are ignorant of the power of non-violent action will become overconfident, and react mildly to its challenges until they are too late to stop. [121]

Non-violent action is based on the assumption that governments and institutions (like churches) depend on people, and that power is a pluralistic, fragile thing which depends on many groups synergistically reinforcing the sources of power. Power is most effectively controlled at its sources, and the priest's illusion of power can be compromised by attacking these power sources. In general, these are: [114]

1. **Authority.** The right to command and direct, to be heard or obeyed by others, and be voluntarily accepted by the people without imposing sanctions. Authority figures do not need to be superior; they just need to be **perceived and accepted** as superior. Authority is a power source, and not power *per se*; it is purely mental.
2. **Human resources.** Power is affected by the number of followers, allies, and helpers; the strength of their organizations; and their proportion relative to the rest of society.
3. **Knowledge, skills, and abilities.**
4. **Intangible psychological/ideological factors.** Habits and attitudes towards obedience and submission; presence of a common faith, ideology, or mission.
5. **Material resources.** The limits of power are defined by control of property, natural resources, financial resources, the economic system, and means of communication, and means of transportation.
6. **Sanctions.** The ability to punish others. These sanctions do not produce obedience; only the fear of sanctions. These sanctions manifest themselves as the eight forms of repression: [121]
 - a. Control of communication and information.
 - b. Psychological pressures (e.g., slander, rumors, ostracizing, threats).
 - c. Confiscation.

- d. Economic sanctions (e.g., boycotts, blacklists, firings, cutting off utilities).
- e. Bans and prohibitions.
- f. Arrests and imprisonment.
- g. Exceptional restrictions (e.g., new laws, extralegal trials, suspensions of *habeas corpus*).
- h. Direct physical violence.

Non-violent action *is not* a safe means of struggle; there is no such thing. Repression should not come as a surprise. A high degree of courage is needed to accept these sufferings; there will be a price to pay to achieve objectives. Freedom isn't free. The fear of retribution only encourages its continuation. The fastest way to end an opponent's brutalities is to demonstrate that they can't achieve the opponent's objectives. Addressing the root causes of the brutalities will mitigate the repression. Facing repression is a positive sign, because it proves you're a serious threat to the opposition. Repression will become increasingly severe whenever the current method is deemed ineffective. **Repression only works when it is feared, and when that fear compromises the activist's willpower.** Non-violent action does not induce the oppressor's violent tendencies; it merely reveals them. Non-violent action brings out the bully in those inclined to be bullies, stripping away cherished images to expose the truth. Non-violent action usurps power from the oppressing group by assuming their status, and acting in ways they had the "right" to behave. This frustration, irritation and inadequacy cause the oppressor to feel powerless, leading them to use of force to return their illusion of strength. If non-violent action is misperceived as weakness, and not courage, then repression occurs anyway out of irrational hostility. Other times, the oppressors are demoralized by from the knowledge that the non-violent actors are right. [121]

Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Camus, and Sartre all agree that courage is not the absence of fear or despair, but the ability to move forward in spite of fear or despair. [123] Brave people aren't fearless; they've just found something which means more to them than fear. Only the insane are fearless. Only cowards boast about fearlessness; they know no fear only because they've never been tested. Courage isn't intrinsic, it's a learned response; a learned skill. Fear cannot be killed, but regularly exposing yourself to fear will mitigate and trivialize its effects, similar to allergy shots. [124] Consistently dealing with frightening situations is the only thing that can make you brave, just as how rejecting temptations confers temperance. [125] Every triumph of the will as against your fear cultivates a permanent habit of courage; **courage thrives on encouragement.** [124] Finding courage is the easiest, and the most noble, when it involves overcoming fear associated with preventing others from being harmed; cultivating courage is a selfless discipline that conquers selfish fear. **Compassion cultivates courage.**

Activists must unflinchingly endure sanctions. Hardships are temporary. Despair is the conclusion of fools. Power is an illusion you must learn to see through. Repression is less effective against non-violent action

because repression was designed to stop violent actions. [121] “With the power of conviction, there is no sacrifice” — if you truly want something, then the hardships which must be faced to complete that goal will become trivial and welcome.

Non-violent action does not claim to “love” opponents or make any efforts to convert them; this is a fallacy created by religious apologists who see most non-violent actions as too aggressive for their tastes. Opponents will not respect those who helplessly submit or plea in fear of punishment. Sabotage is technically a non-violent action, since it destroys property, not people. However, the use of sabotage is discouraged since it: [121]

1. Can unintentionally hurt or kill opponents or bystanders.
2. Requires a willingness to use violence against guards or those who discover the plans.
3. Requires secrecy, which undermines the trust between non-violent actors.

Non-violent action does not require a mutual closeness or a sense of community. Non-violent activists do not need to be pacifists or saints. Non-violent activists do not need to be in fighting shape; the elderly, disabled, and out-of-shape can all make equal contributions — thus leading to the rapid development of a numerically superior force. Non-violent activists have no educational requirement, allowing anyone to join. [121] Historically, the most effective operators were “ordinary” people. [114] Tolstoy was among the first to realize that the “Great Man” Theory of History is false — that many small individual actions, contribute to, and create the environments necessary for great men to rise to power. **Great men merely channel and leverage the zeitgeist.** Likewise, what individuals do not do is often as important as what they do. This is why *War and Peace* is such a long book; because it painstakingly chronicles each of these small actions. [98] Case and point, the Tiananmen Square Tank Man is a considered to be a rousing symbol of defiance and freedom — but he didn’t accomplish anything. Conversely, a WWII prison break in Poland only succeeded because a young female telegrapher aided the effort simply by not sending a request for reinforcements. [98]

Most remarkable people are not remarkable by nature. Instead, they made a few key choices that helped them overcome their fears. [126]

5.9 — Catholic-specific Considerations

There are some special considerations regarding Catholic clergy that should be noted:

- Catholics have always placed an extreme emphasis on the minor aspects of their religion which differ from Protestantism; these have come to define both their faith and sense of identity. Catholicism is not-Protestantism. [44]
- Catholics tend to have stronger institutions than Protestants. Protestantism compensates for this with stronger Biblical authority. [127]

- Distance has a way of enhancing power, so that respect becomes tinged with reverence. [128] This is indicated by the Catholic tendency to constantly reiterate that the pope is “the Pope, in Rome.”
- Catholics, and especially Catholic institutions, tend to think in absolutes. This results in the following side effects:
 - Their absolute thinking manifests itself as various tautologies which are used as thought-terminating clichés (e.g., “all murder is wrong,” or “all good men are virtuous”). This is exploitable, since it can prolong your conversations with a variety of tangents which evaluate all of the special cases. [125]
 - Absolute thinking leads to absolute rejections. This is why ex-Catholics are more likely to become atheists than ex-Protestants. Because of their relativism, discouraged ex-Protestants typically join different Christian sects. [127]
- Catholics tend to be less aware of their shortcomings, and spend less time dwelling on their past than Protestants do. This is because Protestants have no confession/absolution mechanism to fall back on; they *only* have a final judgment. [127]
- Parishioners can appeal a priest’s actions, or inaction, by petitioning their bishop. If that fails, the parishioner can petition the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and/or the pope directly, to address the bishop’s alleged heresy. [44]
- Remember, the Jesuits were once fanatical not from the strength of the church, but from its weakness during the Reformation. [129]

Chapter 6

Points of Contention Within the Bible

“...you little know the effect of the Bible on me. Properly read, it is the most potent force for atheism ever conceived.”

– Issac Asimov, Notes for a Memoir

The Bible is essentially a compilation party album of anonymously-written holy texts based off of rumors and urban legends. These texts were then translated, and these translations were translated many times. No one has seen the original texts, and history has forgotten the names of anyone who might have. Throughout history, these translators inserted their own embellishments and original material into the text. The divinity of these texts was arbitrarily declared by a committee. Not all sects agreed with their results, so they formed their own committees, which added or removed books as they saw fit.

As a result, the Bible contradicts itself at virtually every opportunity.

How can one find guidance from the Bible, when the Bible is unsure of what *it* believes? However, this nebulousness is what makes the Bible so powerful — by being intentionally confusing and contradictory, rebellion becomes impossible, since there is no way of knowing what to rebel against. Juche, the North Korean state ideology, exploits this same principle.

Since any Biblical teaching can be contradicted by some other biblical teaching, the clergy can “prove” that scripture mandates their personal agendas. Through exegesis, a priest can strategically interpret scripture to make anything you say wrong, and anything they say right. Thus, they maintain hegemony with regards to discourse.

However, turnabout is fair play. With foreknowledge, any of their arguments can be turned against them, by invoking its theological counterargument. At the risk of looking foolish, this will lead the priest into an emotionally-heated argument which bores spectators. By sending the priest into pointless tangents, you will eat at their time, and slowly creep them closer to burnout.

Lists of these counterarguments are present below. You should familiarize yourself with them, but there is no need to memorize them; you can always sneak a peek at your mobile device to view this site, or excuse yourself to the restroom to do so. The important thing to remember is what to look for, and how these form of these arguments works:

- **Many of these are based on conflicts between the Old and New Testaments.** In general:
 - **When you need to take a soft approach, cite the New Testament,** and mention how all of the laws of the Old Testament — including the Ten Commandments — were “abolished” (EPH 2:15) during the crucifixion. This results in a clean slate between God and man,

where all debts were canceled, and all charges were dropped (COL 2:13-14).

- **When you need to take a hard approach, cite the Old Testament,** and mention how Jesus' teachings merely amend the old laws *without* replacing them (1PET 1:25), because Jesus explicitly taught that every single character of the Old Testament laws were valid (MAT 5:17-19; JOH 7:19; LUK 16:17). Any attempt to dance around this problem defies Christ's direct teachings. [27]
- **Question Christ's resurrection.** This is the highest-value target; if the resurrection is untrue, then the entire Christian religion is invalidated (1COR 15:17). [27]
- **Do not argue.** *The goal is to waste the priest's time,* and to get them to invoke some thought-terminating cliché like "You need to find the answers for yourself," or some other polite paraphrase of "I can't be bothered with dealing with you." Getting the clergy member to publicly announce that they have no answers does more for our cause than simply proving them wrong.

These listings are sufficient, but not complete. These listings are poorly-organized, and we apologize for any inconvenience this may cause. All love should be given to the authors of 1001 Bible Contradictions [130] and the Skeptic's Annotated Bible [131]; these listings — and this book — would not be possible without their Herculean efforts.

6.1 — Points of Contention with the Nature of God

Are there many gods?

- **No.** The Bible is adamant that the God of the Abraham is one Lord (DEU 6:4), and that there are no other Gods (DEU 32:39; JOH 17:3; 1COR 8:4, 6)
- **Yes.** The Bible demonstrates that other gods also exist:
 - The Bible explicitly states that there are many gods (GEN 18:1-3; EXO 22:28, 23:13; 1COR 8:5), who are members of an "assembly" (PSA 89:6-8) or "council" (JER 23:18, 21-22).
 - The Lord is referred to as "the most high God" (GEN 14:22), and "a great King above all gods" (PSA 95:3) who is to be worshiped by other gods (PSA 97:7). These statuses imply the existence of contemporaries, as does his power to judge over other gods (PSA 82:1, 6).
 - While creating man, God speaks in the plural, as though he were talking to a colleague (GEN 1:26).
 - God tends to do this (GEN 3:22, 11:7; ISA 6:8).
 - God is referred to as the "god of this world" (2COR 4:4), which implies the existence of other worlds, each having their own god.
- **Maybe?** The Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost are separate entities who are equally and in parallel, God (1JOH 5:7).

Did God make men to be sinful?

- **No.** God created man to be intrinsically upright (ECC 7:29).
- **Yes.** Man is “shaped in iniquity; and in sin” (PSA 51:5).

What is God's name?

- **EI Shaddai** (“God Almighty”) (EXO 6:2-3).
- **I AM** (EXO 3:14-15).
- **Jealous**, for he is a jealous God (EXO 34:14).
- **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS** (JER 23:6).
- **Ishi**, which means “husband” (HOS 2:16).
- **The LORD of hosts** (1SAM 4:4).

Does God have a corporeal body?

- **Yes.** God's physical body is mentioned several times:
 - God must have a body, because he can stand (EXO 34:5) and walk (GEN 3:8; DEU 23:14).
 - God is explicitly stated to have arms (JER 27:5), hands and feet (PSA 18:9; LUK 24:39), fingers (EXO 31:18), “loins” (EZE 1:27), horns coming out of his hands (HAB 3:3-4), and wings (PSA 91:4).
 - God is explicitly stated to have a face (EXO 33:11, 20, 22-23), with eyes (DEU 11:12 PSA 34:15), ears (PSA 34:15), a mouth (ISA 1:20), and nostrils (EXO 15:8).
- **No.** “God is a spirit” (JOH 4:24).

What is God's gender?

- **Male.** God created Adam in his own image, and Adam is male (GEN 2:7; 9:6). Women were created from one of Adam's ribs at a later time (GEN 2:22).
- **Hermaphrodite.** The unusual wording and use of plural pronouns during the creation of man implies that Adam was originally a hermaphrodite: “Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam” (GEN 5:2). Since Adam was created in God's image, this implies that God is a hermaphrodite who self-identifies as male (GEN 1:27).

Is God omnipotent?

- **Yes.** Nothing is too hard for God (JER 32:27); everything is possible (MAT 19:26), and nothing is impossible (LUK 1:37).
- **No.** The Lord God was incapable of driving iron chariots out of a valley (JUDG 1:19).

Is falling into the hand of God a fearful thing?

- **Yes**, it's a fearful thing (HEB 10:31).
- **No**, “for his mercies are great” (2SAM 24:14).

Will those who seek early find God?

- **Yes**, they shall (PRO 8:17).
- **No**, they shall not (PRO 1:28).

Does God change his mind?

- **Yes.** God frequently changes his mind:
 - God told Adam that he could eat anything, and explicitly mentioned that he could eat the fruit from every tree (GEN1:29), and saw no problem with these instructions (GEN 1:31). God immediately reversed this decision, since it granted Adam and Eve explicit permission to eat from the Tree of Knowledge (GEN 2:17). This confusing situation ends with God unleashing the concept of death (GEN 5:3-5).
 - God explicitly lamented regrets creating mankind, prompting him to annihilate the human race (GEN 6:6-7), an act which he quickly and explicitly regretted (GEN 8:21).
 - God promised to aid the Israelites by driving out the Promised Land's many indigenous peoples (EXO 33:1-3). When God proved unable to lead his chosen people to the Promised Land, opted to kill them instead (NUM 14:12), but stopped when Moses talked him out of it (NUM 14:19-20).
 - God was prepared to destroy Jerusalem as punishment for David conducting an illegal census, but decided to spare the city at the last second (2SAM 24:14-16).
 - God promised the dying Hezekiah that he could live for another 15 years (2KIN 20:1-6), but God quickly changed his mind, allowing him to die (2KIN 20:21).
 - God occasionally resented the problems he caused mankind (EXO 32:14). Specifically, God explicitly regrets the good things he's done for people who've become corrupted. Likewise, God regrets the previous harm done to reformed villains (JER18:7-8, 42:10; JON 3:10).
 - God explicitly regrets creating grasshoppers (AMO 7:3).
- **No.** God does not change his mind.
 - God explicitly stated that he does not repent, and that he follows-through on anything he says, no matter what (EZE 24:14).
 - The Bible states that God cannot change his mind, because he is not human (NUM 23:19).
- **Unconfirmed.** A "man of God" told Eli that God would "consume his eyes" as partial punishment for his son's actions (1SAM 2:27-33). While God did a lot of strange and/or morally-questionable acts in the Old Testament, he never ate anyone's eyes. However, that "man of God" might just have been a random crazy person.

How does God judge people?

- **While standing** (ISA 3:13).
- **While sitting** (JOE 3:12).

Is God omniscient?

- **Yes.** "The eyes of the LORD are in every place" (PRO 15:3), so no creature can escape his sight (HEB 4:13), and it is impossible to hide from him (JER 23:24). God is aware of every action (JOB 34:21; JER 16:17).
- **No.** There were several things that God didn't know, prompting him to ask questions:
 - God was unable to find Adam and Eve when they hid after eating from the Tree of Knowledge (GEN 3:9)
 - God didn't know Abel's whereabouts, prompting him to ask Cain. (GEN 4:9)
 - God traveled to Sodom and Gomorrah to see if it was as sinful as he had heard (GEN 18:20-21).
 - God did not know where the Israelites lived, so they had to mark their doors with blood to prevent accidental child murders (EXO 12:13).
 - God needed Balaam to identify himself (NUM 22:9).
 - God had to test Hezekiah, to see what was in his heart (2CHR 32:31).
 - God lamented the fact that the Israelites established princes without his knowledge (HOS 8:4).

Is God the only holy one?

- **Yes.** The Bible explicitly states that only God is holy (REV 15:4).
- **No.** There are other holy entities:
 - The entire congregation in Israel is holy, because their god is holy (LEV 11:44-45; 19:2). Holiness is granted to anyone who sanctifies themselves in this manner (LEV 20:7).
 - David claimed to be holy (PSA 86:2).

Is God omnipresent?

- **Yes.** God can see everyone, in every place (PRO 15:3), and their actions (JER 16:17) and all things are naked and open to him (HEB 4:13). God is inescapable (PSA 139:7; JER 23:24-25).
- **No.** An omnipresent God would have no need to travel, since he would already be at his destination. However:
 - God had to travel see the Tower of Babel (GEN 11:5), and he traveled to Sodom and Gammorah to see if it was as wicked as he had heard (GEN 18:21).
 - The Lord "passes by" (1KIN 19:11), which implies travel. This created a strong wind, earthquakes, and fire, all of which the Lord was explicitly said not to be in (1KIN 19:12).

Are God's wonders innumerable?

- **Yes.** God's wonders are "without number" (JOB 9:10), because they are infinite (PSA 40:5).
- **No.** It is mathematically possible for one person to compile a list all of God's achievements (PSA 26:7; 73:28).

Is God always nearby? Is it easy to find God?

- **Yes.** God is always near people who legitimately need him (PSA 46:1; 145:18), and everyone who honestly tries to search for God will eventually find him (1CHR 28:9), because God will come to all who ask for him (PSA 145:18) and go to him (JAM 4:8).
- **No.** In times of trouble, God hides far away (PSA 10:1), and cannot be disturbed (LAM 3:44; EZE 20:3).

Can only God do wondrous things?

- **Yes.** Only God can perform great wonders (PSA 136:4).
- **No.** Satan is capable of wondrous things as well (2THE 2:9).

Did God create evil?

- **Yes.** God explicitly stated that he created (ISA 45:7; AMO 3:6) and framed (JER 18:11) evil. God proved this by sending evil spirits (JUDG 9:23), including Satan (GEN 3:1). This is further evidenced by how God willingly and knowingly performed evil acts:
 - The blind man whom Jesus healed was intentionally blinded by God — not as a punishment for his sins, or for the sins of his parents — but just so Jesus could demonstrate his healing powers (JOH 9:1-3).
 - God intentionally created laws that were impossible to follow, just so he could rationalize harming people (EZE 20:25).
 - The Bible explicitly states that God is evil for he treated Job (JOB 42:11).
- **No.** “The LORD is good to all” (PSA 145:9) and he “doth not afflict willingly” (LAM 3:33) because his “eyes are too pure to approve evil” (HAB 1:13). Paul was explicit that God “is not the author of confusion” (1COR 14:33).

Is God merciful?

- **Yes.** God is merciful (EXO 34:6, JAM 5:11) to all (PSA 145:9), and this will continue forever (1CHR 16:34) due to his unending compassion (LAM 3:22). God is love (1JOH 4:16).
- **No.** God is preoccupied with vengeance (ROM 12:19). He advocates murder without pity (DEU 7:16), and lives up to this standard (1SAM 6:19). God orders multiple genocides (1SAM 15:2-8; JER 13:14) since he “is a consuming fire” (HEB 12:29).

Is God a warrior?

- **Yes.** “The LORD is a man of war” (EXO 15:3; ISA 42:13), who is “mighty in battle” (PSA 24:8).
- **No.** He is “the God of peace,” (ROM 15:33) and because he is “not the author of confusion, but of peace” (1COR 14:33).

Does God enjoy his own works?

- **Yes.** Observing his works bolsters God’s self-esteem (GEN 1:31).
- **No.** God regrets creating the world (GEN 6:6).

Does God create discord and confusion?

- **Yes.** God explicitly created the concept of foreign languages for the sole purpose of causing discord and confusion between men (GEN 11:6-9).
- **No.** God “is not the author of confusion” (1COR 14:33); in fact, he explicitly hates those who sow discord (PRO 6:16-19).

Does God get furious or angry?

- **Yes.** God repeatedly mentioned unleashing his fury against various people (JER 42:18; EZE 6:12), and frequently lashed out in anger (NUM 25:3-4; DEU 6:15, 9:7-8, 28:20, 32:21; PSA 7:11, 78:49; ISA 26:21; JER 4:8, 17:4, 32:30-31; NAH 1:2; ZEP 2:2).
- **No.** There is no fury within God (ISA 27:4), and he is “ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness” (NEH 9:17).

Does God hold grudges?

- **Yes.** God was furious with the Israelites the entire time they wandered the desert, which is why it took them so long (NUM 32:13). God can hold eternal grudges (JER 17:4).
- **No.** God’s anger is momentary (PSA 30:4-5) and won’t last forever (JER 3:12; PSA 103:9; MIC 7:18).

Is God’s work perfect?

- **Yes.** The Bible explicitly states that all of God’s work is perfect, because God always true, just, and right (DEU 32:4).
- **No.** God created many imperfect works:
 - God’s creations, Adam and Eve, were clearly imperfect because they were incapable of following simple commands (GEN 2:16-17, 3:6) and teaching their children not murderer (GEN 4:8).
 - God was so displeased by his flawed creations that he destroyed the vast majority of living things (GEN 6:5-6).
 - The Bible mentions that Jesus was “made perfect” by his suffering (HEB 5:8-9), which implies that he was previously imperfect.

Where does God dwell?

- **In Zion** (PSA 76:1-2; JOE 3:17, 21).
- **In Heaven** (ECC 5:2).
- **In an unapproachable light** that no one has, or can, see (1TIM 6:16).
- **In clouds of thick darkness** (1KIN 8:12; PSA 97:1-2).
- **In eternity** (ISA 57:15).
- **“Among the children of Israel”** (EXO 29:45).
- **With anyone who loves Jesus and follows his teachings** (JOH 14:23).
- **With those “of a contrite and humble spirit”** (ISA 57:15).

Who causes people to become deaf or blind?

- **The Lord** (EXO 4:11).
- **Foul spirits** (MAR 9:25).

Does God lie?

- **No, it is impossible.** The Bible explicitly states that God neither lies nor repents (1SAM 15:29). Every one of God's words is pure (PSA 12:6, 119:140; PRO 30:5), because God is incapable of lying (HEB 6:18; TIT 1:2) since he is not a man (NUM 23:19).
- **No, lest he be a hypocrite.** God directly commanded mankind not to lie (EXO 20:16). God thinks liars are a cursed (MAL 1:14) abomination (PRO 12:22). As such, the Bible definitively forbids lying (EPH 4:25; COL 3:9) and states that God will explicitly punish liars with "a second death" in a burning lake of fire and brimstone (REV 21:8).
- **Yes.** God tell lies:
 - God freely admitted to deceiving prophets (2CHR 18:20-22; EZE 14:9; 1KIN 22:20-22) and deluding people into believing lies (2THE 2:11).
 - God straight-up lied to Jeremiah (JER 20:7).
- **God endorses lying:**
 - God rewarded the Hebrew midwives for lying to the Pharaoh (EXO 1:18-20).
 - God spared Rahab for lying to protect Joshua's spies (JOS 2:4-5). This is commonly cited as evidence of people being saved by their works (JAM 2:25).

Did God dwell in Solomon's temple?

- **Yes.** Solomon's temple was God's chosen house (1KIN 9:3-5; 2CHR 7:12, 16).
- **No.** God specifically stated that he didn't want a house (1CHR 17:4; ACT 7:48, 17:24).

Did God love the city of Zion?

- **Yes.** God explicitly stated he loved (PSA 87:2-3) and desired (PSA 132:13-14) the city of Zion.
- **No.** Zion provoked God's anger and fury (JER 32:31).

Does God love everyone?

- **Yes.** "God is love" (1JOH 4:8), and therefore, he must love us (1JOH 4:16). He loves us so much, he murdered his son to give us the option of redemption (JOH 3:16).
- **No.** God has performed many hateful acts:
 - Excluding hose onboard the Ark, God intentionally killed all living things (GEN 7:21-23)
 - God explicitly stated that he hates non-Israelites (LEV 20:23); specifically the people of Gilgal (HOS 9:15) and Esau (MAL 1:3).

- In a vulgar display of power, God killed the firstborn in every Egyptian family to intimidate the Pharaoh (EXO 12:29).
- The Bible explicitly states that God hates all sinners (PSA 5:5), especially the wicked and violent (PSA 11:5) and those who do not praise him (ACT 12:23).

Does God want people to die?

- **Yes.** God explicitly ordered certain crimes to be capital offenses (DEU 17:2), and God will laugh and mock as these sinners receive their comeuppance (PRO 1:26).
- **No.** God takes no pleasure in watching people die (EZE 18:32).

Does God want for people to go to Hell?

- **Yes.** God is hell-bent on damning people:
 - God intentionally created evil people just to have someone to damn on Judgement Day (PRO 16:4).
 - God intentionally deludes people into believing lies, just so they can become damned (2THE 2:11-12).
- **No.** God wants for all people to be saved, and to know the truth (1TIM 2:3-4). God wants man to repent, not perish (2PET 3:9).
- **The ends justify the means.** God just wants people to understand his message, and deliverance is a way of motivating people (MAR 4:11-12).

Does God know what is in everyone's heart?

- **Yes,** the Lord “knowest the hearts of all men” (ACT 1:24).
- **No.** God must test people to find out (DEU13:3):
 - This is why God ordered Abraham to murder his son, Isaac (GEN 22:12).
 - This is why God caused the Israelites to wander in the desert for 40 years (DEU 8:2).

Does God help those who need it?

- **Yes.** “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (PSA 46:1).
- **No.** If this were true, then the Song of Anguish (PSA 22:1-2) would not exist.

Does God withhold his blessings?

- **Yes.** God ignores the fervent prayers of those who harm others (ISA 1:15), do other evil things (MIC 3:4), or have ulterior motives (JAM 4:3).
- **No.** God gives everything which is asked from him, and finds anything that is sought (LUK 11:10), with an emphasis on wisdom (JAM 1:5).

Smiting Shepherds

Can God be heard?

- **Yes.** God spoke directly to both Adam (GEN 3:9-10) and Moses (EXO 33:11-12).
- **No.** No one has heard God's voice at any time (JOH 5:37).

Does God get tired?

- **Yes.** God rested on the seventh day because he wanted to feel refreshed (EXO 31:17). God once told Jerimiah that he was weary (JER 15:6).
- **No.** God never faints or feels weary (ISA 40:28).

Is God just?

- **Yes.** God's intrinsic justice is what gives him the right to judge (GEN 18:25). God is a perfect and impartial judge (DEU 32:4), and there are no traces of injustice in him (PSA 92:15)
- **No.** God repeatedly performed or endorsed unjust actions and behaviors:
 - God will kill you for breaking a single one of his laws, regardless of any previous good deeds. The Bible's authors explicitly called out God's injustice in this matter (EZE 18:25).
 - God will punish several generations of innocent children for the crimes of their fathers (EXO 20:5).
 - God actively engages in gender discrimination, as shown by his separate and unequal rules on selling slaves (EXO 21:7).
 - God frequently subjects his followers to draconian punishments for minor foibles, like when he burned the Israelite's camp, simply because they complained about their hardship (NUM 11:1).
 - God created some people with the explicit intention of damning them (ROM 9:11-13).
 - Jesus taught that God robs the poor to indulge the rich (MAT 13:12), like Bizzarro Robin Hood.

Is God impartial towards men?

- **No,** because God clearly plays favorites:
 - Though God stated that he respects the Israelites (LEV 26:9), it was said in a way which implies that he disrespects others.
 - God has predetermined who will be saved or damned (ROM 8:29-30).
 - God respected Abel, but not Cain, based on their offerings (GEN 4:4-5).
 - God favored Mary over all other women (LUK 1:30).
 - God admitted to loving Jacob and hating Esau (ROM 9:13).
 - This is why Jesus commanded his disciples to avoid the Gentiles, and in particular, to discriminate against Samaritans (MAT 10:5-6). Jesus refused to help a Canaanite based on her ethnicity. While Jesus eventually helped her, it was only to stop her groveling (MAT 15:22-26).
- **Yes.** God is "good to all" (PSA 145:9). God does not play favorites (DEU 10:17) because it implies that he respects people, which he explicitly does not do (2CHR 19:7; ROM 2:11).

Can God be seen?

- **Yes.** Jacob (GEN 32:30) and Moses (EXO 33:11, NUM 12:7-8, 14:14) saw God “face to face.” Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel saw God as they ate and drank (EXO 24:9-11). God explicitly appeared before Abram, (GEN 17:1), Manoah and his wife (JUDG 13:22), Job (JOB 42:5), and Isaiah (ISA 6:1); it is implied that God appeared before Daniel (DAN 7:9).
- **No.** “No man hath seen God at any time” (JOH 1:18, 5:37; 1JOH 4:12), nor can man ever see God (1TIM 6:15-16). God explicitly stated that he must hide his face (EXO 33:23) to prevent it from killing people (EXO 33:20); this is why God prefers to assume alternate forms, like fire (DEU 4:15).

Can God be tempted?

- **Yes.** God has been tempted:
 - The Bible explicitly states that God can be tempted (MAL 3:15), which is why Jesus forbade that practice (MAT 4:7).
 - Satan tempted God into destroying Job’s life for absolutely no reason (JOB 2:3).
- **He used too.** The Israelites succeeded in tempting God into creating water for them at Massah (EXO 17:2, 7), but they were soon prohibited from tempting God again (DEU 6:16). Now, any attempt at temptation will anger God (ACT 15:10).
- **No.** God cannot be tempted with evil, nor can God tempt men (JAM 1:13).

Does God tempt men?

- **Yes.** God explicitly tempted Abraham (GEN 22:1) and David (2SAM 24:1).
- **Most likely.** When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he explicitly made sure that they asked God not to tempt them (MAT 6:13).
- **No.** God cannot tempt nor be tempted (JAM 1:13)

Will God destroy the wicked, and spare the righteous?

- **Yes.** God gives the righteous gladness and strength, and the wicked will perish and be destroyed (PRO 10:27-29).
- **No.** Despite being “a perfect and an upright man” God decided “to destroy him [Job] without cause” (JOB 2:3).

Will God spare the righteous?

- **Yes.** God explicitly stated that those who follow his laws will “surely live” (EZE 18:8-9, 19), and extended this offer to reformed villains (EZE 33:19).
- **No.** God destroys the righteous and the wicked alike (JOB 9:22), since it makes no difference to him (EZE 21:3).

Can God forgive all sins?

- **Yes.** God is willing to forgive all sins (COL 2:13), and this is Christianity's major selling point (ACT 13:38-39; 1JOH 1:9).
- **No.** Since forgiveness is granted via the power of the Holy Spirit, those who blaspheme against the Holy Spirit can never be forgiven (MAT 12:31) and are eternally damned (MAR 3:29).

Does God remember forgiven sins?

- **Yes.** Forgiveness does not render the sinner innocent; they still must pay for their transgressions. In severe cases, children can be punished for their father's sins; this can continue for several generations (EXO 34:6-7). Men are judged for their sins after their deaths (HEB 9:27).
- **No.** God explicitly stated that he forgets forgiven sins (JER 31:34; HEB 8:12).

Is Jesus also God?

- **Yes.** Jesus explicitly claimed to have existed before Abraham (JOH 8:58), and that Jesus and his Father are one (JOH 10:30; 14:9-11), which is corroborated elsewhere (HEB 1:8). Jesus was "in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God" (PHIL 2:5-6) because "for in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (COL 2:9).
- **Yes?** Assuming that "the Word" is a metaphor for Jesus, then Jesus is God. (JOH 1:1)
- **No, Jesus is neither God, nor a god:**
 - Jesus claimed to be the son of God, which is not God, but equally powerful as God (JOH 5:18).
 - Jesus can't be God, because God is the only god (ISA 45:5).
 - There were no other Gods formed before the LORD, and there will be none after (ISA 43:10).
 - Jesus never demonstrated any godlike prowess, and he performed no mighty works, excluding healing a few sick or afflicted individuals via the laying of hands (MAR 6:1, 5).
- **No, because Jesus is subject to God** (1COR 15:25, 28). The Bible indicates that Jesus is a separate entity who is subordinate to God, because he:
 - Ascended to God, his father (JOH 20:17).
 - Sits at the right hand of God (MAR 16:19; COL 3:1; 1PET 3:21-22).
 - Serves as the only mediator between God and man (1TIM 2:5).
 - Has no control over heavenly seating arrangements (MAT 20:23).
 - Does not know when Judgment Day will occur (MAT 24:36).
 - Believes God forsook him on the cross (MAT 27:46).
 - Learns and grows, implying he was neither all-knowing nor all-powerful (LUK 2:52).
 - Was an ordinary mortal without superpowers (JOH 8:40; ACT 13:23; ROM 1:3; 2TIM 2:8); his miracles were attributable to God's works (JOH 5:19; 8:28; ACT 2:22)

- Refused to be called good, because only God is good (MAR 10:18), and because his Father was greater than him (JOH 14:28).
- Will be used as the standard which men are judged by (JOH 17:30-31).
- **No, because Jesus is the son of Satan** (REV 22:16).

Is God the only savior?

- **Yes.** God explicitly stated there are no saviors besides him (ISA 43:11; HOS 13:4).
- **No.** Jesus is also a savior (LUK 2:11; ACT 13:23).

Is Jesus the only intermediary between God and man?

- **Yes.** "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1TIM 2:5).
- **No.** The Holy Spirit can intercede on their behalf (ROM 8:26).

Is following God required to follow Jesus?

- **No.** Jesus will accept anyone (MAT 11:28; JOH 7:37), and will save anyone who calls for him by name (ROM 10:13).
- **Yes.** Only those who follow God can follow Jesus (JOH 6:44, 65), and vice versa (JOH 6:37).

Who is the gateway to heaven?

- **Only God can allow people into Heaven**, since he leads men to follow Jesus (JOH 6:65).
- **Following Jesus** is the only way to reach God (JOH 14:6).

Does God protect the innocent?

- **Yes.** God protects and/or avenges the innocent and righteous (EXO 23:7).
- **No.** God permitted the killing of all Midian males and non-virgins (NUM 31:17). During the siege of Jericho, God enabled the Israelites to kill every person inside, regardless of age or gender, as well as all of their livestock (JOS 6:21). The Amalek clan later suffered the same fate (1SAM 15:3).

What is God's relationship with serpents?

- **They are cursed by God.** God explicitly cursed all serpents for their role in coaxing Adam and Eve to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. This is why snakes slither, and why people and snakes are natural enemies (GEN 3:14-15).
- **They are a praiseworthy symbol of God.** God commanded Moses to create, and bless his people with, a fiery brass serpent on a pole (NUM 21:8-9). Jesus' crucifixion was considered analogous to Moses' exalted serpent (JOH 3:14).

Smiting Shepherds

Does God accept burnt offerings to him?

- **Yes.** God explicitly demands ritual blood sacrifice (GEN 15:9-10; EXO 20:24; 29:1, 11-37; LEV 1:5; DEU 12:27). God respects (GEN 4:4) and enjoys these offerings (GEN 8:20-21; LEV 23:12-18; NUM 18:17-19).
- **No.** God denies or asking for (JER7:22) or even wanting (PSA 40:6, 50:13, 51:16; JER 6:20) burnt offerings, because he doesn't care for blood (ISA 1:11). God considers animal sacrifice to be a merciless (MAT 9:13, 12:7) form of murder (ISA 66:3). As such, no offering is acceptable to him (MIC 6:6-7).

Will God curse the earth?

- **No.** Following the flood, God promised to never curse the earth again (GEN 8:21).
- **Yes.** God made continued threats to curse the earth (MAL 4:6).

Does God bless America?

- **No.** God explicitly stated that monarchy is his chosen form of governance (DEU 17:14-15; ECC 8:2).

Does God accept human sacrifices?

- **Yes, occasionally:**
 - Jephthah sacrifices his virgin daughter to the LORD in exchange for his assistance in defeating the Ammonites (JUDG 11:30-39).
 - God permits Achan and his family to be stoned and burned to death (JOS 7:24).
 - David sacrificed his sons and grandsons to end the famine (2SAM 21:8-14).
- **Not really.** While God commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, it was just a test of Abraham's suggestibility (GEN 22:1-2).
- **No,** human sacrifice is a wicked practice which angers God (2KIN 21:6), prompting him to forbid the practice (LEV 18:21; DEU 12:29-31; 2KIN 16:3) as a capital offense (LEV 20:2; 2CHR 28:3; JER 19:5, 32:35).
- **WTF?** God intentionally gave humans laws they could not follow, in the hope that they would turn away from him, sacrifice their children to Moloch, and thus be damned (EZE 20:25-26).

What is God's opinion on interracial and mixed-ethnic marriages?

- **Intermarriage is expressly forbidden,** as your children will turn away and worship other gods. This provokes God's anger, leading to your destruction. (DEU 7:3-4).
- **Intermarriage is a normal and accepted practice:**
 - Joseph had children with an Egyptian priest's daughter (GEN 46:20).
 - Moses married an Ethiopian woman (NUM 12:1).
 - "King Solomon loved many strange women" from a laundry list of ethnic groups (1KIN 11:1-2).

Will God punish you for having sex with your half-sister?

- **Yes.** Having sex with a half-sibling is absolutely condemned, resulting in an automatic curse from God (DEU 27:22). Even seeing each other naked was considered grounds for banishment (LEV 20:17).
- **No.** Sarai was Abraham's half-sister (GEN 20:11-12) and she was blessed by God in order to conceive incestuous children (GEN 17:15-16).

Will God defend Jerusalem?

- **Yes,** it was prophesized that God will come to the defense of Jerusalem (ZEC 12:8).
- **No,** it was prophesized that Jerusalem will fall (ZEC 14:2).

Can God disrupt natural cycles?

- **Yes.** Joshua miraculously stopped the earth's rotation, causing the sun to remain overhead for a full day (JOS 10:12-13).
- **No.** Cycles of nature (e.g., the seasons, agriculture, and the days) can never end (GEN 10:22).

Will God protect believers from being led astray?

- **Yes.** God is known and heard by all of his followers, and no one will ever be able to take them away from him (JOH 10:27-29).
- **No.** The Holy Spirit itself explicitly stated that nothing can stop people from losing their faith (1TIM 4:1).

What is the Spirit of God like?

- **It is a spirit of love, joy, and peace** (GAL 5:22).
- **It is an "evil spirit"** (JUDG 9:23; 1SAM 16:14-16, 23, 18:10-11, 19:9) of **vengeance** (GEN 4:15; ISA 34:8) and **fury** (DEU 32:19-27; JUDG 15:14-15, 14:19).

Are the scriptures divinely inspired?

- **Yes.** The scriptures explicitly state that all scriptures are divinely inspired (2TIM 3:16).
- **No.** The scriptures are not divine:
 - Paul explicitly stated several times that he was expressing his own personal views, and that he did not speak with divine authority (1COR 7:6,25; 2COR 11:17).
 - Paul taught that scriptures are literature, which is not meant to be viewed in a literal or historical context. Paul explicitly stated that the story of Abraham is an allegory (GAL 4:22-26).
 - Even St. Augustine admitted that Noah's Ark is just a metaphor for Christ and his church (City of God, XV, 26).
- **Possibly not.** Paul asked Timothy to return some of his books, especially "the parchments," which may have been rough drafts of the Bible (2TIM 4:13).

Does God judge people?

- **Yes.** God can (1PET 1:17) and does (EZE 18:30) judge man.
- **No.** All judgments have been delegated to Jesus (JOH 5:22).

6.2 — Points of Contention with the Book of Genesis

What did God create the universe from?

- **From formless, pre-existing matter** (WIS 11:17).
- **From nothing**, since he created everything (JOH 1:3; HEB 11:3).

Who created Heaven and Earth?

- **God did, alone** (GEN 1:1; ISA 44:24).
- **God did, with Jesus' assistance** (1COR 8:6). The Word that was with and is God is an allusion to Jesus (JOH 1:1-5, 9-10, 14).

How long did it take for God to create Heaven and Earth?

- **Three days**; one to create Heaven, one to create the evening and morning, and one to create the land (GEN 1:6-13).
- **One day** (GEN 2:4).

When did God separate light from darkness?

- **On the first day** (GEN 1:3-5).
- **On the fourth day** (GEN 1:16-19).

What underlies the earth? What is the earth set upon?

- **A series of pillars** (1SAM 2:8).
- **Foundations** (PSA 104:1, 5).
- **The earth floats on a giant sea** (PSA 24:1-2).
- **Nothing**; the earth floats freely in space (JOB 26:7).

When did God create humans and birds?

- **God created male and female humans simultaneously** (GEN 1:26-27) on the sixth day, **after** creating all plants (GEN 1:11-13) and other land animals (GEN 1:24). Marine life was created previously on the fifth day (GEN 1:20-23), when **birds were also created from the waters** (GEN 1:20).
- **God created man** (GEN 2:7) *before* he created land animals and **birds from the ground itself** (GEN 2: 19). Although God had previously created seeds (GEN 2:4-5) **there were no plants until after he created man** to till the earth (GEN 2:8-9). **Women were created** (GEN 2:22) **after men** (GEN 2:7).

Was Adam allowed to eat everything in the Garden of Eden?

- **Yes.** God explicitly stated that man is permitted to eat any and all seed-bearing fruits and plants (GEN 1:29).
- **No.** God explicitly banned Adam from eating fruit from the Tree of Knowledge (GEN 2:17).

Did God curse Adam for eating from the Tree of Knowledge?

- **Yes.** The very concept of death itself is part of God's punishment for eating from the Tree of Knowledge (GEN 2:16-17).
- **Not exactly.** Adam had many sons and daughters and lived to be 930 years-old, which is pretty much the opposite of being cursed (GEN 5:4-5).

Who is to blame for original sin?

- **Adam is explicitly stated to be responsible for original sin** (ROM 5:12-19).
- **Adam is explicitly innocent, and Eve is entirely responsible for original sin** (1TIM 2:14).

Who was the first to worship the Lord?

- **Cain and Abel were,** via their sacrifices (GEN 4:3-4).
- **Seth was** explicitly stated as being the first to worship the Lord, following the birth of his son, Enos (GEN 4:26).

What was the world's population when Cain was marked?

- **There were only three people in the entire world at the time;** Adam, Eve, and Cain (GEN 4:1-2, 8).
- **Other people had to have existed,** because God marked Cain so that others knew to kill him on sight (GEN 4:14-15).

What became of Cain?

- **Cain is cursed** from the earth itself; meaning his farming would never produce food. As such, Cain became "a fugitive and a vagabond" (GEN 4:11-12).
- **He died,** since those who "have gone the way of Cain" have "perished" (JUDE 1:11).
- **Cain does fairly well for himself.** Cain got married (somehow), started a family, and founded a city (GEN 4:16-17).

When did Noah enter the ark?

- **On the day the rains started** (GEN 7:11-16).
- **Seven days before the flood** (GEN 7:6-10).

Who defined the clean and unclean animals?

- **Moses did.** He gathered the Israelites and gave them additional laws (DEU 5:1) which included the definitions clean and unclean animals, thus forming the basis of Jewish dietary law (DEU 14:3-21).
- **The notion of clean and unclean animals pre-dates Moses.** God commanded Noah to take 7 pairs of the clean animals onto the ark, and only one pair of the unclean animals. Therefore, clean and unclean animals were previously defined (GEN 7:1-3).

How long did the flooding last?

- **40 days** (GEN 7:17).
- **150 days** (GEN 7:24).

When did the earth dry up, following the Flood?

- **The first day of the first month** (GEN 8:13).
- **The twentieth day of the second month** (GEN 8:14).

How long did it take for the ark to come to rest?

- **148 days.** Noah and his family entered the ark (GEN 7:7) on the 17th day of the 2nd month (GEN 7:11), and landed on Mt. Ararat on the 17th day of the 7th month (GEN 8:4). By the traditional Jewish calendar, the ark was thus afloat for 148 days.
- **219 days.** The floodwaters receded slowly, and mountaintops were not visible until the 1st day of the 10th month (GEN 8:5). Since Mt. Ararat was submerged until this point, the ark must have been afloat for 219 days, by the traditional Jewish calendar.

Did anything survive the flood?

- **No.** The flood destroyed every single living, excluding Noah and the contents of his ark (GEN 7:23).
- **Yes.** There were other survivors:
 - The ancient race of giants (GEN 6:4) were not mentioned among the ark's passengers, yet they later reappeared as the Sons of Anak (NUM 13:33).
 - Before the flood, the Kenites lived between Egypt and the Euphrates River, as part of God's covenant with Abraham (GEN 15:18-19). Yet, the Kenites still existed after the flood, and Moses' father-in-law may have been a Kenite (JUDG 1:16).
 - By tracing back various genealogies (GEN 5:25-29; 7:7, 11) one can calculate when the flood occurred. While the exact year varies between translations, the genealogies and Methuselah's stated age at the time of his death (GEN 5:27) together imply that flood occurred *before* Methuselah's death. Therefore, Methuselah survived the cataclysm.
 - This fact alone forced St. Augustine, of all people, to admit that the Bible contains errors (City of God, XV, 11).

Where did Abraham go after leaving Haram?

- **They intentionally ventured forth into Canaan** (GEN 12:5).
- **They wandered, by faith, without any destination** (HEB 11:8).

Did Abraham spend time in Canaan?

- **Yes.** Abraham lived on the plain of Mamre, in Hebron, where he built a temple (GEN 13:18).
- **No.** Jacob's father (Isaac) "was a stranger, in the land of Canaan" (GEN 37:1). God gave Abraham no inheritance in Canaan, and mentions that he never set foot there (ACT 7:4-5).

Did God promise Canaan to Isaac and Jacob?

- **Yes.** God explicitly promised "all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession" to Isaac, Jacob, and all of their descendants (GEN 17:8).
- **No.** Despite obeying God's call (HEB 11:8-9), Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob died without ever receiving what God had promised (HEB 11:13). None of them ever set foot in Canaan (ACT 7:4-5).

What was the city was the city of Dan called in the time of Abram?

- **The city of Dan was originally named Laish**, but it was later renamed in honor of Israel's son, Dan (JUDG 18:29).
- **The city was always called Dan.** Abram went there when it was known by that name (GEN 14:14).

Was Lot a righteous man?

- **Yes.** In fact, Lot was the only virtuous person living in the greater Sodom-Gomorrah area. He was constantly sickened by all of the crime and vice surrounding him. When those cities were destroyed, God saw to it that only Lot and his daughters were spared (2PET 2:7-9).
- **No.** Lot freely surrendered his daughters to be gang-raped by a crazed mob (GEN 19:8). Later, Lot allowed his daughters to get him so intoxicated that he submitted to their desires for incestuous sex. (GEN 19:36)

Who destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah?

- **Two angels** were sent to destroy the cities on God's behalf (GEN 19:1, 13).
- **The Lord himself** personally destroyed them, via raining fire and brimstone (GEN 19:24).

Who named the city of Beersheba?

- **Abraham did** (GEN 20:1, 2, 9; 21:31-32).
- **Isaac did** (GEN 26:6, 7, 10, 28, 33).

Did Lot's daughters think there were men left on earth?

- **Yes.** Lot's daughters were with him when God promised not to destroy the city of Zoar (GEN 19:21-22). The mountain cave that Lot and his daughters took refuge in was on the outskirts of Zoar (GEN 19:30).
- **No.** Lot's daughters were convinced that their father was the last man on earth (GEN 19:31), and they probably would not have committed drunken incest if they knew otherwise.

Did Sarah have faith that she would conceive a child in her old age?

- **Yes.** Sarah was able to bear children well-after menopause through the power of her faith (HEB 11:11).
- **No.** Sarah had no faith in her ability to conceive, and straight-up laughed at God when told her that she would (GEN 18:10-12).

Did Abraham need God's help to have children in his old age?

- **Yes.** Abraham was so old and infirm that he was unable to impregnate anyone without divine intervention (GEN 21:2).
- **No.** Abraham's other wife, Keturah, had at least six of his children (Zimram, Jockshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah) without any sort of divine intervention (GEN 25:1-2).

How old was Ishmael when Abraham abandoned him?

- **Ishmael was still a child;** he was hidden in some shrubbery (GEN 21:14-15).
- **Ishmael was 14.** (GEN 17:24-26; GEN 21:5,8).

When did Jehovah/YHWH/LORD come in to use as the name of God?

- **Before the time of Abraham,** since Seth (GEN 4:26) and Noah (GEN 9:24-26) both used the term. Abraham must have known the name of God, because he was the one who named Jehovahjireh, "the Mountain of the Lord" (GEN 22:14). Both Abraham (GEN 12:8) and Isaac (GEN 26:25) were shown to know the Lord by name.
- **After time of Abraham.** When God revealed his name to Moses in their first conversation, he explicitly mentioned that his name was unknown to Abraham and Isaac (EXO 6:2-3).

How was Abraham justified?

- **Abraham was justified by his faith** in God, which made him righteous (ROM 4:3). This was demonstrated when, by faith alone, Abraham attempted to sacrifice Isaac (HEB 11:17). Abraham was not justified by his works; if he was, he would have had no glory before God (ROM 4:2).
- **Abraham was justified by his works,** namely, his attempted sacrifice of Isaac (JAM 2:21). This incident explicitly proved that man can be justified by his works and not by faith alone (JAM 2:24).

How did Jacob get the birthright?

- **Jacob purchased Esau's birthright** (GEN 25:31-33). Esau willingly and knowingly consented to the transfer, despite only receiving a bowl of lentil soup in exchange (GEN 25:34).
- **Jacob deceived his father by pretending he was Esau** (GEN 27:18-19, 26, 28-29).

What was the purpose of Jacob's errand?

- **Jacob was trying to flee from Esau** and his anger (GEN 27:42-45).
- **Jacob was looking for a wife** (GEN 28:2).

Did Jacob name the city of Bethel?

- **Yes.** The city was originally called Luz until Jacob renamed it (GEN 28:18-19; JUDG 1:23).
- **No.** He couldn't have because:
 - The city of Bethel was mentioned several times in the story of Abram (GEN 12:7-8; GEN 13:1-3).
 - Bethel and Luz must be different places, because Joseph travels from Bethel to Luz (JOS 16:1-2).

Where did Joseph's brothers find the hidden money?

- **After they returned home**, while they were unpacking (GEN 42:29, 35).
- **While staying at an inn** (GEN 42:27; GEN 43:21).

Was Jacob's name permanently changed to Israel? If so, where did this happen?

- **Yes.** God permanently changes Jacob's name to Israel, but it is unclear when. It either happened:
 - As Jacob passed over the Jabbok River, 30 miles (48 km) north of Jerusalem (GEN 32:22, 28).
 - At his altar at Elbethel, 5 miles (8 km) north of Jerusalem (GEN 35:7, 10).
- **No.** Despite permanently changing his name, God still refers to Israel as Jacob when speaking to him (GEN 46:2).

How old was Benjamin when his clan migrated to Egypt?

- **Benjamin was a child**, who was so young that he would die if he became separated from his father. (GEN 43:15)
- **Benjamin was a grown man**, with ten sons of his own, who also accompanied him into Egypt. (GEN 46:8)

Did Zebulun's territory reach the sea?

- **Yes.** His territory was a "haven for ships" (GEN 49:13).
- **No.** While Zebulun's territory reached towards the sea, it stopped at Jokenam, which was still inland (JOS 19:11).

What was Jacob's final act?

- **He asked Joseph to bury alongside his fathers, not in Egypt, and died when he rested his head on the top of his bed** (GEN 47:29-31).
- **After blessing Joseph's sons, Jacob died while leaning on his staff** (HEB 11:21).

Was Jacob brought out of Egypt?

- **Yes.** God promised Jacob that he would leave Egypt (GEN 46:2-4).
- **No.** Jacob died (GEN 49:33) in Egypt (GEN 50:6).

What are the circumstances of Jacob's burial?

- **Jacob was buried in Machpelah**, in a sepulcher purchased from Ephron (GEN 50:13).
- **Jacob was buried in Sychem**, in a sepulcher that Abraham bought from the sons of Emmor (ACT 7:15-16).
- Jacob was buried in a sepulcher that he **bought from the sons of Hamor** (JOS 24:32).

What will become of the Israelites?

- **Their population will explode to literally astronomical levels** as they spread throughout the world (GEN 26:4).
- **Their population will become decimated and scattered** (DEU 4:27).

What were the 12 Tribes of Israel?

The Bible is consistently inconsistent about listing the Tribes of Israel, as illustrated in the table on the next page. Please note the following:

- The number of Israeli tribes fluctuates between 11 and 13. The traditional twelve those listed in GEN 46, 49; EXO 1; and 1CHR 2.
- Traditionally, when territory was divided, Levi received no share, and Joseph received a double share.
- The names of 12 of Jacob's children were initially listed (GEN 29:31-30:24), but this list forgot Benjamin and included Dinah.
- The Levites were not explicitly mentioned in NUM 10:14-27, but the Kohathites were (NUM 10:21). Kohath was the son of Levi; therefore, the Kohathites are a subgroup of Levites.
- The Song of Deborah (JUDG 5:14-23) lists eleven tribes, and forgets five of Jacob's children (Simeon, Levi, Judah, Manasseh, and Gad). Four of these tribes are new and unique (Barak, Machir, Gilead and Meroz). Machir, Gilead and Meroz were not sons of Jacob; and this was *the only mention of anyone named Meroz*.
- 11 tribes were mentioned when Solomon's kingdom broke up (2SAM 19:43; 1KIN 11:31), but their names were unlisted. The Tribe of Dan is intentionally omitted from later books, because the Antichrist was rumored to be from the Tribe of Dan.

#	Tribe	The Twelve Tribes of Israel												REV 7:4-8			
		GEN 29:31 to 30:24	GEN 46:8-27	GEN 49:3-27	EXO 1:2-5	NUM 10:14 -27	NUM 26:5- 51	NUM 34:16-29 and 35:1-	DEU 33:6-24	JUDG 1:17- 36	JUDG 5:14- 23	1CHR 2:1-2	1CHR 6:54- 80				
1	Asher	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2	Benjamin		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3	Dan	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4	Gad	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
5	Issachar	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
6	Joseph	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
7	Judah	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
8	Levi	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
9	Naphthali	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
10	Reuben	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
11	Simeon	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
12	Zebulun	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
13	Manasseh																
14	Ephraim																
15	Barak																
16	Machir																
17	Gilead																
18	Meroz																

When did Abraham's descendants reclaim their homeland?

- **After 4 generations.** God explicitly told Abraham that they would reclaim their homeland (GEN 15:13) in four generations (GEN 15:16).
- **After 6 generations.** The Bible explicitly states that Abraham's descendants did not return until the sixth generation:
 1. Abraham begat Isaac (GEN 21:3).
 2. Isaac begat Jacob (GEN 25:26).
 3. Jacob begat Levi (GEN 29:34).
 4. Levi begat Kohath (GEN 46:11).
 5. Kohath begat Amram (EXO 6:8)
 6. Amram begat Moses (1CHR 23:13).

6.3 — Points of Contention with the Life of Moses

How many Israelites were in Egypt?

- **Many.** The Israelites outnumbered the Egyptians (EXO 1:8-9).
- **Few.** The Israelites were selected by God out of pity, because they were the absolute smallest minority group (DEU 7:7).

Who appeared to Moses in the burning bush?

- **One of the Lord's angels** spoke on his behalf (EXO 3:2-2).
- **God called directly to Moses** (EXO 3:4).

Did Moses fear the Pharaoh?

- **Yes.** The Bible explicitly states that Moses was afraid of the Pharaoh, who sought to kill him. Moses fled from the Pharaoh for this reason (EXO 2:14-15; ACT 7:29) until he was safe (EXO 4:19).
- **No.** "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king" (HEB 11:27).

Did the Israelites listen to Moses?

- **Yes,** in fact "they bowed their heads and worshiped" (EXO 4:31).
- **No,** they didn't listen, because they were discouraged by their years of hard labor (EXO 6:9).

Who hardened the Pharaoh's heart?

- **Aaron did.** The Pharaoh took the demonstration of Aaron's shape-shifting rod as a personal affront (EXO 7:11-13).
- **The Lord did,** to prevent the Pharaoh from allowing the Israelites to escape (EXO 10:20).
- **The Pharaoh did** it to himself (EXO 8:15).

What were the Plagues that God brought upon Egypt?

The Plagues God Brought Upon Egypt			
Plague	EXO 7-12	PSA 78	PSA 105
Blood	7:20	78:44	105:29
Frogs	8:6		105:30
Lice	8:17		105:31
Flies	8:24	78:45	105:31
Crop blight	9:3		
Boils/pestilence	9:10	78:50	
Thunder, hail, and fire	9:23	78:48	105:32
Locusts	10:13	78:46	105:34
Darkness	10:22		105:28
Killing of the firstborn	12:29	78:51	105:36
Frost		78:47	105:33
Evil angels		78:49	

Were all of the waters of Egypt turned to blood?

- **Yes.** All Egypt's water was explicitly turned into blood (EXO 7:20-21).
- **No.** The groundwater was unaffected (EXO 7:22-24).

How many of Egypt's cattle were killed by God?

- **All of them.** God explicitly slew the entire Egyptian cattle population (EXO 9:6).
- **God only killed the firstborn cattle** (EXO 12:29).

What was the extent of the damage from the 7th Plague's hailstorm?

- It killed every man and beast that happened to be outside at the time. Additionally, **it killed every plant and broke every tree** (EXO 9:25).
- **Some plants had to have survived**, because the plague of locusts were explicitly described as eating the plants and fruits which survived the hailstorm (EXO 10:14-15).

Was Moses good at public speaking?

- **Yes.** Moses "was mighty in words and in deeds" (ACT 7:22).
- **No.** Moses himself explicitly stated that "I am not eloquent," and that he was "slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (EXO 4:10).

How long did the Israelites' sojourn last?

- **400 years** (ACT 7:6).
- **430 years** (EXO 12:40-41).
- **< 350 years**, as implied by analysis of different genealogies (GEN 46:8, 11; EXO 6:18, 20; 7:7).

Who went before the Israelites?

- **God himself personally spoke to the Israelites** (EXO 13:21, 16:10).
- **An angel** spoke on God's behalf (EXO 14:19, 23:20-23).

Smiting Shepherds

How does God part the Red Sea?

- God imbues Moses with the power to part seas (EXO 14:15-16).
- God created a strong east wind (EXO 14:21).
- God parted the sea with the power of wisdom itself (WIS 10:18).
- God did not need into invoke anything to part the sea; he just did it (NEH 9:11).

What are God's Commandments?

God's Commandments						
#	Commandment	EXO 20:2-17; DEU 5:6-21	EXO 34:13-28	MAT 19:17-19	MAR 10:19	LUK 18:20
1	No other gods	X	X			
2	No graven images	X	X			
3	No Lord's name in vain	X				
4	Observe the Sabbath	X	X			
5	Honor parents	X		X	X	X
6	Don't murder/kill	X		X	X	X
7	No adultery	X		X	X	X
8	No stealing	X		X	X	X
9	Don't lie	X		X	X	X
10	Don't covet	X				
11	Observe Feast of Unleavened Bread		X			
12	God gets all firstborn		X			
13	Observe Feast of Weeks		X			
14	Men appear before God thrice per year		X			
15	No leaven in sacrificed blood		X			
16	God get the first fruits of harvest		X			
17	Don't seethe kids in mother's milk		X			
18	Love neighbors as self (actually LEV 19:18)			X		
19	Don't defraud (actually LEV 19:13)			X		

Did the Israelites have adequate water after leaving Egypt?

- **No.** The Israelites had no water (EXO 15:22) and were unable to find any potable water sources after three days (EXO 15:23), which caused the people to question Moses (EXO 15:24).
- **Yes.** The Israelites must have had plenty of water, since they were able to wash their clothes (EXO 19:14).

How was the Israelites' condition in the desert?

- **Good.** The time spent in the desert was comfortable, and the Israelites "lacked nothing" (DEU 2:7). Cereal grains, honey, butter, milk, fat, and grape juice were all readily available (DEU 32:13-14).
- **Bad.** The lack of food led the Israelites to speak ill about Moses, compromising their confidence in both Moses and God (EXO 16:2, 8). The emancipated Israelites received lesser quantities and lower-qualities of food than what their Egyptian oppressors provided (NUM 11:4-6).

Who provided the Ten Commandments to Moses?

- **God.** The Lord directly gave the Ten Commandments to Moses (EXO 19:20; 20:22).
- **Angels.** The Ten Commandments were provided by angels acting as mediators, and Moses did not speak directly with God (GAL 3:19).

Who wrote the second set of Ten Commandments?

- **God carved them for Moses** (EXO 34:1).
- **Moses carved them himself**, based on what God had told him (EXO 34:27).

Who built the Ark of the Covenant?

- **Bezaleel built it** (EXO 37:1).
- **Moses claimed to have built it himself** as he carved the second tablets (DEU 10:1-5).

Did God accompany the Israelites on the Exodus?

- **Yes.** God explicitly stated that he would personally accompany the Israelites on the Exodus (EXO 33:14).
- **No.** God sent an angel instead. God explicitly did not follow the Israelites, since he would probably wind up killing them (EXO 33:2-3).

Did Moses see the face of God?

- **Yes.** God and Moses spoke "face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (EXO 33:11).
- **No.** Moses asked to do so (EXO 33:18), but he was told that anyone who tried would be killed in the process (EXO 33:20).

Where did Moses receive the Ten Commandments?

- At **Mt. Sinai** (EXO 19:18, 25; 20:1-3).
- At **Mt. Horeb** (DEU 4:10, 12-13). While scholars argue that Mt. Horeb was an alternate name for Mt. Sinai, this has never been confirmed.

Was Moses meek?

- **Yes.** In fact, Moses was meek to such a degree that it made him superior to all other men (NUM 12:3).
- **No.** After his armies returned from conquering the Midianites, Moses, in his anger, ordered his officers to kill every Midian male and non-virgin. Virgin Mediant women were kept as war trophies (NUM 31:14-18)

What were God's instructions to Moses to get the rock to give water?

- **To smite the rock** (EXO 17:5-6).
- **To speak to the rock** (NUM 20:7-8).

Did all of Korah's men die? If so, how?

- **Yes,** because the earth swallowed them all up and destroyed everything (NUM 16:31-32) with its fire (NUM 26:10).
- **No,** because:
 - The 250 who offered incense were killed by God's fire attack (NUM 16:35).
 - "The children of Korah died not" (NUM 26:11).

What was manna like?

- Manna was **white, "like coriander seed," and tasted like honey wafers** (EXO 16:31).
- Manna was **"as coriander seed," "the color of bdellium" (i.e., brown or golden-brown), and it tasted like "fresh oil"** (NUM 11:7).

When was the city of Heshbon established?

- Heshbon must have been established **prior to Moses' conquests,** because it was one of the cities he captured (NUM 21:25).
- Heshbon was one of the cities built by the "the children of Reuben," **after the region was subdued** (NUM 32:37).

Did God want Balaam to go?

- **Yes.** God explicitly told Balaam that "if the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them" (NUM 22:20).
- **No,** and God was angered by the fact he went (NUM 22:21-22).

Who came up with the idea for judges for the people?

- **Moses did** (DEU 1:9-10, 12-13, 16-18).
- The idea came from **Moses's father-in-law, Jethro** (EXO 18:12, 17-19, 21-22, 24).

Who chose the judges?

- **They were appointed by Moses** (EXO 18:25).
- Moses allowed **the people to elect their own judges** (DEU 1:13).

What are the contents of the Ark of the Covenant?

- The Ark of the Covenant is explicitly stated to **only contain the stone tablets** which Moses placed there at Mt. Horeb (EXO 40:20; DEU 10:5; 1KIN 8:9).
- The Ark of the Covenant is explicitly stated to **contain other artifacts**; e.g., Aaron's rod, and a golden pot containing a sample of manna (HEB 9:4).

Why was Moses denied entry into the promised land?

- Because **he needed to be punished for his disobedience** (NUM 20:12).
- Because **he could not rally the Israelites into fighting** (NUM 14:22-23; DEU 4:21).

What did Moses do with the Midianites?

- **Moses annihilated them.** All males were killed (NUM 31:7), along with all non-virgin women; virgin women were kept as war trophies (NUM 31:17-18).
- **The Midianites survived and regrouped.** The Midianites held the Israelites captive for 7 years in the time of Gideon, well after the time of Moses (JUDG 6:1). God convinced Gideon to annihilate them (JUDG 6:15-16) using a series of trumpets, chants, jugs, and torches to drive the Midianite soldiers into frenzy and slay one another. The Midianite prince Oreb was beheaded, and prince Zeeb was crushed in a winepress (JUDG 7:24-25).

Was Moses peerless among prophets?

- **Yes.** All other prophets are inferior to Moses (DEU 34:10-12).
- **No.** In addition to parting waterways (2KIN 2:14), Elijah was also able to resurrect the dead (1KIN 17:22; 2KIN 4:32-34) and burn his enemies with fire from the sky (2KIN 1:10).

Was Moses infirm?

- **Yes.** At age 120, Moses was too frail to cross the river Jordan, or to continue leading (DEU 31:2).
- **No.** Moses maintained sharp vision and great vigor up until his death at age 120 (DEU 34:7).

Where did the Israelites go after leaving Moseroth/Mosera?

- **To Benejaakan** (NUM 33:30-31).
- **To Gudgodah**, since they had passed through Benejaakan prior to arriving at Moseroth/Mosera (DEU 10:6).

Did the Israelites pass through Edom on their journey? Did the Moabites aid them?

- **Yes.** The Israelites passed through Edom, and received help from the Moabites (DEU 2:28-29). Recall that Esau was the father of the Edomites at Mt. Seir (GEN 36:9; DEU 2:4, 8).
- **No.** Edom turned the Israelites away (NUM 20:18-21; JUDG 11:17-18). All Ammonites and Moabites were then forbidden from entering into the congregation of the Lord, as their collective punishment for failing to provide the Israelites with food and water as they escaped from Egypt (DEU 23:3-4).

Did any of Moses' contemporaries enter the Promised Land?

- **No.** God's covenant was explicitly stated to be with the children of the Israelites, and not the Israelites themselves (DEU 5:2-3). As such, no one who actually participated in the Exodus ever reached the Promised Land; they all perished in the desert (NUM 32:13).
- **Yes.** Caleb and Joshua were explicitly stated to have both survived the Exodus and entered the Promised Land (DEU 1:34).

Did Moses write the Pentateuch?

- **Yes.** The entirety of the Pentateuch, and all of its laws, statutes, ordinances, and precepts were written "by the hand of Moses" (2CHR 33:8; NEH 9:14).
- **No.** The Pentateuch contains information that Moses could not have known:
 - The story of Joseph occurred before the Egyptian captivity (GEN 37:1-2), and makes passing references to the Kings of Israel in its prelude (GEN 36:31). However, Israel would not have kings until 500 years **after** the captivity.
 - The Pentateuch describes the age and location of Moses' death, and describes the public mourning after his funeral (DEU 34:5-8).

Were the Israelites invincible?

- **Yes.** No one could stand before them, because God fills the lands they tread upon with fear and dread of the Israelites (DEU 11:25).
- **No.** The Israelites "fled before the men of Ai" (JOS 7:4), and were forced into the mountains by the Amorites (JUDG 1:34).

6.4 — Points of Contention with the Life of Christ

When did Jesus live, with respect to the time of David?

- **28 generations later.** The time of Abraham, the time of David, the Babylonian captivity, and the time of Jesus all occur 14 generations apart from one another (MAT 1:17).
- **42 generations later.** Jesus' entire paternal bloodline was explicitly listed to prove his connection to David (LUK 3:23-31).

Was Jesus a descendant of David?

- **Yes.** Jesus was explicitly stated to be “made of the seed of David” (ROM 1:3), and two different (though contradictory) genealogies explain Jesus' relation to David (MAT 1:1-16; LUK 3:23-38).
- **No.** An angel informed Mary that God, via the Holy Spirit, was the father of her child (LUK 1:34-35); therefore, Joseph's genealogy is irrelevant. Mary's bloodline (LUK 1:5; 1:36; 2:5) indicated that she was a Levite, whereas David descended from Judah.

When did Jesus live, with respect to the time of Abraham?

- **40 generations later**, as explained in a genealogy (MAT 1:2-16).
- **55 generations later**, as explained in a genealogy (LUK 3:23-38).
- **42 generations later**, since there 14 generations between Abraham and David, between David and the Babylonian captivity, and between the Babylonian captivity and Jesus (MAT 1:17).

Who was Joseph's father?

- **Jacob** (MAT 1:16).
- **Heli** (LUK 3:23).

Was Joseph the biological father of Jesus Christ?

- **Yes.** Jesus was “made of the seed of David” (ROM 1:3).
- **No.** Mary was impregnated by the Holy Spirit before Mary and Joseph ever had a chance to have sex (MAT 1:18).
- **Maybe?** The wording of LUK 3:23 (“as was supposed”) implied that Luke was uncertain of Jesus' parentage.

When did the Annunciation occur, and to whom?

- The Annunciation was given to **Mary, prior to conception** (LUK 1:30-31).
- The Annunciation was given to **Joseph, after conception** (MAT 1:20).

When did Jesus receive the Holy Ghost?

- Jesus was imbued with the Holy Spirit **during the Annunciation, well before his birth** (LUK 1:31, 41, 67).
- Jesus was not imbued with the Holy Spirit during his lifetime; only **after his resurrection** (JOH 7:37-39).

Did Jesus' family and friends know that God had honored him?

- **Yes.** An angel appeared to personally inform Jesus' family of this fact (MAT 1:20 -21; LUK 1:26-33).
- **No.** Jesus' family thought he'd lost his mind when he claimed divinity (MAR 3:20-21). Jesus cited this skepticism as proof of his divinity, since prophets are rejected in their families, and in their hometowns (MAR 6:4).

When did Jesus become the Messiah?

- **At the moment of his conception** (LUK 1:35).
- **At the moment of his birth** (LUK 2:11).
- **After his baptism** (ACT 1:22).
- **During the moment of his resurrection** (ACT 2:36).
- **After his resurrection** (ACT 13:33, ROM 1:3).

When was Jesus born?

- **Between 37-4 BCE**, during the reign of King Herod (MAT 2:1).
- **Between 6-7 CE**, when Cyrenius (Quirinius) was governor of Syria (LUK 2:1, 7).

Where was Jesus born?

- **In Bethlehem** (MAT 2:1).
- **In Galilee** (JOH 7:41-42).

What was Jesus' hometown?

- Jesus' home was in **Capernaum** (MAR 2:1).
- Jesus was born in **Bethlehem, in Judea** (MAT 2:1). Judea is Jesus' "native place" (JOH 4:3, 43-44).
- Jesus grew up in **Nazareth, in Galilee** (LUK 4:14-16, 24).

What was the city of David?

- **Zion** (2SAM 5:7; 1KIN 8:1; 1CHR 11:5; 2CHR 5:2).
- **Jerusalem** (2KIN 14:20).
- **Bethlehem** (LUK 2:4, 11).

Was John the Baptist born before Jesus?

- **Yes.** John the Baptist was born 6 months before Jesus' conception (LUK 1:13, 24, 26-27, 31).
- **No.** John claims that Jesus came before him (JOH 1:30). Jesus confirms this by saying that he came before Abraham (JOH 8:58).

Did Herod kill all of the young children in Bethlehem?

- **Yes.** Herod ordered the deaths of all children in the greater Bethlehem area who were under age 2 (MAT 2:16).
- **No.** Since John the Baptist (LUK 3:2-3) was born 6 months prior to the conception of Jesus (LUK 1:13, 24, 26-27, 31), he should have been among the slain — yet he survived.

Where did John the Baptist baptized people?

- **In the River Jordan** (MAT 3:4; MAR 1:9).
- **At Bethabara/Bethany** (JOH 1:28).

Where did Joseph, Mary and Jesus go after Jesus' birth?

- **They fled to Egypt**, where they remained until King Herod's death (MAT 2:14-15).
- **They traveled to Jerusalem**, to have Jesus named and circumcised, and for Mary to receive the mandated post-childbirth purification. Afterward, they returned to Galilee, and settled in Nazareth (LUK 2:21-22, 39).

Was John the Baptist really Elijah/Elias, who had returned to Earth?

- **Yes.** Jesus taught his disciples that John the Baptist was secretly Elias, who had returned to Earth (MAT 11:13-14; 17:12-13).
- **No.** When directly questioned by the Levite priests, John the Baptist denied being the Christ, Elias, or a prophet (JOH 1:19-21).

Were the Pharisees baptized by John?

- **Yes.** The Pharisees attended John's baptisms (MAT 3:7), where he gladly received them (MAT 3:11).
- **No.** The Bible explicitly states that the Pharisees were unbaptized (LUK 7:29-30).

Who baptized Jesus, and when?

- Jesus was baptized by **John the Baptist in the River Jordan** (MAR 1:9) **prior to John's arrest** (MAR 1:14).
- Jesus was baptized by **an anonymous person, when John the Baptist was imprisoned** (LUK 3:19-22)

Had John the Baptist and his disciples heard of the Holy Ghost?

- **Definitively yes.** All four gospels unanimously agree that John baptized Jesus with the Holy Ghost (MAT 3:11, MAR 1:8, LUK 3:16, JOH 1:33).
- **No.** Paul met people who had received John's baptisms in Ephesus, and they were ignorant of the very concept of a Holy Ghost (ACT 19:1).

Where did Jesus go after his baptism?

- After his baptism, (MAR 1:9) **Jesus was called into the wilderness**, where he remained for 40 days (MAR1:11-13).
- **Jesus went to Galilee** (JOH 1:43) the day after his baptism (JOH 1:32)

When did Jesus begin his ministry?

- **Before John the Baptist's imprisonment.** Jesus began his ministry (JOH 2:11) by scourging the moneychangers and flipping their tables (JOH 2:15), which occurred before John's imprisonment (JOH 3:22-24).
- **After John the Baptist's imprisonment.** Hearing the news of John the Baptist's imprisonment (MAT 4:12) is what provoked Jesus to start his ministry in the first place (MAT 4:17).

Smiting Shepherds

Did John the Baptist know Jesus prior to his baptism?

- **Yes.** John the Baptist knew Jesus' reputation, which is why he felt that he did not have the authority to baptize Jesus (MAT 3:13-14). However, Jesus convinced John to perform the baptism anyway. (MAT 3:15-16)
- **No,** and the details are sketchy:
 - John the Baptist did not know Jesus — or that he was the messiah — prior to either Jesus' baptism (JOH 1:32) or John's imprisonment (JON 3:24)
 - John the Baptist did not know Jesus, or if he was divine, even after baptizing him. John learned about Jesus' divinity after he was imprisoned, when John sent his disciples to ask Jesus if he was the messiah (MAT 11:1-3).

Who were the Twelve Apostles?

The Twelve Apostles							
#	Name	MAT 10:2-4	MAR 3:16-19	LUK 6:13-16	JOH 21:2	ACT 1:13	GAL
1	Andrew	X	X	X		X	
2	Bartholomew	X	X	X		X	
3	James Alphaeus	X	X	X		X	
4	James (Jesus' brother)						X
5	James Zebedee	X	X	X	X	X	
6	John Zebedee	X	X	X	X	X	
7	Judas (James' brother)			X		X	
8	Judas Iscariot (Simon's son)	X	X	X	X		
9	Judas (not Iscariot)			X	X		
10	Labbaeus Theaddeus	X	X				
11	Levi Alphaeus, the Publican		X	X			
12	Matthew, the Publican	X	X	X			
13	Nathanael of Cana				X		
14	Nicodemus (?)				?		
15	Philip	X	X	X	X	X	
16	Simon Peter	X	X	X	X	X	X
17	Simon the Cannanite	X	X				
18	Simon Zelotes			X		X	
19	Thomas Didymus	X	X	X	X	X	

Where was the first place that the devil took Jesus to?

- **The pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem** (MAT 4:5).
- **To a high mountain top** (LUK 4:5).

How did Simon Peter learn that Jesus was the Christ?

- **From God** (MAT 16:15-17).
- **From his brother, Andrew** (JOH 1:40-41).

When did Jesus call upon Simon and Andrew?

- **After** (MAR 1:16-18) **John's imprisonment.** (MAR 1:14)
- **Prior to** (JOH 1:40-24) **John's imprisonment** (JOH 3:24).

When did Simon and Andrew begin to follow Jesus?

- **As Jesus walked by them**, at the Sea of Galilee (MAR 1:16-18).
- **After Jesus filled their ships with fish** at Lake Gennesaret, which was another name for the Sea of Galilee (LUK 5:1-11).
- **After they spent a day with him at Bethabara** (JOH 1:28, 35, 39-42).

Where was Simon and Andrew's home?

- **In Capernaum** (MAR 1:21).
- **In Bethsaida** (JOH 1:44).

Where did Jesus rename Simon?

- **At Caesarea Philippi** (MAT 16:13, 18).
- **At Capernaum** (MAR 2:1; 3:13, 16).
- **In "a certain city"** (LUK 5:12; 6:12-14).
- **At Bethbara** (JOH 1:28, 41-42).

Where did Jesus preach his first sermon? Who was the audience?

- **Jesus preached to the multitudes from atop a mountain**; thus, the "Sermon on the Mount" (MAT 5:1; 7:28-29)
- **Jesus preached privately to his disciples** (LUK 6:20) **while they stood on a plain** (LUK 6:17).

When Did Jesus deliver the Sermon on the Mount?

- **Before** (MAT 5:1-11) **healing Peter's mother-in-law** (MAT 8:14-15).
- **After** (LUK 6:20:23) **healing Peter's mother-in-law** (LUK 4:38).

To whom did Jesus teach the Lord's Prayer?

- **To the multitudes** (MAT 5:1).
- **Only to his disciples** (LUK 11:1).

Smiting Shepherds

What were the Jesus' Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount?

Blessed are...		
#	MAT 5:3-11	LUK 6:20-23
1	The poor in spirit	The poor
2	They that mourn	Those who hunger now
3	The meek	Those who weep now
4	They who hunger and thirst for righteousness	Those who are hated, shunned, reproached and cast out for Christ's sake
5	The merciful	
6	The pure in heart	
7	The peacemakers	
8	Those persecuted for righteousness' sake	
9	Those who are reviled and persecuted for Christ's sake	

Did Jesus want others to know that he was the Messiah?

- **No.** Jesus explicitly told his disciples not to tell people that he was the Christ, and that it should be a secret (MAT 16:20; MAR 8:29-30; LUK 9:20-21), because he knew that the Pharisees were out to get him (MAT 12:14-16).
- **Maybe?** Jesus was proclaimed to be the Son of God by the devils he exorcised (LUK 4:41), but since these devils were "of God" (1JOH 4:2, 15), one could invoke the Trinity to argue that Jesus knew the devil would do this as a way to tell people he was the Messiah.
- **Yes.** Jesus publicly advertised that he was the Messiah (JOH 4:25-26, 8:58, 9:35-38).

Did Jesus tell his disciples everything?

- **Yes.** Jesus told his disciples everything he had heard from God (JOH 15:15).
- **No.** Jesus withheld "many things" from his disciples, because they were not ready for them (JOH 16:12).

Who did Jesus command his disciples to teach?

- **Only to wayward Jews.** Christ ordered Peter and other disciples to avoid Gentiles entirely. (MAT 10:2, 5-6)
- **Jesus commanded his disciples to "teach all nations"** (MAT 28:18-19). Peter made it a point to seek out and teach the Gentiles (ACT 15:7).

Did Jesus require the testimony of witnesses?

- **No.** Jesus has no need for man's testimony (JOH 5:33-34).
- **Yes.** Jesus requires witnesses to vouch for him (JOH 15:27).

Did Christ extend his message to the Samaritans?

- **Yes.** Jesus was explicitly stated to be extremely popular among the Samaritans (LUK 9:52; JOH 4:39-41). Phillip later spread the gospel to Samaria (ACT 8:5).
- **No.** Jesus explicitly told his disciples to avoid Gentiles and Samaritans, and that they should stick to “the lost sheep of Israel” (MAT 10:5-6).

Was Jesus well-received by the Samaritans?

- **Yes.** When Jesus went to rest at the Samaritan village, he wound up staying for two days, because he was so sought after (JOH 4:39-40).
- **No.** Jesus tried to stay at a Samaritan village while traveling to Jerusalem, but “they did not receive him” (LUK 9:51-3).

What did Jesus tell his disciples to bring on their journey?

- Jesus explicitly told his disciples that **they only needed shoes and staves** for their journey (MAR 6:7-9).
- Jesus explicitly told his disciples not to bring shoes or staves for their journey; **they required absolutely nothing** (MAT 10:5, 9-10; LUK 9:3).

Did Jesus perform miracles besides those explicitly listed in the Book of John?

- **Yes.** Jesus reportedly performed many other miracles (JOH 20:30; ACT 2:22).
- **No.** Jesus performed no miracles besides those listed in the Book of John. Jesus was put off by everyone seeking signs from above, and called for a moratorium on displays of divinity for the remainder of his generation (MAR 8:12).
- **Not yet.** However, Jesus will usher in the Second Coming with a grand, unmistakable display of divine power (JOE 2:30-31; MAT 24:29-33; MAR 13:24-29).

Did Herod want to kill John the Baptist?

- **Yes.** Herod feared John because he was considered to be a prophet, and could rally crowds of people (MAT 14:5).
- **No.** Herod was reluctant to kill John, because he enjoyed his company (MAR 6:20).

What did Herod think of Jesus?

- **Herod was the first to think that Jesus was a resurrected John the Baptist** (MAT 14:1-2; MAR 6:16).
- **Herod heard rumors that John the Baptist had resurrected, but was not convinced that this was Jesus** (LUK 9:7, 9).

Did Jesus baptize people?

- **Yes.** Jesus baptized his disciples in Judea (JOH 3:22-26).
- **No.** The Bible explicitly states that Jesus did not baptize others, though his disciples did (JOH 4:2).

Who asked Jesus to help the centurion's servant?

- **The centurion himself** (MAT 8:5-8).
- **Jewish elders**, acting on the centurion's behalf (LUK 7:2-3).

Why did Jesus perform miracles?

- **Jesus performed miracles out of compassion.** He used his power simply because he wished to alleviate the suffering of others (MAT 9:27; MAR 5:19, 41-42).
- **Jesus performed miracles to convince others of his divinity** (JOH 4:48, 20:30-31; ACT 2:22).

When did Jesus calm the storm?

- Jesus calmed the sea (MAT 8:26) **before he called the publican** (MAT 9:9) and before praising John the Baptist (MAT 11:11).
- Jesus calmed the sea (LUK 8:24) **after he called the publican** (LUK 5:27-28) and before praising John the Baptist (LUK 7:24, 26-27).

Are miracles proof of a divine mission?

- **Yes.** Miracles provide a basis for belief:
 - The Israelites feared and believed in both God, and his servant, Moses, simply because of the wondrous feats they performed to defeat the Egyptians (EXO 7:10-12; 8:7; 14:31).
 - When questioned by John, Jesus cited the testimony of those he healed as evidence of his divinity (MAT 11:2-5; JOH 5:36; HEB 2:4).
 - The common people accepted Jesus' miracles as proof of divinity, and sought him as a teacher for this reason (JOH 3:2).
- **No.** Miracles, signs, and other wonders are the hallmarks of false prophets who are trying establish credibility. These Satanic people (LUK 11:19; 2THE 2:9) will only deceive you (REV 13:13-14) and turn you away from God (DEU 13:1-3). Likewise, anyone who performs miracles and claims to be the Christ is really just one of many false Christs who appear from time to time (MAT 24:24).

What was the situation regarding the demonic possessions at Gadarenes/Gergesenes?

- **A single man came out of the tombs**, possessed by Legion. Legion begged not to be sent **into the country** (MAR 5:1-2, 9-10).
- **Two men came out of the tombs** (MAT 8:28).
- **One man came out of the city**, possessed by Legion. Legion begged not to be sent **into the deep** (LUK 8:27, 30-31).

What was the condition of Jarius' daughter when Jesus arrived?

- **She was on the brink of death** (MAR 5:23; LUK 8:42).
- **She was dead** when Jesus arrived (MAT 9:18).

What did the disciples on the ship do after Jesus walked on the water?

- **Those in the ship began to worship him** (MAT 14:33).
- **No one worshiped Jesus for this miracle**; this was so stunning that everyone forgot everything, including the recent miracle of the loaves and the fish (MAR 6:51-52).

After feeding the 5000, where did Jesus go?

- **To Gennesaret** (MAR 6:52).
- **To Capernaum** (JOH 6:13, 16-17).

When and how did Jesus cure the blind man?

- Jesus cured the blind man **at Bethsaida, by spitting on his eyes, and through the laying-of-hands** (MAR 8:22-25).
- Jesus cured the blind man **outside the temple, by anointing him with a paste of spit and clay, then telling the man to wash himself** (JOH 8:59, 9:1-6).

Whose daughter was exorcised by Jesus?

- **A Canaanite woman** (MAT 15:22).
- **A Greek woman**; specifically, a Syrophenician (MAR 7:26).

When did Jesus heal the blind? How many did he help?

- Jesus healed **a single blind man on the way to Jericho** (LUK 18:35).
- Jesus healed **two blind men on the way from Jericho** (MAT 20:29-30).

Who can cast out devils in the name of Jesus?

- **Only the disciples** were granted that power (MAR 3:14-15).
- **Anyone who believes in Jesus' name** has this power (MAR 16:17).

Can Jesus' disciples heal sicknesses?

- **Yes.** The Bible explicitly states that Jesus "gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease" (MAT 10:1).
- **No.** "I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him" (MAT 17:16).

Why did the disciples fail when they tried to cast out a demon?

- **They did not have enough faith to do so** (MAT 17:19-20).
- **They did not pray and fast** (MAR 9:28-29).

Did Jesus' disciples fast?

- **Yes.** Jesus instructed his disciples on how to fast without becoming a hypocrite in the process (MAT 6:16-17).
- **No.** Jesus was questioned about his unusual practice of not fasting, since fasting was a common practice among the Pharisees and John's disciples (MAR 2:18).

How did Jesus react to Peter at Caesarea Philippi?

- **He honored him.** Jesus gave Peter his new name, and made him his most trusted lieutenant. Christ's entire plan on earth was left to Peter to carry out (MAT 16:18).
- **He chastised him,** and tried to drive him out, just like he was a demon (MAT 16:23).

What was Jesus' message?

- **Christ advocated violent revolution,** and that "the kingdom of heaven suffered violence, and the violent take it by force" (MAT 11:12). Jesus encouraged everyone to arm themselves, even if it meant selling the clothes they were wearing (LUK 22:36). Jesus made a scourge, and used it to assault people before flipping the moneychanger's tables (JOH 2:15).
- **Christ advocated non-violence** (MAT 5:5) **and passive resistance** (MAT 5:39), which would render weapons unnecessary (MAT 26:52).

When did Jesus prophesize his passion, with respect to the transfiguration?

- **6 days afterward** (MAT 17:1-2).
- **8 days afterward** (LUK 9:22).

When did Jesus start flipping tables?

- Jesus was explicitly stated to have attacked the money changers **at the beginning of his ministry** (JOH 2:11-15).
- Jesus' attack on the money changers occurred **after smiting the fig tree** for failing to bear fruit (MAR 11:15). This had to have occurred **towards the end of his ministry**, because the table-flipping incident that was what finally scared the Pharisees into plotting against Jesus (MAR 11:18).
- The table flipping happened on the day Jesus entered Jerusalem (MAT 21:10-12), **before smiting the fig tree** (MAT 21:12).

Could Jesus produce food when needed?

- **Yes.** Jesus had the power to miraculously produce enough food to feed 5,000 men (MAR 6:41-44).
- **No.** Jesus condemned a fig tree for failing to produce fruit at his command (MAR 11:12-14).

How long did it take for the fig tree to die?

- When Jesus smote the fig tree, it **withered and died instantly** (MAT 21:19-20).
- When Jesus smote the fig tree (MAR 11:13-15), it **didn't die until the next day** (MAR 11:19-20).

Where was Mary and Martha's home located?

- **In Bethany** (JOH 11:18-20).
- **Somewhere between** (LUK 10:38) **Samaria** (LUK 9:51-53) **and Jericho** (LUK 18:35). Jesus did not arrive in Bethany until after (LUK 19:29) visiting Mary and Martha.

Who scolded whom for anointing Jesus? Where and when did this take place?

- **An unnamed woman anointed Jesus** (MAT 26:6-7) only to be **scolded by the disciples** (MAT 26:8-9).
- **An unnamed woman anointed Jesus's head at Simon the Leper's house** (MAR 14:3), only to be scolded **by some people** (MAR 14:4-5). This took place **after Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem** (MAR 11:7-11).
- **An unnamed woman anointed Jesus' feet at a Pharisee's house** (LUK 7:36-38).
- **Mary anointed Jesus' feet at Lazarus' house** (JOH 12:1-3). **Only Judas Iscariot had a problem with this** (JOH 12:4-5). This took place **prior to Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem** (JOH 12:12-15).

Did the disciples ask Jesus where he was going?

- **Yes.** Both Simon Peter (JOH 13:36) and Thomas (JOH 14:5) asked, but Christ didn't answer.
- **No.** Jesus chastised his disciples for never asking where he was going (JOH 16:5).

How many times does Jesus go to Jerusalem?

- **Only once** (MAT 21:10, MAR 11:11).
- **Three times:**
 - Once as a 12 year-old with his parents (LUK 2:42), then later with Satan (LUK 4:9), and then with his disciples (LUK 19:28).
 - After Passover (JOH 2:13), after a feast (JOH 5:1), and again during another feast (JOH 7:9, 14).

How did Jesus ride into Jerusalem?

- **On a colt** (MAR 11:7, LUK 19:35), provided by his disciples (MAR 11:2, LUK 19:30).
- **On a young donkey** that he found (JOH 12:14).
- **On both a donkey and a colt.** (MAT 21:6-7), provided by his disciples (MAT 21:2).

How did the crowds in Jerusalem respond to Jesus?

- **They proclaimed Jesus**, covering his path with fine garments as they sung praises (MAR 11:7-11).
- **They condemned Jesus**, and cheered for his crucifixion with such enthusiasm that even Pilate thought it was absurd. Pilate only released Barabbas and crucified Jesus to appease these crowds (MAR 15:12-15).

When was the first communion and Last Supper take place?

- The first communion took place **on Passover** (MAT 26:20, 26-28; MAR 14:22-23; LUK 22:16-20), **during the Last Supper** (MAT 26:19; MAR 14:12, 16-17, 22; LUK 22:13-15).
- The first communion (JOH 6:54, 56, 59) took place **prior to the Last Supper** (JOH 13:1-2, 29), which occurred **before Passover** (JOH 18:28).

Was Jesus aware of Judas' betrayal?

- **Yes.** Jesus called Judas out on his betrayal as it happened (LUK 22:47).
- **No.** Jesus did not suspect anything (MAT 26:49-50).

When did Jesus tell his disciples he would be betrayed?

- **Before the first communion** (MAR 14:18, 22).
- **After the first communion** (LUK 22:19-21).

When did Satan enter Judas?

- **Before the Last Supper** (LUK 22:3-4, 7).
- **After the Last Supper** (JOH 13:3-4, 26-27).

When did Judas Iscariot betray Jesus?

- Judas betrayed Jesus (MAR 14:10-11) **before the Last Supper** (MAR 14:22).
- Judas betrayed Jesus (JOH 13:30) **after the Last Supper** (JOH 13:26-27).

What in what order was the first communion offered?

- **Bread was served before wine** (MAR 14:22-23).
- **Wine was served before bread** (LUK 22:17-19).

Where did Jesus predict Peter's denial?

- **While standing on Mt. Olives** (MAT 26:20, 30, 34).
- **During the Last Supper** (LUK 22:19, 34, 39).

How did the chief priests identify Jesus prior to his arrest?

- **The chief priests paid Judas to kiss Jesus, and only Jesus, to single him out from the crowd to arrest** (MAR 14:43-44).
- **The chief priests already knew who Jesus was** after he barged into the temple (MAR 11:15, 17-18).

How many times did Jesus leave his disciples to pray on Mt. Olives?

- **Once** (LUK 22:39-47).
- **Three times** (MAR 14:34, 41).

Did Jesus accept his fate with courage?

- **Yes.** "He [Jesus] humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (PHIL 2:8).
- **No.** Jesus begged God for a way to escape the crucifixion, but God refused (JOH 12:27-28). During the crucifixion, Jesus was afraid, and he cried the entire time (HEB 5:7).

Were Jesus' prayers at Gethsemane identical?

- **Yes,** Jesus "prayed, and spake the same words" (MAR 14:39).
- **No.** Jesus prayed two separate prayers (MAT 26:39, 42), and later repeated the second one (MAT 26:44).

Were there witnesses to Jesus' prayer on the Mount of Olives?

- **No. Jesus was alone,** as demonstrated by the fact that Jesus found that all of his disciples were asleep when he returned from his prayers (LUK 22:45).
- **Yes. Since the Bible quotes what Jesus spoke** in his prayer on the Mount of Olives (MAT 26:39, 42; MAR 14:36; LUK 22:41-42), **someone had to witness this event in order to record his words.**

Does Judas identify Jesus to the authorities?

- **Yes.** Judas identified Jesus, by being the one that he kissed (MAT 26:49, MAR 14:45).
- **Not really.** Judas tried to identify Jesus with a kiss, but Jesus called him out on his plan before he could do so (LUK 22:47-48).
- **No.** Although Judas told the authorities Jesus' whereabouts (JOH 18:1-2), Judas never singled him out. When asked, Jesus freely identified himself (JOH 18:4-5).

When was Jesus taken away?

- **Before someone amputated the ear of high priest's servant with a sword** (MAR 14:46-47).
- **After someone amputated the ear of high priest's servant with a sword** (LUK 22:50, 54).

Are the 30 pieces of silver and the Potter's Field significant?

- **Yes,** because this fulfilled one of Jeremy's (Jeremiah's) messianic prophecies (MAT 27:9-10).
- **No,** because Jeremiah made no such prophecy. This "prophecy" is a paraphrase of one of Zechariah's statements (ZEC 11:12-13).

What happened to Judas Iscariot?

- **Judas rejected the silver**, and threw it down in the temple. **He later hung himself** (MAT 27:5). Since the silver was considered "blood money," the Pharisees could not legally deposit it into their treasury. After consulting with their lawyer, the Pharisees used the money to buy a clay mine (a "potter's field"), which doubled as a graveyard because it was uncultivable land with deep holes in it. This place became known as the "field of blood," since it was purchased with blood money (MAT 27:6-8).
- **Judas kept the silver**, and purchased the potter's field for himself. **He died shortly thereafter, when he was disemboweled after he tripped and fell on a rock in his new field** This place became known as the "field of blood," as a reference to the strange, gory death which occurred there (ACT 1:18-19).

Who did Jesus' captor first take him to?

- **Caiaphas**, the high priest (MAT 26:57).
- **Annas**, Caiaphas' father-in-law (JOH 18:13).

When did Jesus' trial take place?

- Jesus' trial (MAT 26:59, 65-66) **took place at night**; the Bible explicitly states that the crucifixion took place the next morning (MAT 27:1-2).
- Jesus' trial took place **early in the morning** (LUK 22:66, 71).

Was Lazarus really dead?

- **No**. Lazarus was not dead, just incredibly ill (JOH 11:3-4).
- **Yes**. Jesus explicitly stated that Lazarus was dead (JOH 11:14-15).

Did Pilate try and condemn Jesus?

- **Yes**. Pilate arrested and tried Jesus (JOH 18:12-35), and later issued a death sentence (JOH 19:15-16).
- **No**. The high priests, scribes, and elders assembled (MAT 26:57), convicted Jesus of the crime of blasphemy, and sentenced him to death (MAT 26:65-66).
- **Yes and no**. The high priests, scribes, and elders assembled (LUK 22:66), and convicted Jesus of the crime of blasphemy (LUK 22:71), but they did not sentence him. The council brought the matter to Pilate (LUK 23:1-2), and stated that Jesus claimed to be a king, which was a capital offense under Roman law. Pilate was then required to issue the death penalty (LUK 23:1-24).

What crime was Jesus officially charged with?

- **Blasphemy** (MAT 26:65).
- **Claiming kingship** (JOH 19:12).
- **Claiming kingship as a part of a tax fraud scheme** (LUK 23:2).

When asked, did Jesus tell the high priest that he was the Christ?

- **Yes.** Jesus explicitly told the high priest that he was, in fact, the Christ (MAR 14:61-62).
- **Not exactly.** While Jesus did not claim to be the Christ, he did not deny it either (MAT 26:63-64).
- **No.** Jesus had no need to make such a claim, and told the high priest to “ask them who heard me” (JOH 18:19, 21).

How did Pilate feel about Jesus?

- **Pilate found no fault in Jesus** (LUK 23:4) and “sought to release him”, but was goaded into killing him instead (JOH 19:12).
- **Pilate was part of a global conspiracy to kill Jesus** (ACT 4:26 -27).

What did Jesus say to Pilate during his trial?

- **Jesus remained silent**, and put forth no defense (MAT 27:11-14).
- **Jesus claimed to be a king, but his kingdom was “not of this world.”** Jesus did not claim to be the king of the Jews (JOH 18:33-37).

Can Jesus testify about himself?

- **Yes.** “Jesus answered and said unto them, ‘Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true...’” (JOH 8:14).
- **No.** “If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true” (JOH 5:31).

When was Jesus scourged?

- Jesus was explicitly shown to be scourged (JOH 19:1) **prior to receiving his death sentence** (JOH 19:15-16).
- Jesus was explicitly shown to be scourged **after sentencing** (MAR 15:15).

Who is responsible for the death of Jesus?

- **The Jews.** Since all Jewish people played a role in — and are thus responsible for — the death of Jesus Christ, they now suffer a “blood debt,” whereby all Jews are equally and in parallel guilty of this crime for all eternity (MAT 27:25).
- **The chief priests** came up with the idea, who then passed it along to Pilate (LUK 23:23-24).
- **It was Pilate’s idea**, and he asked the chief priests for their consent (JOH 19:15-16).
- **The princes of this world** are responsible (1COR 2:8).
- **Jesus** accepted the responsibility for his own death (JOH 10:17-18).

Were the Jews legally justified in killing Jesus?

- **Yes.** Claiming to be the Son of God was a capital offense under Jewish law (JOH 19:7).
- **No.** When asked, the Jews claimed their legal system explicitly forbade the death penalty (JOH 18:31).

Who dressed Jesus prior to his execution, and in what?

- **Herod's soldiers did the dressing** (LUK 23:11).
- **Pilate's soldiers dressed Jesus in purple robe** (JOH 19:1-2).
- **The governor's soldiers dressed Jesus in a scarlet robe** (MAT 27:27-28).

Who carried the cross?

- **Jesus was explicitly stated to have carried his own cross** (JOH 19:16-17).
- **Simon the Cyrenian carried the cross** for Jesus (MAR 15:21).

How did Jesus die?

- **Jesus was slain, then hung on a tree** (ACT 5:30).
- **Jesus died on the cross** (MAT 27:40).

Are those who hang on a tree cursed?

- **Yes.** Anyone who hangs on a tree is intrinsically cursed (DEU 21:23; GAL 3:13).
- **No,** because Jesus was hung from a tree (ACT 5:30).

When was Jesus crucified?

- **Before the Passover meal** (JOH 18:28; 19:14, 23).
- **After the Passover meal** (LUK 22:13-16).
- Jesus was explicitly stated to have been crucified **at 3:00 PM** (MAR 15:25).
- Jesus must have crucified **late in the day**, since Pilate's trial took place around 6:00 PM (JOH 19:14-18).

What was written on the sign above Christ's head?

- **"This is Jesus the King of the Jews"** (MAT 27:37).
- **"The King of the Jews"** (MAR 15:26).
- **"This is the King of the Jews"** (LUK 23:38).
- **"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews"** (JOH 19:19).

How many thieves reviled Jesus on the cross?

- **2** (MAR 15:32).
- **1** (LUK 23:39-40).

Where were the women during the crucifixion?

- **They stood by the cross** (JOH 19:25-26).
- **They watched the crucifixion from afar** (MAT 27:55).

Did Jesus receive vinegar on the cross?

- **Yes.** After receiving the vinegar, he said, "It is finished," and died (JOH 19:30).
- **No.** Jesus did not receive the wine/myrrh cocktail, as he died before it was offered (MAR 15:23).

What were Jesus' last words?

- **"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"** (MAT 27:46).
- **"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit"** (LUK 23:46).
- **"It is finished"** (JOH 19:30).
- **Nothing, *per se*.** He just "cried with a loud voice" (MAR 15:37).

When was the temple curtain torn in half?

- **After Jesus died** (MAR 15:37-38).
- **Before Jesus died** (LUK 23:45-46).

How did Joseph of Arimathaea acquire Jesus' body?

- **Joseph of Arimathaea boldly asked Pilate for Jesus' body while he still hung on the cross.** Pilate complied upon hearing the news of Jesus's death (MAR 15:43-45).
- **Joseph of Arimathaea asked Pilate for Jesus' body in secret, after he died,** because he feared retribution from the Jews (JOH 19:33, 38).

Who buried Jesus?

- **Joseph of Arimathaea buried him alone** (MAR 15:45-46).
- **Joseph of Arimathaea buried Jesus with Nicodemus' help** (JOH 19:38-42).
- **The rulers of Jerusalem buried Jesus** (ACT 13:27-29).

When did the woman (or women) arrive at the sepulcher?

- **Before sunrise** (JOH 20:1).
- **At sunrise** (MAT 28:1; MAR 16:2).
- **After sunrise** (LUK 24:1).

Why did the women go to Jesus' tomb?

- They wanted **to anoint Jesus' body** (MAR 16:1).
- They wanted **to see the tomb** (MAT 28:1).
- They went to the tomb **for no particular reason** (JOH 20:1).

Who visited the tomb?

- **Mary Magdalene went alone** (JOH 20:1).
- **Mary Magdalene and “the other Mary”** (MAT 28:1).
- **Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother of James), and Salome** (MAR 16:1).
- **Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother of James), Joanna, and other women** (LUK 24:10).

When was Jesus' body anointed?

- Jesus was **anointed prior to internment** in the tomb (JOH 19:38-42).
- Jesus's body was **interred** (MAR 15:45-47) **before being anointed**. The women went to the tomb with the intention of anointing the body (MAR 16:1-2).

Was the tomb was open when the women arrived?

- **Yes**, it was already opened when they arrived (MAR 16:4; LUK 24:1-3; JOH 20:1-2).
- **No**. The tomb was closed when they arrived, and they witnessed an angel rolling the stone aside (MAT 28:1-3).

Were there guards at Jesus' tomb?

- **Yes**. The tomb had to be guarded, because the angel terrified some guards (MAT 28:4).
- **No**. When the women found that the tomb was open, they asked each other why; because there were no guards to ask (MAR 16:2-6).

Were the women told what had happened to Jesus' body?

- **Yes**. The women were explicitly told that Jesus had risen (MAR 16:5-6).
- **No**. The women were convinced Jesus was the victim of graverobbers (JOH 20:2).

Who did the women see at the tomb?

- **“An angel” outside the tomb**, sitting on the stone door (MAT 28:1-4).
- **“A young man” sitting inside** the tomb (MAR 16:5).
- **“Two men” standing inside** the tomb (LUK 24:3-4).
- **“Two angels” sitting inside** the tomb (JOH 19:40).

Did the women tell the disciples about the empty tomb?

- **Yes**, but the details are sketchy:
 - They quickly informed **all** of the disciples (MAT 28:8).
 - They only told a **group of 11** disciples. The other one was told later (LUK 24:9).
 - They **only talked to Simon Peter and another disciple** (JOH 20:2).
- **No**. The women said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid (MAR 16:8).

Who raised Jesus from the dead?

- **God did** (ACT 2:32).
- **The Holy Spirit did** (ROM 8:11).
- **Jesus resurrected himself** (JOH 2:19-21).

Where did Jesus first appear?

- **At the tomb** (JOH 20:11, 14).
- **Near the tombs** (MAT 28:8-9).
- **On the road to Emmaus** (LUK 24:13-15).

Who was the first to see the resurrected Jesus?

- **Mary Magdalene** (MAR 16:9).
- **Two of his disciples**, though it is unclear which two (LUK 24:13-15).
- **Peter** (1COR 15:5-8).

How did Mary Magdalene react to the risen Jesus?

- **She felt a combination of “fear and great joy,”** and ran off to tell the other disciples. **She recognized Jesus and worshiped at his feet** (MAT 28:8-9).
- Mary ran off at the sight of the open tomb, to get other disciples. Mary only met Jesus later, when she returned. **She cried from sadness and grief, because Jesus was a probable victim of graverobbers. She was unaware that she met Jesus** (JOH 20:1-15).

Did Jesus tell the apostles that he would die and be resurrected?

- **Yes.** Jesus outlined the resurrection story to the apostles ahead of time (LUK 18:33).
- **No.** Jesus alluded to the resurrection, but he never directly explained it to the apostles (JOH 13:36). Although prophets mentioned the resurrection, the apostles were laborers who did not study the scriptures (JOH 20:9).

Where did Jesus first appear to his eleven remaining apostles?

- **In Galilee** (MAT 28:16-17).
- **In Jerusalem** (LUK 24:33, 36-37).

How did the resurrected Jesus appear to his disciples?

- **In his corporeal body, exactly as he was in life.** Jesus explicitly pointed out that he was not a spirit, and remained comprised of flesh and bone (LUK 24:39).
- **Jesus appeared “in another form”** (MAR 16:12) since “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1COR 15:50). Since Jesus was now “free from the law of sin and death” he could no longer be comprised of flesh, which is intrinsically sinful. Therefore, after the resurrection he appeared **in an alternate form which was “in the likeness of sinful flesh”** (ROM 8:1-3).

Did the disciples believe in Jesus' resurrection?

- **Yes.** The disciples believed in the resurrection, and they wanted in on it (MAR 10:34-37).
- **No.** The disciples did not initially believe in the resurrection (MAR 16:11) because it sounded like a tall tale (LUK 24:11).

How did the disciples react to the resurrected Christ?

- **They worshiped him** (MAT 28:9), even though some doubted what had happened (MAT 28:17).
- **They were utterly terrified** (LUK 24:36-37).
- **They were glad** (JOH 20:19-20).

How many of his apostles did Jesus visit after his resurrection?

- **Only to eleven of them** (MAR 16:14), because Thomas Didymus was elsewhere (JOH 20:24).
- **Peter at first, and then the rest of the twelve** (1COR 15:5).

Did Jesus allow his believers to touch him before the ascension?

- **Yes** (LUK 24:39). The disciples held his feet (MAT 28:9), and Thomas was allowed to stick his fingers into Jesus' spear wound to prove that it was really him (JOH 20:26-27).
- **No.** Jesus refused to let anyone touch him (JOH 20:16-17).

Where did Jesus go immediately after resurrecting?

- **He ascended into Heaven** (JOH 20:17).
- **He went to Galilee** (MAT 28:10).

Where did the resurrected Jesus tell his disciples to go?

- **To Galilee** (MAT 28:10).
- **Nowhere**; he wanted them to remain in Jerusalem (LUK 24:49).

Was Jesus the first to rise from the dead?

- **Yes** (1COR 15:20). Christ is "the first that should rise from the dead," (ACT 26:23) and the "first begotten of the dead" (REV 1:5).
- **No.** Others were resurrected before Jesus; he was just one of many:
 - Elijah restored the dead to life (1KIN 17:22-23; 2KIN 4:32-35).
 - The deceased Elisha resurrected the corpses that touched his bones (2KIN 13:21).
 - Jesus resurrected a maid (MAT 9:23-25), a young man (LUK 7:12 -15), and most famously, Lazarus (JOH 11:43).
- **Maybe?** The Witch of Endor brought Samuel back from the dead (1SAM 28:14-15). However, since Samuel's grave was in Ramah (1SAM 28:3), this likely referred to channeling his spirit in a séance.

When did Jesus ascend?

- **The day after the Sabbath** (MAR 16:9-19; LUK 23:54-55; 24:1-3, 13, 15, 51).
- **9 days after the Sabbath** (JOH 19:31; 20:1, 17, 26; 21:1, 14).
- **40 days after the Sabbath** (ACT 1:1-3).
- **Many days after the Sabbath** (ACT 13:30-31).

From where did Jesus ascend to Heaven?

- **Galilee** (MAR 16:7).
- **Bethany** (LUK 24:50-51).
- **Mt. Olivet**, a day's journey away from Jerusalem (ACT 1:9, 12).

When was the Holy Spirit given to the apostles?

- **On Easter Sunday, prior to the ascension** (JOH 20:17-22).
- **On Pentecost** (2:1-4), **after the ascension** (ACT 1:9).

How many believers were there immediately following Jesus' ascension?

- **~120** (ACT 1:15).
- **>500** (1COR 15:4-7).

When will Jesus arise?

- Jesus would arise after **three days and three nights** (MAT 12:40).
- Jesus would arise **sometime on the third day** (MAT 20:19).
- Jesus would **wait three days, and then arise** (MAT 27:63).

When did Jesus ascend into Heaven?

- **The same day he resurrected** (LUK 23:43).
- **Three days after the resurrection** (LUK 24:21, 51).

How long did Jesus spend in his tomb?

- **3 days and 3 nights**, to emulate Jonah and the whale (MAT 12:38-40).
- **2 days and 2 nights**. He died on a Friday, and spent that night in the tomb (MAT 27:1-2, 35, 57), where he remained all of Saturday (MAT 27:1-62, 64; MAR 15:42-43; LUK 23:46; JOH 19:30), before resurrecting on Sunday morning (MAT 28:1, 6; MAR 27:1; LUK 24:1; JOH 20:1).

6.5 — Points of Contention with the Nature of Christ

Was Jesus deceitful?

- **No.** Jesus explicitly taught that deceit was evil, defiling (MAR 7:22-23), and Satanic (MAT 5:37).
- **Yes.** Jesus told his disciples that he would not go to the feast, but secretly went anyway after they left (JOH 7:6-10).

Who was Jesus' message for?

- Jesus' message was **intended for all men** (JOH 1:7; 12:32; 18:20; ACT 17:31; ROM 5:18).
- Jesus' message was **reserved for the initiated** (MAT 13:10).

Was Jesus spiteful?

- **No.** Jesus used his dying breath to ask that his killers be forgiven, since they acted out of ignorance, and not malice (LUK 23:34).
- **Yes.** Jesus cursed the innocent, as demonstrated when he miraculously and spitefully killed a fig tree for not producing fruit (MAR 11:12-14).

Did Jesus believe that you could receive all things?

- **No.** Despite his miraculous power, Jesus could not receive fruit from a barren tree (MAR 11:12-14).
- **Yes.** Jesus taught that with faith, one can have anything one desires (MAR 11:21-23).

Was Jesus humble?

- **Yes.** Jesus was "meek and lowly in heart" (MAT 11:29).
- **No.** Jesus was a *prima donna*:
 - Jesus went on about how people are not worthy of him (MAT 10:38).
 - Jesus rebuked his worshipers (MAT 15:22, 25), and openly told them that he couldn't stand their company (MAT 17:17; 9:18).
 - Jesus ordered his followers to put his needs before that of their families (LUK 14:26) and to obey his every command (JOH 15:14).

Was Jesus an angry person?

- **No.** Jesus preached against anger, stating that it was grounds for damnation (MAT 5:22).
- **Yes.** Jesus was explicitly shown to be angry (MAR 3:4-5) and verbally abusive (MAT 3:7; LUK 11:38, 40) to the Pharisees.

What was Jesus' opinion on the uncommitted?

- **"Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us"** (LUK 9:50).
- **"He that is not with me is against me"** (LUK 11:23).

Did Jesus love his enemies?

- **Yes.** Loving one's enemies (MAT 5: 44; LUK 6:27) and overcoming them through passive-aggression (MAT 5:39) were Jesus' core teachings.
- **No.** Christ explicitly stated that his enemies should be slain before him (LUK 19:26-27).

Who is Jesus the son of?

- **The Son of God** (JOH 10:36; ACT 8:37).
- **The Son of Man** (MAT 16:13; LUK 19:10).

Was Jesus the Messiah?

- **Yes.** Jesus claimed to be the messiah (LUK 4:18; JOH 4:25-26) and was accepted as such (JOH 1:41).
- **No,** because Jesus failed to fulfill the prophecies:
 - Jesus did not fulfill Isaiah's prophecy of subduing other nations (ISA 44:28, 45:1).
 - Jesus did not fulfill Isaiah's prophecy of being the harbinger of the Day of Vengeance (ISA 61:1-2). Jesus omitted this detail when he made his messianic claims, replacing it with his miracle of restoring sight to the blind (LUK 4:17-19).
 - Jesus didn't fulfill the prophecy, because he didn't assume the throne of David (LUK 1:32), as his kingdom was "not of this world (JOH 18:36)."
 - The Messiah's reason-for-being was to redeem the Israelites (LUK 2:34-28) which Jesus failed to do (LUK 24:19-21; ACT 1:6) due to his premature death (JOH 12:34).

Were there other Christs?

- **No,** because "to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him" (1COR 8:6).
- **Yes,** because there were other saviors. Cyrus is also referred to as "the Lord's anointed," i.e., the messiah (ISA 45:1).
- **Sort of,** there were other saviors, but they were also Jesus. If the bread which Jesus served at the Last Supper was truly transubstantiated, then Christ inhabits multiple bodies (MAT 26:26).

Who is the light of the world?

- **Jesus is** (JOH 9:3-5).
- **You are** (MAT 5:14).

Was Jesus perfect?

- **Yes.** Jesus was "undefiled" (HEB 7:26) and "without blemish" or other spots (1PET 1:19).
- **No.** Jesus was imperfect:
 - Jesus did not think of himself as being good (MAR 10:18).
 - The Bible states that Jesus was "made perfect" by his resurrection, which implies that he was previously imperfect (HEB 5:9).
 - Jesus' miracles had shoddy results — the blind man who Jesus healed still had poor eyesight — to the point where he thought that people were walking trees (MAR 8:23-24).

Was Jesus without sin?

- **Yes.** Jesus was able to experience all the human frailties which sin causes without experiencing sin itself (HEB 4:15).
- **Yes and no.** Jesus was originally without sin, but he was made “to be in sin” (2COR 5:21). Otherwise, he could not have died on the cross, since “the wages of sin is death” (ROM 6:23).
- **No.** If Jesus was without sin, then he would not have needed John’s baptism, which was for the repentance of sins (MAR 1:4-9). Jesus needed such a baptism, because he sinned on multiple occasions:
 - Jesus preached the earlier Commandment of “Honour thy father and mother” (MAR 10:19), yet Jesus treated Mary disrespectfully (JOH 2:3-4) and insulted her by implying that she was not blessed (LUK 11:27-28). Jesus further insulted her by denying that he had a family (MAT 12:46-50).
 - God’s Commandments explicitly prohibit coveting other’s people’s property (EXO 20:17). Despite reiterating God’s law against stealing (MAR 10:19), Jesus ordered his disciples to steal people’s animals (MAT 21:2), simply because he wanted them (MAT 21:3).
 - Abstaining from working on the Sabbath is one of God’s commandments (EXO 20:8-10). Jesus’ reluctance to obey the Sabbath marked him for termination (JOH 5:18), because his miracles were illicit, though benevolent (JOH 9:4, 6, 14).
 - It is sinful for people to remain silent when their testimony could prove someone’s innocence (LEV 5:1). While the Gospels disagree on the details, they agree that Jesus committed this sin in some form; either by remaining silent at his own trial (MAT 27:13-14), or by condemning himself by confessing (MAR 14:60-61).
 - Although he was to “love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (DEU 6:5), Jesus was convinced that God had forsaken him, and Jesus filled his dying words with this despair (MAT 27:46; MAR 15:34).
 - The Bible commands people to swear by God’s name (DEU 6:13), a practice which Jesus denounced (MAT 5:34).

Was Jesus created by God?

- **Yes.** Jesus is God’s only child (JOH 3:16).
 - God created Jesus to be **superior** the angels, and was more excellent than any of them (HEB 1:4).
 - God created Jesus to be **inferior** to the angels, so that he could be eventually killed (HEB 2:9).
- **No.** Jesus could not have been created by God, because he was God (JOH 10:30; 14:9-11). Jesus was also the Word (JOH 1:14), which “was with God, and the Word was God” (JOH 1:1).

Is Jesus the only immortal?

- **Yes.** The Bible explicitly states that Jesus Christ is the only immortal person (1TIM 6:14-16).
- **No.** Whoever participates in communion will become immortal once Christ raises them from the dead on Judgement Day (MAR 10:29-30; JOH 6:54, 10:28; ROM 6:23; 1COR 15:54; 2TIM 1:10; 1JOH 5:11).

Is Jesus omnipotent?

- **Yes.** God had granted all of his powers and abilities to Jesus (MAT 28:18; JOH 3:35).
- **No.** Jesus is not all-powerful:
 - Jesus does not have the power to determine the seating arrangements in the heavenly court, since that power is reserved for God (MAT 20:23).
 - Jesus was unable to make a barren fig tree produce fruit, to abate his hunger (MAR 11:12-14). Also, an all-powerful Jesus could have made himself immune to hunger.
 - Jesus admitted that he could do nothing himself (MAR 6:5); he only did what God was going to do anyway (JOH 5:19).

Is Jesus omniscient?

- **Yes.** “Jesus knowest all things” (JOH 16:30; 21:17) and hidden within him are “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (COL 2:2-3).
- **No.** Jesus doesn't know everything:
 - God keeps the exact date of Judgment Day a secret from everyone, including Jesus (MAR 13:32).
 - Jesus did not know that it was the bleeding woman who had touched him (LUK 8:45).
 - Jesus did not know the whereabouts of Lazarus (JOH 11:33-34).

Is Jesus omnipresent?

- **Sort of.** Jesus is anywhere where two or more gather in his name (MAT 18:20), and he is with those who teach his message “always, even unto the end of the world” (MAT 28:20).
- **No.** Jesus stated that he won't always be around (MAT 26:11), since he was going to leave to where men cannot follow (JOH 13:36; JOH 16:7, 28).

What is Jesus like?

- **Like a lion** (REV 5:5).
- **Like a lamb** (JOH 1:36).

Was Jesus like a shepherd?

- **Yes.** "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (JOH 10:11). This is a reoccurring theme (HEB 13:20; 1PET 2:25).
- **No.** Jesus is like a sheep (JOH 1:36; ACT 8:32; REV 7:14).

Was Jesus peaceful?

- **Yes.** Jesus believed that peacemakers were blessed (MAT 5:9), and he gifts his peace to others. (LUK 2:14; JOH 14:27, 16:33; ACT 10:36; 2THE 3:16).
- **No.** Jesus "came not to send peace, but a sword" (MAT 10:34). Jesus dismissed the idea of world peace, and sought to divide the world further (LUK 12:51) and break up families (MAT 10:35-36). Jesus advised his followers that if they did not own swords, they should sell all of their clothes to raise the money needed to buy a sword (LUK 22:36).

Is Jesus merciful?

- **Yes.** Jesus did not "come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (LUK 9:56), because he came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (LUK 19:10).
- **No.** The Book of Revelation is highlighted by "the wrath of the Lamb" (REV 6:16). When Christ returns, he will "judge and make war" (REV 19:11), wear clothes dipped in blood, smite nations with words alone, and rule with an iron rod and the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God (REV 19:13-15).

Does Jesus change?

- **Yes!** Jesus obviously changed, because he was a lowly construction worker who was a previously-glorious being who was with, and who also was, the immortal God of all-creation (JOH 17:1-5).
- **Yes.** Jesus obviously changed because he grew from a baby (LUK 2:7) into a man (LUK 2:52).
- **No.** "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (HEB 13:8).

Will Christ's Kingdom end?

- **Yes.** Christ's kingdom will eventually come to an end (1COR 15:24-25, 28).
- **No.** Christ's kingdom "shall not pass away" (DAN 7:14), and last forever (HEB 1:8) without end (LUK 1:33).

Was Jesus an ascetic?

- **Yes.** Jesus was an ascetic because he:
 - Went on a 40-day religious retreat into the wilderness (MAT 4:1-2).
 - Had no regard for treasures (MAT 6:19), his life, food, drink, his body, or his clothing (MAT 6:25) and he had nowhere to lay his head (MAT 8:20).
 - Advised his disciples to preach without any pocket money, baggage, extra clothing, shoes, or walking sticks, and to work for food (MAT 10:7-10).
- **No.** Unlike the Pharisees, the disciples did not fast (MAT 9:10-14). Jesus was described as both a glutton and a wino (MAT 11:18).

Did Jesus fear being killed?

- **Yes.** Jesus feared for his life:
 - Jesus escaped when he discovered the Pharisees' plot to kill him (MAT 12:14-15).
 - Jesus would not walk among the Jews, because he was afraid they would kill him (JOH 7:1; 11:53-54). This is why Jesus repeatedly ran and hid (JOH 8:59; JOH 10:39).
- **No.** Jesus taught that you should not fear things which can kill your body, because they cannot kill your soul (MAT 10:27-28; LUK 12:4).

Can Jesus inherit David's throne?

- **No.** God dictated that Josiah's son, Jehoiakim, and grandson, Jeconiah (1CHR 3:15-17), and all of their descendants (JER 36:31) are permanently banned from inheriting the throne of David (JER 36:30). Jesus can never inherit the throne of David because his earthly father, Joseph, was a direct descendant of Jechonias (MAT 1:1, 11-16).
- **Maybe?** Despite a direct mandate from God, Jeconiah still became the King of Judah (EST 2:6).
- **Yes.** God will give the throne of David to Jesus (LUK 1:31-32).

Will Jesus always be with his disciples?

- **Yes,** because, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (MAT 28:20).
- **No.** "For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always" (MAT 26:11).

Will Jesus' followers die before he returns?

- **No.** Those who lived in the time of Jesus will live to see the Second Coming (MAR 13:26, 30).
- **Yes.** Some of Jesus' followers will die, since they will be the first to rise (1THE 4:16).
- **Maybe?** Jesus told his followers that will be betrayed and killed, yet they will not be injured in the process (LUK 21:16-18).

Will the keepers of Jesus' words die?

- **Yes.** The keepers of Jesus' teachings will be killed and hated by every nation (MAT 24:9).
- **No.** "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keeps my saying, he shall never see death" (JOH 8:5).

Was Jesus the prophet Moses had predicted?

- **Unconfirmed.** Jesus arbitrarily declared himself to be the prophet which Moses spoke of (LUK 24:44; JOH 5:46), a notion that was parroted by his disciples (JOH 1:45, ACT 3:22, ACT 26:22).

Are the dead with Jesus?

- **Yes.** Jesus explicitly stated the dead will follow him into Heaven (LUK 23:43). This is a generally-accepted precept (2COR 5:8; PHILI 1:23).
 - Stephen gave his spirit to Jesus when he was stoned (ACT 7:59).
- **No.** Because "whither I go, ye cannot come" (JOH 13:33). Only Christ can ascend to Heaven, and even King David was unworthy of entry (ACT 2:34).

Is God always with Jesus?

- **Yes.** Jesus and God are one (JOH 10:30), because God dwells inside him (JOH 14:10), and is with him even when he is alone (JOH 16:32).
- **No.** The dying Jesus was convinced that God had forsaken him (MAR 15:34).

6.6 — Points of Contention with the Biblical Narrative

Where does the soul reside?

- **In the breath.** God created Adam by sculpting him out of dust and breathing into his nostrils (GEN 2:7).
- **In the blood.** This is why eating blood is prohibited (DEU 12:23).

Can a Moabite enter the congregation of the Lord?

- **No.** All Ammonites and Moabites were forbidden from entering into the congregation of the Lord, as their collective punishment for failing to provide the Israelites with food and water as they escaped from Egypt (DEU 23:3-4). Even their tenth-generation descendants were unable to enter the congregation of the Lord; their entire line was banned forever (DEU 23:3-4).
- **Yes.** Ruth, the great-grandmother of David (RUT 4:10-17), was a Moabite (RUT 1:4).

Is man superior to other creatures?

- **Yes.** God imbued man with dominion over all fish, birds, cattle, and insects (GEN 1:26).
- **No.** Man is just another beast (ECC 3:19).

Exactly how was Rahab the Harlot saved?

- **By her faith** (HEB 11:31).
- **By her works** (JAM 2:25).

When was the son of Nun first called Joshua?

- Nun's son was referred to as Joshua (EXO 17:9) **before the events** at Mt. Sinai (EXO 20:1; 24:13).
- Nun's son was not given the name Joshua (NUM 11:28; 13:8, 16) until **after the events** at Mt. Sinai (NUM 3:1; 10:12).

How many men took place in Joshua's ambush against Ai?

- **30,000** (JOS 8:3).
- **5,000** (JOS 8:12).

What was the fate of the city of Ai?

- **Ai was completely destroyed in a fire attack**, which "made it a heap forever, even a desolation unto this day" (JOS 8:28).
- **The city of Ai continued to exist**, because men from Ai are later mentioned (EZR 2:28, NEH 7:32).

What happened to the twelve stones Joshua pitched in Jordan?

- **They were removed.** Joshua pitched them again in Gilgal (JOS 4:20).
- **They were not removed;** in fact, they are still there (JOS 4:9).

Who were the Gibeonites?

- **They were Hivites**, and the only allies the Israelites had (JOS 11:19).
- **They were "the remnant of the Amorites."** Although the children of Israel had sworn to spare them, "Saul sought to slay them in his zeal" (2SAM 21:2).

Were the Canaanites destroyed?

- **Yes.** Joshua completely annihilated the entire Canaanite race; "he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel commanded" (JOS 10:40). Their cities and farms were looted and plundered, and any stragglers or hideouts were hunted and executed (JOS 11:14).
- **No.** The Canaanites were never completely driven out, and those who survived were forced to pay tributes (JUDG 1:28, 30, 33, 35).

Who conquered the Canaanites?

- **Joshua did**, he “took the whole land” (JOS 11:16-17, 23; 12:7-8; 21:43).
- **Judah did** (JUDG 1:4-5), after the death of Joshua (JOS 13:1-6; JUDG 1:1; 2:23).

Then why were the Canaanites spared?

- **To test the faith of Israel** (JUDG 2:21-22; 3:4).
- **To teach ways of war** to the children of Israel (JUDG 3:1-2).

Who killed King Jabin of Hazor?

- **Joshua**. King Jabin was explicitly shown to be killed by Joshua (JOS 11:1, 10-11).
- **Not Joshua**. King Jabin was not killed until 120 years after Joshua's death (JUDG 1:1; 3:11, 30; 4:2, 24).

Who conquered Bethel? Did they conquer Gezer as well?

- **Joshua** and conquered Bethel **and** Gezer (JOS 12:7, 12, 16).
- **The House of Joseph** conquered Bethel (JUDG 1:22-25), but they **did not** conquer Gezer (JUDG1:29).

What became of Anak's sons?

- They were **slain by Judah** (JUDG 1:10).
- They were **expelled** (JUDG 1:20) and **driven out** (JOS 15:14).

What became of the cities of Eshtaol and Zorah?

- **They were given to the tribe of Judah** (JOS 15:20, 33).
- **They were given to the tribe of Dan** (JOS 19:40-41).

How many coastal cities were south of Edom in Judah?

- There were a total of **29** coastal cities south of Edom in Judah (JOS 15:38).
- There were a total of **36** coastal cities south of Edom in Judah (JOS 15:20-37). While 38 cities are listed, there are duplicate entries.

Did the Israelites practice idolatry?

- **Yes**. Joshua had to tell the Israelites to put away their idols (JOS 24:14) of “the strange gods which are among you” (JOS 24:23).
- **No**. The Israelites only served the Lord (JUDG 2:7) and closely followed the teachings of Moses (JOS 22:2).

Was Sisera murdered in his sleep?

- **Yes**, he was explicitly stated to be asleep at the time of his death (JUDG 4:21).
- **No**. Sisera was awake, or at least awake enough to ask for something to drink (JUDG 5:25-27).

Did Eli correct his sons?

- **Yes.** Eli is explicitly shown chastising his sons (1SAM 2:22-24).
- **No,** “his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not” (1SAM 3:11-13).

Were the Philistines subdued throughout Samuel’s reign?

- **Yes.** “The Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel” God was against the Philistines throughout Samuel’s reign (1SAM 7:13).
- **No.** The Philistine army reassembled and mobilized (1SAM 13:5) during Samuel’s reign (1SAM 13:10).

How did Saul meet David?

- **Saul asked Jesse to bring David to him,** and Saul was aware that David was his son (1SAM 16:19). David met Saul (1SAM 16:21) **prior to fighting Goliath** (1SAM16:50).
- **After the battle with Goliath, Saul asked Abner to bring David to him,** unaware of who he was. (1SAM 17:55-58).

Was David detained at Saul's court?

- **Yes.** Saul kept David in his court as his personal armor-bearer (1SAM 16:21).
- **No.** David returned to his flocks of sheep, over in Bethlehem (1SAM 17:15).

Was David a warrior before his bout with Goliath?

- **Yes.** David was known as a mighty, valiant, and cunning “man of war” (1SAM 16:18).
- **No.** David was “but a youth” (1SAM 17:33), who admitted unfamiliarity with weapons and armor (1SAM 17:38-39).

What became of the Amalekites?

- **They perished.** The Amelekites were smote and completely destroyed (GEN 14:1, 7, 12).
- **They endured.** Despite being completely destroyed, the Amalekites continued to survive, and had to be re-annihilated (1SAM 15:7-8, 20, 32-33), again (1SAM 27:8-9) and again (1SAM 30:1, 17) and again (1CHR4:43). *Yet despite five complete and total annihilations,* the Amalekites continued to survive while the Jews were held captive in Babylon, long after David’s time (EST 3:1).

Who killed Saul?

- **Saul committed suicide.** After being wounded by archers, Saul fell on his own sword (1SAM 31:3-4) to escape being tortured by his enemies.
- **An Amalekite did,** and he later recounted the story to David (2SAM 1:6-10).
- **The Philistines** slayed Saul at Mt. Gilboa, and hung his bones in the streets of Bethshan (2SAM 21:12).
- **The Lord** killed Saul, as punishment for his transgressions against him (1CHR 10:13-14).

Did Saul's sons die with him?

- **Yes.** Saul and all of his sons were killed together (1CHR 10:6, 1SAM 31:2, 6).
- **No.** One of Saul's sons, Ishbosheth survived and became a king who ruled over Gilead, the Ashurites, Jezreel, Ephraim, Benjamin, and all of Israel (2SAM 2:7).

Was the Dagon's temple closed in Samuel's lifetime?

- **Yes.** The Dagon temple was permanently closed (1SAM 5:5) prior to Samuel becoming a judge (1SAM 7:3).
- **No.** Saul's head and armor were displayed as trophies in the Dagon's temple (1CHR 10:8-10).

What did David think of Achishm, King of Gath?

- **David was "sore afraid" of him** (1SAM 21:12-13).
- David and his family lived with him and his men (1SAM 27:3). **They got along well, and thought highly of one another** (1SAM 29:6, 9).

Who were David's chief captains ("the three mighties")?

- Their leader, **Joab; Jashobeam the Tachmonite**, who killed 300 men at a time with his spear; and **Eleazar** (1CHR 11:6, 11-12).
- Their leader, **the Tachmonite** (who is implied to be **Jashobeam**); **Adino**, who killed 800 men at a time with his spear; and **Eleazar** (2SAM 23:8-9).

When did David take the Ark of the Covenant to Obededom's house?

- **David took the Ark of the Covenant** (1CHR 13:6-7) **to Obededom's house** (1CHR 13:13) **prior to defeating the Philistines** (1CHR 14:16).
- **David defeated the Philistines** (2SAM 5:25), **before taking the Ark of the Covenant** (2SAM 6:3) **to Obededom's house** (2SAM 6:10).

When did David go to Jerusalem?

- **Before conquering Zion** (1SAM 17:54-55).
- **After conquering Zion** (2SAM 5:4-7).

How long was the Ark of the Covenant at Abinadab's house?

- **20 years** (1SAM 7:1-2). This occurred before the reign of Saul (1SAM 10:24).
- **47 years.** Saul reigned for 40 years (ACT 13:21), and was succeeded by David, who ruled for 7.5 years in Hebron before entering Jerusalem (2SAM 5:4-7). The Ark of the Covenant did not leave Abinadab's house until David had established himself in Jerusalem (2SAM 6:2-3).

Why did God forbid David from building a temple?

- **God has no need for a temple** because he does not dwell in houses, and preferred to be wherever the Israelites were (1CHR 17:4-6).
- **David was unworthy to build a temple**, because he "hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood" (1CHR 28:3).

Who tempted David to number Israel?

- **Satan did** (1CHR 21:1).
- **God did** (SAM 24:1).

Did David want God to judge him?

- **Yes.** David explicitly asked for God to judge him (PSA 7:8).
- **No.** David did not want to be judged, since no man is justified in God's eyes (PSA 143:2).

Was David a sinner?

- **Yes.** David sinned on multiple occasions:
 - David freely admitted to greatly sinning against God by conducting an unauthorized census (2SAM 24:10) after caving in to Satan's desires (1CHR 21:1).
 - David lied to a priest, claiming to be on the king's official business, so he could obtain food and Goliath's sword (1SAM 21:3-9).
 - David committed adultery with Bathsheba and impregnated her. David then ordered Joab to send Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, to the most dangerous forefront to quickly die in battle. Once Uriah was killed, David was free to marry Bathsheba (2SAM 11:2-27).
 - David begged for mercy and asked God to forget the sins of his youth (PSA 25:7; 119:176).
- **Mostly no.** Every action in David's entire life was considered good in God's eyes, because David complied with all God's commands — excluding the situation with Uriah (1KIN 15:5).
- **No.** David claimed to have followed God's path without any departures into wickedness (2SAM 22:22; PSA 119:110; ACT 13:22).

Who was the priest that David asked for shewbread? Was he alone?

- **The priest was named Ahimelech, and David was alone** (1SAM 21:1-3).
- **The priest was named Abiathar, and others were with David** (MAR 2:25-26).

Exactly what happened in the Valley of Salt?

- **David killed 18,000 Syrians** (2SAM 8:13).
- **David killed 12,000 Edomites** (PSA 60:1).
- **Avishai, son of Zeruiah, killed 18,000 Edomites. David was not involved** in the Valley of Salt incident (1CHR 18:1).

How long was the famine that God offered David?

- **7 years** (2SAM 24:12-13).
- **3 years** (1CHR 21:11-12).

When did Solomon's begin his reign?

- **476 years after the Israelites left Egypt** (1KIN 6:1).
- **570 years after the Israelites left Egypt**, as determined by the 40 years spent wandering the desert (ACT 13:17-18), the 450 year rule of the judges (ACT 13:20), the 40 years of Saul's reign (ACT 13:21), and the 40 year reign of King David (ACT13:22; 1CHR 29:26).

Did the Lord have a temple prior to Solomon's reign?

- **Yes:**
 - There was a temple in Shiloh (JUDG 18:31), when there was no king (JUDG 19:1).
 - Hannah went to the temple (1SAM 1:9) to ask Eli to help her conceive her son, Samuel. (1SAM 1:20). God later called to Samuel as he slept in this temple (1SAM 3:3).
- **No.** David wanted to build a temple, but God forbade him since he was "a man of war" (1CHR 28:2-3). David delegated the task of temple-building to his son, Solomon (1CHR 28:6), who carried it out to completion (1KIN 6:14).

Did King Abijam please the Lord?

- **Yes.** In addition to making him king (2CHR 13:1), God granted Abijam victory in battle and punished his enemies (2CHR 13:2, 15-17, 20). Additionally, God granted him 14 wives, 22 sons, and 16 daughters (2CHR 13:21), and left him with and a lasting legacy (2CHR 13:22) following his proper funeral (2CHR 14:1).
- **No.** King Abijam was considered to be a sinful man with an imperfect heart (1KIN 15:1-3).

How did God respond to Jehu's killings at Jezreel?

- **God commended him** (2KIN 10:30).
- **God punished him** (HOS 1:4).

Was Asa perfect?

- **Yes.** Asa's heart was perfect for all of his days (1KIN 15:14; 2CHR 15:17).
- **No.** He "oppressed some of the people" (2CHR 16:10). In addition, Asa "relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy God" (2CHR 16:7), and when he took ill, he "sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians" (2CHR 16:12).

Did Asa remove the high places?

- **Yes.** The Bible explicitly states that Asa "took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves" (2CHR 14:2-3).
- **No.** "The high places were not removed" (1KIN 15:14) and they "were not taken away" (2CHR 15:17).

What is God's chosen city?

- **Jerusalem** (2CHR 6:5-6).
- **God has no chosen city** (1KIN 8:16).

Did Elijah anoint Hazael and Jehu?

- **Yes.** Elijah anointed Hazael (1KIN 19:13, 15) and Jehu (1KIN 19:16).
- **No.** Elijah did not anoint Hazael (2KIN 8:13-15), and Jehu was anointed by someone else on his behalf (2KIN 9:1-3).

When did Elisha receive Elijah's mantle?

- Elijah gave his mantle to Elisha **before ascending into Heaven** (1KIN 19:19, 21).
- Elisha received the mantle **after Elijah went to Heaven.** He tore the mantle off of his clothes and let it fall to Elisha as a parting gift while he ascended (2KIN 2:11-13).

Which of Ahaziah's relatives did Jehu like?

- **His brothers** (2KIN 10:13-14).
- **His nephews** (2CHR 22:8).

Is God always with Jesus?

- **Yes.** Jesus and God are one (JOH 10:30), because God dwells inside him (JOH 14:10), and is with him even when he is alone (JOH 16:32).
- **No.** The dying Jesus was convinced that God had forsaken him (MAR 15:34).

Did the men with Paul share his vision? Did they hear the same voice?

How did Paul's men react?

- **The men stood speechless, since they too heard the voice** (ACT 9:7).
- **They men saw the light, but heard no voice** (ACT 22:9).
- **The men fell to the earth** (ACT 26:14).

Did Jesus tell Paul his intentions on the way to Damascus?

- **Yes.** Jesus told Paul of his intentions to make him into "a minister and a witness" (ACT 26:15-18).
- **No.** Jesus would explain everything upon Paul's arrival in Damascus (ACT 22:10).

Who tried to kill Paul in Damascus?

- **The Jews** (ACT 9:23).
- **The local governor** appointed by King Aretas (2COR 11:32).

Where did Paul go immediately after his conversion?

- **To Jerusalem** (ACT 9:19, 26).
- **To Arabia, and later, to Damascus** (GAL 1:17).

From who did Paul received the Holy Ghost from?

- **From God** (GAL 1:15-16).
- **From Ananias** (ACT 9:17).

Was Paul recognized by the Judean church members?

- **Yes.** Paul was well-known to the Judeans; that was where he grew up (ACT 22:3), and formerly persecuted church members (ACT 22:4). Paul was well-received, and people took him into their homes (ACT 21:15-18).
- **No.** Paul was unknown to the Judeans (GAL 1:21).

Did Paul visit all the disciples in Jerusalem following his conversion?

- **Yes.** Baranabas introduced him to all of the disciples (ACT 9:26-28).
- **No.** Paul only ever met Peter and James (GAL 1:18-19).

Did Peter agree with Paul's views on Gentiles and Jews?

- **Yes.** Peter agreed that there were no differences between Gentiles and Jews, since Christ had saved both groups (ACT 15:7-11).
- **No.** Peter resisted Paul's teachings (GAL 2:11), prompting Paul to call Peter out for his hypocrisy (GAL 2:14).

Were the disciples supposed to be baptists?

- **Yes.** Jesus explicitly instructed his disciples to "teach all nations, baptizing them" (MAT 28:19).
- **No.** Jesus told Paul that preaching was more important than baptizing. (1COR 1:1, 17).

Did Paul try to please men?

- **Yes.** Paul tried to please people any way he could (1COR 10:33).
- **No,** because those who try to please others do a poor job of serving Christ (GAL 1:10).

Did Paul use trickery?

- **Yes.** Paul described himself as “crafty” and caught people with guile (2COR 12:16).
- **No.** Paul explicitly denied ever resorting to deceit, uncleanness, or guile (1THE 2:3).

Was Paul a baptist?

- **No, not really.** Paul only claimed to have baptized Stephanas’ family. Paul did not regard baptism as important since “Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel” (1COR 1:16-17).
- **Yes.** Paul was explicitly shown to be a baptist (ACT 19:4-5). Paul baptized many people: Lydia and her family (ACT 16:14-15), the jailer and everyone in his household (ACT 16:27, 30, 33), Crispus, “and many of the Corinthians” (ACT 18:8).

Was Paul the exemplar of sinful pride?

- **Yes.** Paul freely admitted to boasting about how holy he was (2COR 11:5, 16-18), claiming to be the greatest apostles (2COR 12:11), because he performed the most labor out of all of them (1COR 15:10).
 - Such boasting is discouraged (PRO 27:2) because it is debasing, and “the humble are exalted” (LUK 18:14). God is explicitly stated to “resist the proud” and give grace to the humble (1PET 5:5).
- **No.** Paul considered himself to be the least of the apostles (1COR 15:9), and of all the saints (EPH 3:8), because no living person should ever feel glory in the presence of Christ (1COR 1:28-29).

Does Christ live within Paul?

- **Yes.** Christ lived inside Paul (GAL 2:20).
- **No.** Paul knew that no good thing dwelled within him (ROM 7:18).

Does Paul obey the Holy Ghost?

- **No.** The Holy Ghost banned Paul from preaching in Asia (ACT 16:6), which he did anyway (ACT 19:8-10).

What was Paul’s view on sinners?

- Paul taught that **all sinners are intrinsically Satanic** (1JOH 3:8-9).
- **Paul claimed that he was the chief sinner** (1TIM 1:15).

Did Paul encourage others to covet?

- **Yes.** Paul encouraged others to covet the best spiritual gifts (1COR 12:31), like prophesy (1COR 14:39).
- **No.** Paul reiterated God's Commandment against covetous behavior (ROM 7:7; 13:9).

Why did Titus go to Corinth?

- Titus went to Corinth **on his own accord** (2COR 8:16-17).
- Titus went to Corinth **under Paul's orders** (2COR 12:18).

Who was Cain's father?

- **Adam** (GEN 4:1).
- **Satan** (1JOH 3:12).

Did the author of The Acts of the Apostles accompany Paul on his travels?

- **Yes.** The use of the plural "we" implies that author traveled with Paul to Macedonia (ACT 16:10), and later as they sailed from Philippi to Troas (ACT 20:6).
- **No.** The author's use of the plural "they" implies that the passage from Mysia to Troas (ACT 16:8), and going to Lydia's house after getting out of jail (ACT 16:40) were secondhand accounts.

Is everyone descended from Adam and Eve?

- **Yes.** Eve was given her name because she was the mother of all living people (GEN 3:20).
- **No.** Melchisedec, the king of Salem who met with Abraham, was "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God" (HEB 7:1-3).

Who is the foundation for God's house?

- **Jesus Christ was** (1COR 3:10-11).
- **Men are**, with an emphasis on the apostles and prophets (EPH 2:19-22).

Is the Holy Spirit subordinate to God?

- **No**, because the Holy Spirit is itself a divine being (ACT 5:3-4).
- **Yes.** God dispatches the Holy Spirit, who follows God's orders (JOH 14:16-17; 15:26; 16:13).

Who sends the Holy Spirit?

- **God does**, as a reward for obedience (ACT 5:32).
- **Jesus does** (JOH 20:21-22).
- **The Apostles could**, or at least Peter and John could (ACT 8:14-17).

When did other humans gain the ability to receive the Holy Spirit, and how may it be acquired?

- **John the Baptist had the Holy Spirit prior to both his own birth, and the birth of Jesus** (LUK 1:15).
- **The Holy Spirit was said to be upon Simeon** (LUK 2:25).
- **The Holy Spirit was *not* given to anyone prior to Jesus' glorification** (JOH 7:39).

How is man sanctified?

- **By the truth itself** (JOH 17:17).
- **By the Holy Spirit** (1PET 1:2).

How does one receive the Holy Spirit?

- **Asking God.** God sends the Holy Spirit to anyone who asks for it (LUK 11:13).
- **Through laying-of-hands.** The Holy Spirit is transferred only via a saved person laying their hands on someone (ACT 8:17-19; 19:6).

Is God's law perfect?

- **Yes.** The Bible states that God's law is perfect (PSA 19:7; JAM 1:25).
- **No.** God freely admitted to making bad laws and poor judgments which should not be followed or abided by (EZE 20:25). Perfection cannot be created through legal means (HEB 7:19).

Will God's law endure forever?

- **Yes.** Jesus explicitly taught that every single character of the Old Testament laws remained valid (MAT 5:18). Jesus' teachings amended the old laws without repealing or replacing them. This, like all of Jesus's teachings, will stand forever (1PET 1:25).
- **No.** The Old Testament laws, including the Ten Commandments, were "abolished" (EPH 2:15) during the crucifixion. This created a clean slate between God and man; all debts were canceled, and all charges were dropped (COL 2:13-14).

How should the Moabites be treated?

- **The Moabites were to be killed** (JUDG 3:29-30), because the nation of Maob was not permitted to exist (JER 48:2).
- **The Moabites were not to be fought or bothered.** There was nothing to gain by doing so, since God had previously distributed those land rights (DEU 2:9).

Why is there a Sabbath?

- **To celebrate the creation of the world** (EXO 20:11).
- **To celebrate the escape from Egypt** (DEU 5:15).

Do Nazarites need to purify themselves after being near the dead?

- **Yes.** Those dedicated to the Lord must avoid being anywhere near the dead, even if they were family members. Those who watched someone die must shave their heads to purify themselves (NUM 6:6-8).
- **No.** Despite killing 1,000 men with a donkey's jawbone (JUDG 15:16-17), Samson did not require purification, and remained intrinsically consecrated up until he received his first haircut (JUDG 16:17).

What should be done with the firstborn animals?

- **They are to be sold.** All of the money being raised from the sale must be added to your disposable income, to buy whatever items which you have wanted or desired (DEU 14:22-26).
- **They are to be sacrificed.** Their blood should cover the altar and their fat burned, simply because the LORD enjoys the smell (NUM 18:17).
- **They are reserved for priests to eat** (NUM 18:8-10).
- **They are eaten by those who offer them for sacrifice** (DEU 12:17-18).

Who are to become priests?

- **Aaron's sons** (LEV 1:5, 8, 11; NUM 3:9-10, 6:23).
- **The Levites** (DEU 18:1, 7, 33:8, 10).

Can Non-Levites offer sacrifices to God?

- **No.** The Levites had exclusive access to the tabernacle (NUM 18:6), because a Levite was explicitly required to perform all altar-related activities (NUM 18:7).
- **Yes.** Non-Levites have offered acceptable sacrifices:
 - Samuel sacrificed a sucking lamb to God (1SAM 7:9), despite being and Ephrathite (1SAM 1:1-2, 20).
 - Solomon sacrificed 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep without incident (1KIN 8:63).

Can the carrying poles be removed from the Ark of the Covenant?

- **No.** The Ark of the Covenant's poles must remain in place (EXO 25:14-15).
- **Yes.** The Bible mentions putting the poles in places when breaking camp, which implies that they are removed regularly (NUM 4:5-6).

How was a woman's chastity tested?

- **A priest prepares contaminated water for her to drink.** The woman's chastity was (somehow) determined from her degree of sickness (NUM 5:26-27).
- **The woman's parents delivered her bedsheets to the city elders for inspection,** who determined her chastity from the presence of bloodstains, which were presumably from her ruptured hymen (DEU 22:15).

Can Jewish women marry outside of her tribe?

- **No.** Women explicitly cannot marry outside of their father's tribe (NUM 36:8).
- **Possibly.** A priest's daughter can marry outside of her tribe, on the condition that she never eats the food offered to her husband's gods. Nothing was said if the rest of the population could also do so (LEV 22:12).

Was it right for the Israelites to take captives?

- **Yes.** Israelites should take captives, since they can be forced to pay tributes (DEU 20:11, 15).
- **No.** God commanded the Israelites to outright kill all who oppose them (DEU 20:16-18).

Should the Israelites spare the trees in countries they invade?

- **It depends.** Fruit trees must be spared in battle, since they provide soldiers with free food. Siege engines could only be built from non-fruit bearing trees (DEU 20:19).
- **No.** Every single tree should be chopped down, since Israelites were to employ "scorched earth" tactics (2KIN 3:19).

Can the descendants of illegitimate children enter into the congregation of the Lord?

- **No.** Illegitimate children are expressly forbidden from ever entering the congregation of the Lord. Furthermore, being an illegitimate child is so intrinsically sinful that the next ten generations of your family are automatically banned as well (DEU 23:2).
- **Yes.** The Lord favors such people:
 - Phares was the illegitimate son of Judah and his widowed-daughter-in-law, Tamar (GEN 38:15-29). If Phares and ten generations of his descendants are unable to enter the congregation of the Lord, then his ninth-generation descendant, David (MAT 1:3-6), was also banned. However, God himself selected David to become a king (1SAM 16:1).
 - Aaron married Elisheba, a daughter of Amminadab (EXO 6:23), who was a third-generation descendant (MAT 1:3-6) of Phares. As such, she was probably considered a member of the Lord's congregation in order to marry the high priest.
 - Naashon was Elisheba's brother, and therefore, a fourth-generation descendant of Phares (MAT 1:3-6). Despite being unable to enter the congregation of the Lord, he was made numerous offerings to the Lord (NUM 7:12-17), and became a prince of Judah (1CHR 2:10).

Do the Levites have a fixed residence?

- **Yes.** Levites were to live in designated city neighborhoods (NUM 35:2), and rule the suburbs (NUM 35:2, 7).
- **No.** The Levites are homeless (DEU 14:27).

Can Ammonites enter God's congregation?

- **No.** The Bible explicitly states that the Ammonites are permanently banned from ever entering God's congregation (NEH 13:1).
- **Possibly?** Rheoboam, one of Solomon's sons (1KIN 12:23), was buried among the other Hebrew kings, despite the fact that "his mother's name was Naamah an Ammonitess" (1KIN 14:31)

Does God condone hatred and violence against the Edomites?

- **Yes.** God sought vengeance upon Edom, and they would feel his anger and fury (EZE 25:14).
- **No.** It was forbidden to hate the Edomites, because they were "thy brother" (DEU 23:7).

Were prophecies privately interpreted?

- **Yes.** The disciples discussed their private interpretations of prophecy with Jesus on Mt. Olives (MAT 24:3-5).
- **No.** "...no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation," because they directly quote the Holy Ghost (2PET 1:20-21).

Will the prophecies come true?

- **Who cares?** Prophecies are a sure thing (2PET 1:19), because *they are tautological*; by definition, prophecies which do not come true are not real prophecies (DEU 18:21-22). Prophecies are therefore *always true, but utterly meaningless, since they can only predict what has already happened.*
- **No.** The Bible explicitly state that prophecies will fail (1COR 13:8), and backs this claim by citing examples of failed prophecies, like when Jonah prophesized the overthrow of Nineveh (JON 3:4), which never happened (JON 3:5, 10).

Does Jerusalem have special protections?

- **Yes.** Jerusalem's holiness prevents "the uncircumcised and the unclean" from entering. (ISA 52:1)
- **No.** Despite what Isaiah stated, the Romans conquered Jerusalem and expelled the Jews. After the fall of Rome, Jerusalem was conquered by the Muslims, who remain there to this day.

Does poverty exist in the Promised Land?

- **Yes.** Poverty is a perpetual problem which can be mitigated, but never truly solved (DEU 15:11).
- **No.** The whole point of a Promised Land was that it held great abundance for all (DEU 15:4).

What became of the House of David?

- **David's bloodline will endure forever**, and his throne will reign eternal, like the sun and moon (PSA 89:35-37).
- **David's glory ceased** and his throne was cast down to the ground (PSA 89:44).

When did the Tribe of Ephraim break up?

- **65 years after the time of Ahaz**, as prophesized by Isaiah (ISA 7:1, 3, 8).
- **>145 years after the time of Ahaz**, because Ephraim still exists (ZEC 10:7) in the time of Darius (ZEC 1:1).

Will Judah fall with Ephraim?

- **Yes.** The destruction of Israel and Ephraim (HOS 5:5) also included the destruction of Judah (HOS 5:14).
- **No.** God explicitly stated that when he destroyed Israel, he spared Judah (HOS 1:6-7).

Will Ephraim return to Egypt?

- **Yes.** "Ephraim shall return to Egypt" (HOS 8:13; 9:3).
- **No.** "He shall not return into the land of Egypt" (HOS 11:3-5).

Were all of Amaziah's children murdered?

- **Yes.** As punishment for questioning if Amos was a prophet, Amaziah was doomed to lose all of his property and die in a polluted land, while his wife became a prostitute after all of their children were murdered (AMO 7:14-17).
- **No.** Amaziah's son Uzziah (2CHR 26:1) died of leprosy (2CHR 26: 21), thus escaping a violent death.

How did Josiah die?

- **Josiah was promised a peaceful death** (2KIN 22:20).
- **Josiah was slain in battle at Megiddo.** His body was transported to Jerusalem for burial. (2KIN 23:29-30).
- **Josiah was wounded by archers at Megiddo**, and was medievaced to Jerusalem, where **he died of his injuries** (2CHR 35:23-24).

What was Zedekiah's fate?

- God promised Zedekiah that he “**shalt not die by the sword**” and that he would “**die in peace**” (JER 34:4-5).
- **The king of Babylon killed Zedekiah’s sons as he watched**, right before killing all the Judean princes in Riblah. **Zedekiah was then blinded, chained, and spent the rest of his life in a Babylonian prison** (JER 52:10-11).

Who, or what, will be called “The Lord Our Righteousness?”

- **It is a poetic title given to the king that saves Judah and keep Israel safe** (JER 23:5-6).
- **It is a nickname for Jerusalem** (JER 33:15).

Will the endless cycle of planting and harvesting ever cease?

- **Yes.** It was explicitly stated that there were no harvests during famines (GEN 41:53-57; 45:6).
- **No.** The agricultural cycle can never cease (GEN 8:22).

Did God destroy Babylon?

- **Yes.** God promised that Babylon would be a heap of smoldering rubble when he was finished. Even the building foundations would be destroyed, and Babylon would be desolate and uninhabitable forever (JER 51:24-6, 62), because the site would become a breeding ground for dragons (JER 51:37). God will get the entire Babylonian population drunk, just to make them easier to kill (JER 51:39-40), especially since most of them would die from alcohol poisoning (JER 51:57). “Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her” (JER 51:64).
- **No.** Babylon must have survived, since Peter made references to Babylonian churches (1PET 5:13).

Did God destroy Tyre?

- **Yes.** God commanded that the walls of Tyre would be broken, and all of the topsoil removed to make it a barren, desolate place (EZE 26:4-14). The city would be so thoroughly destroyed that no one could ever suspect that the city had ever existed (EZE 26:4-21).
- **No.** Jesus passed by Tyre (MAR 3:8), and Paul later stopped there (ACT 21:3-4).

Will God overthrow Nineveh?

- **Yes.** Jonah foresaw the overthrow of Nineveh (JON 3:4).
- **No.** God spared them, because they were redeemed by their good works (JON 3:10).

What will God do to Babylon?

- **God will make it wet** (ISA 14:22-23).
- **God will completely dry it up** (JER 51:35-36).

Who will be the ransom for the righteous?

- **"The wicked** shall be a ransom for the righteous and the transgressor for the upright" (PRO 21:18).
- **Jesus will** (MAR 10:45; 1TIM 2:5-6).

Will the world end?

- **No.** The Bible explicitly states that the world will exist forever (PSA 78:69; PSA 104:5; ECC 1:4).
- **Yes.** The Bible explicitly states that the earth shall pass away (MAT 24:35; MAR 13:31; LUK 21:33; 1JOH 2:17). The world will "perish" (HEB 1:10-11) and burn, along with all of the works which it contains (2PET 3:10).

When did Jesus think the apocalypse would occur?

- **Jesus was convinced that the apocalypse would occur during the lifetime of those who knew him** (MAR 13:24-30).
- **Jesus was unconvinced that the world was going to end anytime soon**, since he founded a church, which demonstrated planning for the future (MAT 16:18).

When will the world end?

- **The world will end before all of the cities of Israel hear God's word** (MAT 10:23).
- **The world cannot end until the gospels have been preached all over the world** (MAT 24:14) **and in every nation** (MAR 13:10).

What will happen to the grasses and plants during the apocalypse?

- The Bible explicitly states that **all plant life will burn** at the end of the world (REV 8:7).
- The Bible explicitly states that **all plant life will spared**, despite the world ending around it (REV 9:3-4).

Will heavenly signs announce the coming of the kingdom of God?

- **Yes.** The coming of God's Kingdom (MAT 24:27) at the end of the world (ACT 2:17) will be announced by a number of heavenly signs (ACT 2:19). The stars will fall from the sky, and the sun and moon will darken (MAT 24:27) as the moon turns into blood (ACT 2:20).
- **No.** Jesus taught that only "an evil and adulterous generation" would look for heavenly signs besides the one prophesized by Jonas/Jonah; i.e., the resurrection. (MAT 12:39)

What will men do in their last days?

- **They shall beat their swords into plowshares.** (ISA 2:4; MIC 4:3).
- **They will beat their plowshares into swords** (JOE 3:10).

What will the Day of the Lord will be like?

- **It will be incredibly dark** (AMO 5:20), as the sun, moon (ISA 13:10) and stars (JOE 2:10) will all cease to shine.
- **It will be incredibly bright**, since the moon will shine as bright as the sun, and the sun's luminosity will increase sevenfold (ISA 30:26).
- **Neither**, it shall be neither "clear nor dark," and neither "not day, nor night" (ZEC 14:6-7).

How will the Son of Man arrive?

- The Son of Man **will come humbly, riding a donkey** (ZEC 9:9).
- The Son of Man **will make a triumphant, grandiose entrance** (DAN 7:1314).

When will the Son of man come?

- "Immediately after the tribulation," i.e., **on Judgment Day** (MAT 24:21, 29-30).
- **Once the rule Gentiles has ended** (LUK 21:24, 27).

When will punishments and rewards be dealt?

- The righteous shall be rewarded **here, on earth** (PRO 11:31).
- **In the next world**, for all must be judged by Christ (MAT 16:27; 2COR 5:10) or by God (REV 20:12).

Who will judge people?

- **God will judge man** (GEN 18:25; PSA 50:6; ACT 17:31; ROM 2:2; 2THE 1:5; HEB 12:23; 1PET 1:17; REV 20:12).
- **God judges no one**, because he delegated that task to Jesus (JOH 5:22, 27). Jesus commanded his disciples to teach this fact to the people (ACT 10:42), because all must face Christ's judgment (MAT 25:31-32; JOH 5:22 27, 30; 9:39; 2COR 5:10; ROM 14:10).
- **Jesus will not judge anyone** (JOH 8:15), since he is neither a judge nor a divider (LUK 12:14). Jesus existed to prevent condemnation, not to confer it (JOH 3:17, 12:47).
- **The twelve disciples** will judge (MAT 19:28; LUK 22:30). Apparently, this includes Judas.
- **The saints** will be the judges (1COR 6:2, JUDE 14-15).
- **Spiritual people** can judge all things (1COR 2:15).
- **Anyone can** judge anyone else, provided that the judgment is not biased by the judged person's socioeconomic status (LEV 19:15), or their outward appearance (JOH 7:24).
- **No person can.** Men must "judge not, that ye be not judged" (MAT 7:1); anyone who judges another is condemned, since they are probably being a hypocrite (ROM 2:1). Since God is the only lawgiver, man has no authority to judge (JAM 4:12). As such, all judgment should wait until Judgment Day (1COR 4:5).

When will judgments occur?

- **They were already conducted during Jesus' time** (JOH 12:31).
- **Judgments will only start after the resurrection** (ACT 17:31).
- **Judgments occur on an as-needed, case-by-case basis after the death of each individual** (HEB 9:27).
- **All judgments are delayed until the end of the earth** (2PET 3:7).

Will the dead be resurrected?

- **Yes.** All of the dead will be resurrected on Judgment Day (ISA 26:19; JOH 5:28-29), to be "changed" (1COR 15:52) and sent to Heaven or Hell (MAT 25:46). To God, all are alive (LUK 20:37-38).
- **No.** The dead will never rise (JOB 7:9; 14:10-12; AMO 8:14). They are destroyed, along with all of their memories (ISA 26:14; ECC 9:5-6), just like a beast (ECC 3:19-20).
- **Maybe?** Some of the dead will be resurrected, while others will not (DAN 12:2).

Did God slay the Leviathan?

- **Yes.** God has already done this (ISA 27:1).
- **No.** God has not slain the Leviathan, but he will do so in the future (PSA 74:13).

What will become of sinners?

- **They burn.** After tortuous deaths (MAT 24:51), the souls of sinners are punished (MAT 25:30, 46) with "shame and everlasting contempt" (DAN 12:2) by eternally burning (2PET 3:7; REV 14:10-11) in a "furnace" (MAT 13:49-50) or a "lake of fire" (REV 20:10, 15).
- **They cease to be** (ECC 9:5, 10). The souls of sinners will die (EZE 18:20) and face "everlasting destruction" (PSA 145:20; THE 1:9).

What is the upper limit of the human lifespan?

- **70 years** (PSA 90:10).
- **120 years** (GEN 6:3).
- **Hundreds of years** (GEN 11:11, 13, 15; EXO 6:25; JUDG 20:28).

What is death like?

- **Death is silent** (JOB 3:18) **and dark** (JOB 10:21; PSA 88:11 -12).
- **Death is glorious** (PSA 73:24) **and bright** (PRO 4:18). Christians profit by dying. (PHILI 1:21).

Do the dead retain intelligence?

- **Yes,** since the dead are still able to speak (ISA 14:9-10; LUK 9:30-31). God is a God of the living; so to God, all people are alive (LUK 20:38).
- **No.** The dead cannot praise the Lord (PSA 115:17) and their thoughts perish upon death (PSA 146:4).

Are the dead conscious?

- **Yes.** The spirits of the dead talk to one another (LUK 16:22-24) and greet newcomers to Hell (ISA 14:9). The dead can talk to both God (REV 6:9-10) and Jesus (MAR 9:4), and listen to Christ preach sermons to them (1PET 3:18-20).
- **No.** The dead are not conscious or awake (JOB 14:12), because death is like just sleep (JOH 11:11; ACT 7:59-60). The dead know nothing (ECC 9:5), because all knowledge and wisdom are destroyed upon death (ECC 9:10).

Do the dead possess knowledge?

- **Yes.** The dead have been shown to demonstrate several forms of knowledge:
 - The dead retain their memories, since they can welcome relatives to the afterlife (GEN 37:35; LUK 16:22-25).
 - They are aware of earthly events which occurred after their deaths (1SAM 28:15-18).
 - The dead retain opinions, which can still be swayed; this is why Jesus descended into Hell to preach to the dead (1PET 4:6).
- **No.** The dead are explicitly stated to have none of their memories (PSA 6:5) or knowledge (ECC 9:5-6) of their lives. As such, the dead will not welcome you upon joining them (ISA 38:18).

Are the dead all together in one place?

- **Yes.** Christians and their families join God upon death (1SAM 28:19).
- **Yes, but not “as advertised,”** because “all go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again” (ECC 3:20).
- **No.** The dead can't be all together:
 - Heaven and Hell are distinct, separate places (LUK 16:23-26).
 - There is a special place specifically set aside for Judas (ACT 1:25).

Can the spirit be retained after death?

- **Yes.** Peter demonstrated this during Tabitha's resurrection (ACT 9:36, 40-41).
- **No,** because “there is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit” (ECC 8:8).

Should you pray for the dead?

- **Yes.** Praying on behalf of the dead helps them atone for their sins (2MAC 12:44-46).
- **No.** Praying for the dead is a waste of time, as it will not restore them to life (2SAM 12:21-23).

Is Heaven eternal?

- **Yes.** Heaven is “an inheritance incorruptible... that fadeth not away” (1PET 1:3).
- **No.** Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my [Jesus’] words shall not pass away” (MAT 24:35).

Who will enter the kingdom of heaven by force?

- **Violent people** (MAT 11:12).
- **Everyone will** (LUK 16:16).

Who has ascended into Heaven?

- **Only Jesus.** The Bible explicitly states that only Christ has ever ascended to Heaven (JOH 3:13).
- **Elijah** ascended into Heaven upon a flaming chariot (2KIN 2:11).
- **Some guy that Paul knew** ascended into Heaven, but details are sketchy since Paul was not permitted to discuss this event. Paul only mentioned this event in passing, which apparently took place 14 years prior to writing his Second Letter to the Corinthians. (2COR 12:2-4).
- **Enoch** was assumed into Heaven by faith alone, without ever dying (HEB 11:5).
- Catholics believe that **Mary never died, and assumed into Heaven** because she was exempted from Original Sin, which is requisite for death (ROM 5:12-21; 6:23). The Assumption of Mary was declared dogma, *ex cathedra*, in Munificentissimus Deus (1950), based off of Pope Pius XII’s interpretation of GEN 3:15 and 1COR 15:54.

Can thieves go to Heaven?

- **Yes.** Jesus explicitly stated that one of the thieves that was crucified beside him would enter Heaven, simply for defending Jesus’ reputation (LUK 23:43).
- **No.** Thieves are explicitly banned from ever entering Heaven (1COR 6:9-10).

What is Hell like?

- Hell is **brightly lit from all of the fire** (MAT 5:22), just like a furnace (MAT 13:41-2).
- Hell is a **place of darkness** (MAT 8:11-12, 25:30).

Was Israel's sin eradicable?

- **Yes.** Their sins and wickedness could be washed from their hearts (JER 4:14).
- **No.** No amount of cleansing of the heart could ever remove the stain of sin (JER 2:22).

Does Hell exist?

- **Yes.** Jesus explicitly confirmed the existence of Hell, and that it a place of eternal fire prepared for the devil and his fallen angel brethren (MAT 25:41), which is meant to be an eternal punishment for the cursed (MAT 25:46). Jesus later described how the rich man who refused to feed Lazarus is burning in Hell (LUK 16:22-23).
- **No.** There is no need for a Hell, since the wicked will simply cease to be (PRO 10:25; 24:20), and all traces of their existence will be erased forever (OBA 1:16).

Who will perish?

- **The Lord's enemies** (JUDG 5:31).
- **The wicked** (PSA 37:20).
- **Liars** (PRO 19:9).
- **The righteous** (ECC 7:15, ISA 57:1).
- **Good men** (MIC 7:2).

Who will God devour on Judgment Day?

- **The wicked** (HEB 10:27; REV 20:9).
- **The innocent** (MAR 12:38, 40; 2COR 11:2).

Can the spirit be retained after death?

- **Yes.** Peter demonstrated this during Tabitha's resurrection (ACT 9:36, 40-41).
- **No,** because "there is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit" (ECC 8:8).

When will Judgment Day occur?

- **Shortly after the time of Jesus.** The Bible is quite explicit about the fact that the day of the Lord is at hand, and it states this multiple times (ISA 13:6; JOE 1:15; ZEP 1:7; MAT 4:17; PHILI 4:5).
- **Well after the time of Jesus.** Paul's trip to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus took place 14 years after his conversion (GAL 2:1), and the day of the Lord had yet to come.
- **In the far future.** Before Judgment Day comes, there will be a great falling away from the church, a "man of sin" will be revealed, and an all-powerful Satan will show off with all sorts of miracles and wonders (2THE 2:2, 9).
- **It is unknown and unknowable.** Due to God's non-linear perception of time, it is impossible for humans to determine when Judgment Day will be (2PET 3:8-10).

What is the Kingdom of God like?

- **It's a physical place.** During the Last Supper, Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of God as being a physical place, where one could eat and drink (MAR 14:25; LUK 14:15).
- **It's an ethereal place.** The Kingdom of God is "not of this world" (JOH 18:36) and it is a purely spiritual world, since flesh and blood cannot enter (1COR 15:50). One cannot eat and drink food and water there, only "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (ROM 14:17).
- **It's a state of mind.** The Kingdom of God is not a place of *any* kind; it is a metaphor for something within you (LUK 17:20-21).

Who does the world belong to?

- **God** (GEN 14:19; EXO 9:29, 19:5; DEU 10:14; PSA 24:1, 47:7; ISA 37:16; MAT 11:25; 1COR 10:26; ACT 17:24).
- **Satan** (MAT 4:8-9, JOH 12:31, 2COR 4:4).
- **Humanity itself** (PSA 115:16).
- **The meek** (MAT 5:5).

Is Satan confined to Hell?

- **No.** Satan can roam freely (1PET 5:8), without God knowing his whereabouts (JOB 1:7). If Satan were confined, it would have been impossible for him to hang out with Joshua (ZEC 3:1) and Jesus (MAT 4:1).
- **Yes.** The Bible explicitly states that all of the fallen angels are chained up in Hell until Judgment Day (2PET 2:4; JUDE 1:6).

Can man resist the devil?

- **Yes.** The devil will flee from anyone who resists him (JAM 4:7).
- **No,** the devil can take people captive at his will (2TIM 2:26).

Can Satan control Christians?

- **Yes.** "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat" (LUK 22:31).
- **No.** Satan cannot even touch, let alone control, a Christian (1JOH 5:18).

Who causes unbelief?

- **Satan does.** He takes the Word out of the hearts of those who fall by the wayside (LUK 8:12), and blinds the minds of unbelievers (2COR 4:3-4).
- **Jesus does.** He intentionally obfuscated his teachings by speaking in parables, in an effort to keep people in the dark. This way, his followers could not be converted away or rebel, since they wouldn't know what to rebel against (MAR 4:11-12).
- **God does.** God hardened the hearts of the Jews, so that they would reject Jesus (JOH 12:38-40). God intentionally deludes people into believing lies, in order to damn them to Hell (2THE 2:11-12).

Who was the greatest person ever?

- **Solomon was.** The Bible explicitly states that there was no one greater before or since Solomon (1KIN 3:10-12).
- **John the Baptist was.** The Bible explicitly states that no woman has ever bore a greater son (MAT 11:11).
- **Jesus is implied to be the greatest person ever,** but the Bible is not explicit about this; it just says that Jesus was “greater than Solomon” (LUK 11:30-31).

Were all of Job’s children killed?

- **Yes.** The Bible explicitly states that Job was the sole survivor of the windstorm that leveled his house (JOB 1:19), and that God had “cast them away” (JOB 8:4).
- **No.** Some of Job’s children must have survived, because Job lamented about how his kids dislike him for being stinky (JOB 19:17).

Who cast Jonah into the sea?

- **The mariners did** (JON 1:5, 7, 15).
- **The Lord did it himself** (JON 2:1-3).

What swallowed Jonah?

- **“A great fish”** (JON 1:17).
- **A whale** (MAT 12:40).

Was Jerusalem conquered during the rule of Ahaz?

- **Yes.** Under Ahaz, Jerusalem was conquered twice; once by the King of Syria, and later by the King of Israel (2CHR 28:1, 5-6).
- **No.** Although both the Syrians and the Israelis besieged Jerusalem, neither was able to take it (2KIN 16:5).

Was Ahaz buried with his fathers?

- **Yes.** The Bible explicitly states that Ahaz was buried with his fathers (2KIN 16:20).
- **No.** Ahaz was denied his burial, as punishment for laying waste to his lands and slaying his people (ISA 14:20, 28).

What did reversing the sundial show?

- It was a sign **that God would heal Hezekiah** (2KIN 20:7-11).
- It was a sign **that God would defend Jerusalem from the Assyrians** (ISA 38:4-8).

Is the ability to speak in tongues a blessing?

- **No.** In fact, God explicitly created the concept of foreign languages as a curse to punish humankind for their insolence (GEN 11:6-7).
- **Yes.** Speaking in tongues is one of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit (ACT 2:5-6, 11).

Were the pagans of Athens worshipping idols out of ignorance? If so, were they punished for this?

- The Athenians worshiped idols because they were ignorant (ACT 17:22-23). **God overlooked this sin because the Athenians acted out of ignorance, and not from malice** (ACT 17:30).
- The Athenians existed in the world God created, and thus had proof for his existence. As such, **they had no excuse for their idolatry** (ROM 1:18-20) **and God punished them accordingly** (ROM 1:24-28).

Exactly what is the Holy Spirit?

- **The Holy Spirit is an advanced intelligence**, which can teach all things, and grant an instant perfect recall (JOH 14:26), in order to lead people to truth (JOH 16:13). This intelligence is itself a distinct, separate entity (ACT 8:29, 39; 13:2; 16:7).
- **The Holy Spirit is an influence**, a supernatural force that God uses to complete tasks (GEN 1:2; ISA 42:1; ACT 1:5; 2:17; 4:8; 10:38).

6.7 — Points of Contention with the Christian Lifestyle

What do riches say about a man?

- **They are righteous.** Riches are a sign of righteousness, because the righteous are not forsaken, and have no need to beg (PSA 37:25). As such, “in the house of the righteous is much treasure” (PRO 15:6).
- **They are doomed.** It is astonishingly difficult for the wealthy to enter Heaven (MAT 19:23-24). As such, the wealthy are miserable (JAM 5:1) because they have nothing to look forward to (LUK 6:24).

Can the rich receive God's reward?

- **Yes.** There is a precedent for this:
 - After his enduring his curses, God granted the previously-wealthy Job twice what he had before (JOB 42:10).
 - Jesus accepted the wealthy Joseph of Arimathea as one of his disciples (MAT 27:57).
- **No.** “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (MAT 19:24). It is the poor who are the blessed inheritors of God's kingdom (LUK 6:20), while the rich will “weep and howl” at their own misery (JAM 5:1-3).

Is money evil?

- **Yes,** “for the love of money is the root of all evil” (1TIM 6:10).
- **No.** Money will solve all of your problems (ECC 10:19).

Should men leave inheritances for their children?

- **Yes**, because “a good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children” (PRO 13:22).
- **No**. One should “Sell that ye have, and give alms...” (LUK 12:33).

Is poverty a blessing?

- **No**. Poverty just destroys the poor (PRO 10:15). God will use riches to reward the faithful (PSA 112:1, 3; PRO 15:6) until gold seems as abundant as dirt (JOB 22:23-24). Whatever you sacrifice to serve Jesus and his gospel, will be paid back a hundredfold, on Earth, in your lifetime (MAR 10:30).
- **Yes**. The poor are blessed (LUK 6:20) and chosen by God (JAM 2:5), and are promised happiness after death, whereas the rich are merely happy now (LUK 6:24). Material treasure is inferior to spiritual treasure, which cannot rust, decay, or be stolen (MAT 6:19, 21).
- **Indirectly yes**. Since it is extremely difficult for the rich to enter Heaven (MAR 10:24-25), they are fated to miserable (JAM 5:1-3).
- **Irrelevant**. God does not drastically alter the socioeconomic statuses of his believers. Instead, he brings them contentment (PRO 30:8-9).

Should you trust other people?

- **Yes**. You should “believeth all things” (1COR 13:7), because “charity never faileth” (1COR 13:8).
- **No**. You can't trust anyone you know — not even your friends or spouse (MIC 7:5), because they are all deceivers and slanderers (JER 9:4).

Should Christians believe everything?

- **Yes**. “Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things” (1COR 13:7).
- **No**. You should seek evidence for all claims, and only stick with you have proven to be true (1THE 5:21), because only “the simple believeth every word” (PRO 14:15).

Is wisdom good?

- **Yes**, because “wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding” (PRO 4:7). When Jesus gained wisdom, it granted him favor with both God and man (LUK 2:52).
- **No**. God will “destroy the wisdom of the wise” (1COR 1:19-20). Those who are wise in worldly things are seemingly fools before God, because an all-knowing God, by definition, knows the thoughts of the wise. Therefore, wisdom is useless, since it offers no real advantage against God's wrath (1COR 3:19-20).

Can wisdom make people happy?

- **Yes.** "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding" (PRO 3:13).
- **No.** "For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow" (ECC 1:18).

Does the Bible endorse self-praise?

- **Yes.** Moses, as author of the Pentateuch, exalted himself as being "very great" (EXO 11:3), and meek to such a great degree that it alone made him "above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" (NUM 12:3).
- **No.** Seeking honors is "not good" (PRO 25:27).

Is it good to be happy?

- **Yes.** Mirth is commendable (ECC 8:15), because "a merry heart doeth good like a medicine" (PRO 17:22).
- **No.** "Sorrow is better than laughter" because it is good for the heart; the wise mourn, and fools laugh. (ECC 7:3-4). Seeking happiness is a waste of time, since you'll eventually become sad again later (LUK 6:25).

Should Christians mourn?

- **Yes.** "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (MAT 5:4).
- **No.** Christians are expected to rejoice at all times (PHILI 4:4).

Is having a good name a blessing?

- **Yes.** A good name is preferable to great riches (PRO 22:1) and precious ointments (ECC 7:1).
- **No.** "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!" (LUK 6:26).

Is it good to be childish?

- **Yes.** Unless you change and become childish, you can never enter Heaven (MAT 18:3).
- **No.** You should "put away childish things" (1COR 13:11), and not be childlike (EPH 4:14), so that you can think like a grown person (1COR 14:20).

Is it good to be foolish?

- **Yes.** God is pleased by foolish actions, like preaching to the converted (1COR 1:21), since they are a prophylaxis against pride (1COR 4:10).
- **Indirectly yes.** Learning from foolish mistakes is necessary to become wise (1COR 3:18-19).
- **No.** God hates fools, and can't stand the sight of them (PSA 5:5). However, this does not apply to wise people who act like fools (EPH 5:15).

Can foolishness be corrected?

- **Yes.** Foolishness can be corrected with stern discipline (PRO 22:15).
- **No.** Fools can never be separated from their foolishness (PRO 27:22).

Are there any truly new things?

- **No,** “there is no new thing under the sun” (ECC 1:9).
- **Yes,** there will be:
 - God will create “new heavens and a new earth” (ISA 65:17) for the righteous to live in (2PET 3:13).
 - “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2COR 5:17).

Is Christianity an easy path to walk?

- **Yes.** Jesus taught that compared to hard labor, following him is like rest, because “my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (MAT 11:28-30).
- **No.** Christians should expect to be persecuted (2TIM 3:12), because Jesus expected his followers to be able to endure tribulations (JOH 16:33). God will chasten and scourge all of Christ’s followers (HEB 12:6), and those who are not punished are “bastards” (HEB 12:8).

Is temptation desirable?

- **Yes.** Being tried and tested is a joyous thing; challenges are fun (JAM 1:2).
- **No.** Jesus taught his disciples to pray against being led into temptation (MAT 6:13), because even strong-willed people eventually cave into to desire (MAT 26:41).

Are Exorcisms in Jesus' name the sign of a true Christian?

- **Yes.** Jesus explicitly defined the ability to perform exorcisms as one of the metrics used to identify Christians (MAR 16:17).
- **No.** Non-Christians can also perform exorcisms in Jesus’ name (MAR 9:38).

Will you reap what you sow?

- **Yes,** exactly (GAL 6:7). “He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully” (2COR 9:6).
- **No:**
 - “They have sown wheat, but shall reap thorns” (JER 12:13).
 - “He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity” (PRO 22:8).
 - Sowing does not imply a definite chance to reap (MIC 6:15).
 - One can reap what others have sown (MAT 25:26; LUK 19:22).

Can good works lead to your salvation?

- **Yes:**
 - Jesus (JOH 5:28-29; 2COR 5:10) and God (ROM 2:5-6; 1PET 1:17) judge people based on their works, and their compliance with God's laws (ROM 2:13). God distributes divine mercy in proportion to these works (PSA 62:12).
 - Jesus explicitly stated that he rewards good works (MAT 16:27).
 - Claims of faith are meaningless unless they are made tangible by works (JAM 2:14, 17, 22-24, 26).
- **No:**
 - Good works cannot lead to salvation, because they cause men to boast. Salvation comes only through faith alone (GEN 15:6; ROM 1:17, 3:28; EPH 2:8-9), because man is intrinsically incapable of greatness, and only God's forgiveness can make one great (ROM 4:5). This grace is, by definition, not work (ROM 11:5-6). Non-believers are damned, regardless of baptisms (MAR 16:16) or what the law says (GAL 2:16, 3:11), because knowing the law requires knowing and understanding the concept of sin (ROM 3:20). This is why even the righteous have a hard time finding salvation (1PET 4:18).
 - Only the "born again" are saved (JOH 3:3). Those who do not believe in Jesus are automatically damned to hell. (JOH 3:18, 36).
 - The works of man are irrelevant, since salvation is granted arbitrarily at Jesus' discretion. (EPH 1:3-5).
- **Not really.** Jesus judged men based on what they said they would do (MAT 12:37).
- **Irrelevant.** God predetermined your salvation before you were ever born, so neither faith nor works can alter the outcome (ROM 8:29).
- **Maybe?:**
 - You only need to love God and your neighbor to be saved (LUK 10:26-28).
 - You can always buy your way out of sins via alms giving (TOB 12:9).
Please note that this is an Apocryphal claim.
- **Hedge your bets.** Abraham was saved both by faith (ROM 4:2) and works (JAM 2:21).

Should justice be dispensed by one man?

- **No.** The laws set forth in the Pentateuch clearly state that judgments must be dealt by a combination of priests, elders, and judges (DEU 17:9; 21:2).
- **Yes.** Moses, the alleged author of the Pentateuch, judged his people alone, without consequence (EXO 18:18).

Are some people justified?

- **No.** No living person is justified (PSA 143:1-2)
- **Maybe?** Some people will be justified by their words, and others condemned (MAT 12:37).

Has there ever been a just person?

- **Yes.** Noah (GEN 6:9), Mary's husband Joseph (MAT 1:19), and Cornelius the Centurion (ACT 10:22) were all explicitly stated to be just men.
- **No,** "for there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not (ECC 7:20).

What makes men just, and what becomes of just men?

- **Faith** makes one just (HAB 2:4), yet **they will still perish** (ECC 7:15).
- **Good works** makes one just (EZE 18:5), and **they "shall surely live"** (EZE 18:9).

Who is responsible for salvation?

- **God is.** Salvation is God's work (PSA 74:12).
- **You are.** Each person is ultimately responsible for their own salvation (PHILI 2:12).

Can salvation be granted without effort?

- **No.** Earning salvation requires effort, like winning a medal for running a race (1COR 9:24).
- **Yes.** Salvation is purely due to God's mercy, which is independent of a person's will or actions (ROM 9:16).

Is faith a form of work?

- **Yes.** Having faith is just "the work of faith" (1THE 1:3; 2THE 1:11), since faith is "the work of God" (JOH 6:29) because it works by love (GAL 5:6).
- **No, by necessity.** If mankind was saved, then faith cannot be work, because people were saved by their faith in Jesus alone (JOH 3:36), and not by any of their works (GAL 2:16). It has to be this way, since allowing salvation through works just leads to pride and arrogance (EPH 2:8-9).
- **No, by definition.** If you have to work for God's grace, then it wouldn't be grace, *per se* (ROM, 11:5-6).

Can people fall from grace?

- **Yes** (HEB 10:39):
 - God will kill those who make even a single mistake, regardless of their good deeds (EZE 18:24-26). Those who have fallen from grace cannot regain it through repentance (HEB 6:4-6).
 - Defying Jesus results in consequences far worse than defying the Old Testament God, because Jesus damns people to Hell forever, whereas God merely killed (HEB 10:26-29). All who have learned God's laws are required to follow them to the letter; which is why the Bible explicitly admits that everyone would be better off to never learn them (2PET 2:21-22).
 - Jesus willingly let Judas fall from grace in order to fulfill the scriptures (JOH 17:12).
- **No.** Jesus explicitly stated that it is impossible to fall from grace (JOH 10:28), since there is no mechanism that separates people from God's love (ROM 8:38-39).

What is repentance?

- Repentance is an **action that men must perform** (ACT 17:30) or they will perish (MAR 1:15; LUK 13:5).
- Repentance is **one of God's gifts** (ACT 5:31, ACT 11:18, 2TIM 2:25).

Do people have limits?

- **No.** With faith all things are possible (MAT 17:20, MAR 9:23).
- **Yes.** Somethings are impossible for men, but are possible for God (MAT 19:26).

Do Christians know how to pray?

- **Yes.** Jesus taught his followers the Lord's Prayer/Our Father to specifically address this issue (MAT 6:9-13).
- **No.** People don't know what to really pray for, so the Holy Spirit has to infer our needs based on what makes us groan (ROM 8:26).

Is prayer reliable?

- **Yes.** Whatever you ask for in prayer, you will receive, provided that you believe (MAT 21:22), because Jesus will do anything that is asked in his name (JOH 14:14).
- **No.** The Bible explicitly demonstrates that prayer can and will fail:
- Prayers cannot pass through clouds (LAM 3:44).
 - Jesus prayed for God to stop Simon Peter's betrayal, yet it still happened (MAT 26:69-70; LUK 22:31-34). As a result, Jesus considered his best friend to be Satanic (MAT 16:23).
 - Jesus claimed that anyone with faith could replicate his water-walking feat, but no one other than Peter has done so (MAT 14:25-31).

Are repetitious prayers effective?

- **Yes.** Jesus explicitly stated that those who “cry day and night” with repeated prayers will win God’s attention and “he will avenge them speedily” (LUK 18:7-8).
- **No:**
 - Jesus explicitly taught that repeated prayers are a waste of time, since an all-knowing God would already be aware of your needs and desires (MAT 6:7-8).
 - God intentionally ignores the prayers of those who pray too often (ISA 1:15).

Is it profitable to study scripture?

- **Yes.** Since all scripture is divinely inspired, all scriptural studies are profitable, since they teach righteousness (2TIM 3:16).
- **No.** The older scriptures are useless (HEB 7:1).

Does the Bible teach forgiveness?

- **Yes.** The main point of Jesus’ teachings was that God will forgive those who forgive others (MAT 6:14-15; EPH 4:32; COL 3:13). Enemies should be loved (LUK 6:27), and belligerence should be countered with passive-aggression (MAT 5:38-39), because turnabout is not fair play (ROM 12:17-19).
- **No.** Those who harm others should also be harmed (GEN 9:6), in the same manner, and to the same degree (EXO 21:12, 23-25; LEV 24:20; DEU 19:21).

What makes a man righteous?

- **Fear.** (PRO 16:6; JER 32:38- 40; MAT 10:28)
- **Love.** (1JOH 4:18; 5:2; 2JOH 1:6)

Has there ever been a truly righteous person?

- **Yes.** The Bible discusses how God treats righteous people (ECC 9:1; MAT 25:46; JAM 5:16), which implies their existence. In addition, The Bible explicitly stated that the following people were righteous and/or perfect:
 - Noah (GEN 7:1).
 - David (2SAM 22:25).
 - Daniel (EZE 14:14).
 - Job (JOB 2:3).
 - Abel (MAT 23:35).
 - Zacharias and Elizabeth (LUK 1:6).
 - Lot (2PET 2:7-8).
- **No** (ISA 41:26, 64:6). “As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one” (ROM 3:10).

What becomes of the righteous?

- **They will prosper and “not wither”** (PSA 1:3), because those who seek after God “shall not want any good thing” (PSA 34:10). God will reward the righteous, even if he intentionally set out to harm them (JOB 42:12). Case and point, Joseph was a righteous person who became prosperous despite being sold into slavery by his own family (GEN 39:2). As such, the righteous will survive the great tribulation (REV 7:14).
- **They will fail.** Bad things will happen to good people, and good things will happen to bad people (ECC 8:14) because all who wish to be Christians will be hated by everyone (LUK 21:17). The righteous will meet foul ends, such as stoning, being “sawn asunder,” temptation, sword wounds, destitution, affliction, and torment (HEB 11:37).

Can beggars also be righteous people?

- **No.** Since a truly righteous person would not be forsaken, they would never have to resort to begging (PSA 37:25).
- **Yes.** Lazarus was a beggar, and he was explicitly shown to ascend into heaven by a host of angels upon his death (LUK 16:20-22).

Is man capable of goodness?

- **No.** There is literally no one in the world that is capable of good (ROM 3:12) because only God is capable of goodness (MAR 10:18). God sees even the most virtuous person as “a filthy rag” (ISA 64:6).
- **Yes,** some mortal humans were capable of good (MAT 5:45; 2COR 5:10), such as Noah (GEN 7:1), Zacharias, and Elizabeth (LUK 1:5-7).
- **Yes and no.** Humanity is mixed bag of righteous and wicked people (MAT 13:47-48; 22:10; JOH 5:29).

Should others see your good works?

- **Yes.** By allowing others to see your good works, you will show others the goodness of God, by proxy (MAT 5:16; 1PET 2:12).
- **No.** Good works must be performed in secret, or at least anonymously, so their performers avoid becoming attention-seekers and hypocrites. People’s actions can lead to earthly rewards or heavenly rewards, but not both (MAT 6:1-4). Good works done to exalt oneself will ultimately debase oneself (MAT 23:5, 12).

Do Christians sin?

- **Yes.** Only self-deceiving Christians claim to be without sin. While the forgiveness of sins is as simple as confession, only liars claim to be completely without sin (1JOH 1:8).
- **No.** Those born of God are incapable of sin, and all sinners are “of the devil” (1JOH 3:8-10).

What will God do to the wicked?

- **They will prosper** (JER 12:1), **become mighty, and live to an old age** (JOB 21:7). The more a man sins, the longer he will live (ECC 8:12). Robbers will become wealthy, and those who provoke God will become secure (JOB 12:6). They will have "more than their heart can wish" (PSA 73:7) and their large families will inherit this wealth (PSA 17:14).
- **God will not grant wicked people long lives** (ECC 8:13); if anything, he will shorten their lives (PRO 10:27), so that they will die early (ECC 7:17). Their souls will be destroyed upon death (JOB 18:5).
- **Nothing.** Wicked people need no divine punishments, because they will eventually fall victim to the schemes (2TIM 3:13) and evil (PSA 34:21; PRO 13:21) of other wicked people.

Are sinners promptly punished?

- **Yes.** God punishes sinners swiftly (JOB 24:18-20, 24).
- **No.** The wicked will live (JOB 21:7) because God is reluctant to punish them (JOB 21:9, 14).

Are all people sinners?

- **Yes.** There can be no righteous people (ROM 3:10) because all have sinned (1KIN 8:46; ECC 7:20; ROM 3:23), and those who claim otherwise are self-deceived (1JOH 1:8) or liars (1JOH 1:10).
 - Absolutely everyone is filthy (PRO 20:9), and no one has ever done a single good thing (PSA 14:2-3). This is because people are formed by sex, which is intrinsically sinful (PSA 51:5), which is compounded by the burden of Original Sin (ROM 5:12; 1COR 15:22).
 - Only God is capable of good (MAR 10:18).
- **No.** Several people have lived without sin:
 - Noah (GEN 6:9), and Job (JOB 1:8) were both said to be perfect.
 - Zacharias and Elizabeth were considered righteous and blameless, having followed of God's laws and commandments (LUK 1:5-6).
 - David was holy (PSA 86:2).
 - Catholics believe that Mary was without sin. Please note that this dogma has no scriptural basis; it was declared, *ex cathedra*, by Pope Pius IX in Ineffabilis Deus (1854).
- **Yes and no.** Humanity is a mixed bag of sinners and righteous people (LUK6:45), which is why a Christ was needed in the first place (1JOH 2:1).
- **The definition of "person" is flexible to make Christians look good.** A *real* Christian doesn't sin; they are intrinsically godly as a result of being created from God. Sinners only exist because they are "the children of the devil" (1JOH 3:6-10).

Are people sinful from birth?

- **Yes**, because sex is intrinsically impure (PSA 51:5), and no one can “bring a clean thing out of an unclean” thing (JOB 14:4). There is no reason to assume that people are intrinsically righteous or pure (JOB 15:14). If anything, children are wicked from the moment of birth (PSA 58:3), which is why they must be beaten into submission (PRO 22:15).
- **No**. Young children cannot be sinful, since they are unable to discern between good and evil (DEU 1:39; ISA 7:15-16; ROM 9:11). Jesus required this childlike innocence from his followers as a condition for their salvation (MAT 18:3-4; LUK 18:16-17).
 - People are intrinsically capable of good; it just doesn't seem that way because they get caught up in schemes (ECC 7:29).

Is suffering caused by sin?

- **Yes**. “...to the sinner he giveth travail” (ECC 2:26). This is why sinners die (EZE 18:20), and the wicked are destroyed (PSA 145:20) and condemned (PRO 12:2).
- **Possibly?** Suffering is conferred upon those who charge interest on loans (EZE 18:13).
- **No**. Jesus pointed out that the blind man's sightlessness was not the result of his sin, or his parent's sins (JOH 9:1-3).

Should you pray for the dead?

- **Yes**. Praying on behalf of the dead helps them atone for their sins (2MAC 12:44-46).
- **No**. Praying for the dead is a waste of time, as it won't restore them to life. (2SAM 12:21-23)

Will everyone see the glory of the LORD?

- **Yes**. All living things will witness the glory of the Lord together (ISA 40:5).
- **No**. The unjust will not behold the majesty of the Lord (ISA 26:10).

Can people escape death?

- **No**. Everyone is fated to die (HEB 9:27) and rot (ECC 3:20), as a result of Original Sin (ROM 5:12).
- **Yes**. Jesus Christ abolished the concept of death (2TIM 1:10) for those who follow his teachings (JOH 8:51; 11:26; 1THE 4:15-17). Instead, they will merely be “changed” (1COR 15:51).
- **Not exactly**. Christ only abolished the “second death” that comes at the end of the world (REV 2:11).

Will Christians face persecution?

- **Yes**. Christian persecution is just a fact of life (2TIM 3:12).
- **No**. When a man pleases God, God will make his enemies be at peace with him (PRO 16:7).

Why do people die?

- **Eve screwed up.** Death was one of God's punishments for Adam, Eve, and their descendants, for learning about good and evil after eating from the Tree of Life. (GEN 3:22)
- **Satan wills it.** Death is the consequence of sin (ROM 6:23, JAM 1:15), and thus Satan's invention (ROM 5:12).
- **Jesus is somewhat responsible for sin and death.** Had Jesus not preached, the sinful could plea for mercy due to their ignorance (JOH 15:22).

Do humans possess freewill?

- **Yes.** Man is explicitly stated to have "power over his own will" (1COR 7:37). Man is capable of freely choosing which gods to serve (JOS 24:15) and what laws to follow (DEU 11:26-28; 30:19; ISA 7:15; REV 22:17).
- **No.** Humans do not possess freewill, because of predestination (ACT 13:48; ROM 8:29-30; 2TIM 1:9). No man has ever had a chance to think for himself, because all of his thoughts and actions were worked out by God before he created the world (EPH 1:4-5). As such, God created some people solely to be damned for denying Jesus (JUDE 1:4).
 - God shapes everyone's situations and destinies to produce God's desired outcome, creating the illusion of choice in lieu of freewill (ROM 9:15-16). God deliberately lies to people to coax them into sin and damnation as a means to this end (2THE 2:11-12).
 - See §8.2.2 for additional details.

Do people die like beasts do?

- **Yes.** People die just like beasts, because "a man hath no preeminence above a beast" (ECC 3:19).
- **No.** While their bodies return to the dust of the earth, souls are returned to their original owner, God (ECC 12:7).

Will all who seek to enter actually be received?

- **Yes.** Everyone who made an honest effort to enter Heaven will be received (LUK 11:9-10).
- **No.** Many will seek to enter, and still be unable (LUK 13:23-24).

Will every man die for his own sin?

- **Yes.** Everyone will be put to death as punishment for their own sin. It is not possible for a third party to die on someone else's behalf (DEU 24:16).
- **No.** Christ died for all sins, and was punished for the unrelated actions of other people (1PET 3:18).

Will the righteous flourish?

- **Yes.** "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree" (PSA 92:12-13).
- **No.** The righteous will perish (ISA 57:1), because "all things come alike to all" (ECC 9:2).

Who will be saved?

- **Literally everyone.** Through his death and resurrection, Jesus saved all men (JOH 12:32, ROM 5:18) and all flesh (LUK 3:6). Even harlots and government officials now stand a chance of entering Heaven (MAT 21:31).
- **Not everyone.** Jesus taught that although many people will try, few people will actually be saved (LUK 13:23-24). There is much ambiguity and contradiction in this regard, so the saved may or may not be:
 - Anyone who believes in Jesus Christ (JOH 3:16; ACT 16:31).
 - Anyone who both believes in Jesus Christ *and* was baptized (MAR 16:16).
 - Anyone who *claims* to believe in Jesus (ROM 10:9).
 - Claiming belief is insufficient for salvation, unless they actually follow Jesus' teachings (LUK 6:46).
 - Those who repent (LUK 13:3, ACT 3:19).
 - Those who both repent *and* were baptized (ACT 2:38).
 - Only the baptized are saved (JOH 3:5).
 - Only the "born again" are saved (JOH 3:3).
 - The predestined (ROM 8:29-30; 9:11-18; EPH 1:4; 2THE 2:13; 1PET 1:2).
 - The "called" (ROM 8:30).
 - Being called will not guarantee salvation, as few of the called are among the predestined (MAT 20:16).
 - All of the Jews (ISA 54:9-10; ROM 11:26).
 - A small percentage of the Jews (ROM 9:27).
 - None of the Jews; for they are all damned (MAT 8:12, MAT 21:43, 45).
 - Those who earn salvation by their works (MAT 7:21; JOH 5:29).
 - Those who earn salvation by following Jesus' teachings (JOH 8:51).
 - Anyone who loves both God and their neighbor (LUK 10:26).
 - Whoever calls on the name of the Lord, because they are automatically saved (ACT 2:21).
 - Calling on the Lord's name is insufficient, because man is judged by his works, and not by faith (MAT 7:21).
 - Those who doubt are automatically damned (PRO 14:23), even if they were baptized (MAR 16:16).
 - Despite this, Thomas still became a saint, even after his clear objection to news of the resurrection (JOH 20:24).
 - The following groups of people cannot be saved: the unrighteous, fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, the effeminate, abusers (of themselves or of others), thieves, the covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortionists (1COR 6:9-10).

Should Christians find joy when their enemies fail (schadenfreude)?

- **Yes.** A righteous man is to rejoice when their enemies fall, even going as far as to "wash his feet in the blood of the wicked" (PSA 58:10).
- **No.** "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth (PRO 24:17).

Will bad things happen to good people?

- **Yes.** Christian persecution is just a fact of life (2TIM 3:12), because the just and upright are targets of ridicule and scorn (JOB 12:4). God will discipline and scourge everyone he acknowledges (HEB 12:6). This is why God stood idle and allowed Satan to smite Job (JOB 2:7).
- **No.** Bad things are reserved only for bad people (PRO 12:21), and those who do not follow God (1PET 3:13).

How should enemies be treated?

- **Poorly.** Enemies should be persecuted, destroyed (LAM 3:66), and pursued as they flee from your cities (JOS 10:19). If your enemies preach some other gospel, they should be cursed (GAL 1:9) and forced to castrate themselves (GAL 5:10-12); it is wrong to even acknowledge their existence (2JOH 1:10). Both God (LEV 26:7; DEU 7:9-10, 20:14) and Jesus (LUK 19:27) ordered that enemies who resist their rule are to be slain. Enemy belongings are to be plundered and divided among the faithful (JOS 22:8).
- **Well.** You should be good to your enemies (LUK 6:27). Specifically, you should return their lost property (EXO 23:4) and fulfill their basic needs (PRO 25:21).

Should Christians bear the burdens of others?

- **Yes.** "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (GAL 6:2).
- **No.** "For every man shall bear his own burden" (GAL 6:5).

How should people be baptized?

- **In the name of the Trinity** (MAT 28:19).
- **Only in the name of Jesus** (ACT 2:38; 8:16; 10:48).

How much should you love your neighbor?

- **As much as you love yourself** (LEV 19:18).
- **More than you love yourself** (1COR 10:24).

Will the righteous win earthly prosperity?

- **Yes, in the long term.** Righteous people will prosper (PSA 1:1-3) and inherit the land forever (PSA 37:29).
- **Yes, in the short term.** Whatever you sacrifice for Jesus or his cause will be rewarded a hundredfold, payable on earth, during your lifetime (MAR 10:29-30). This is the basis for the televangelist's "prosperity gospel."
- **No.** Jesus taught that earthly treasure should be rejected, "for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Jesus also pointed out that spiritual treasures are more practical, since they cannot rust, decay, or be stolen (MAT 6:19-21).

How should reprimands be dealt?

- **Privately** (MAT 18:15).
- **Publicly** (i.e., in front of a minimum of 2-3 witnesses) (1TIM 5:19-20).

Should Christians bear weapons?

- **Yes.** Jesus explicitly ordered his disciples to buy weapons, even if they had to sell all of their clothes to come up with the money (LUK 22:36).
- **No.** Jesus explicitly told his disciples that they had no use for weapons, “for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword” (MAT 26:52).

Should Christians pray in public?

- **Yes.** You should pray everywhere (1TIM 2:8).
- **No.** You should pray in secret, because only hypocrites feel a need to pray publicly (MAT 6:5-6).

Can Christians marry unbelievers?

- **No.** Unbelievers are to be avoided (2COR 6:14, 17).
- **Yes.** Christians can marry non-Christians if it makes them happy (1COR 7:12).

Should you argue with unbelievers?

- **Yes, so prepare extensively.** You should “be ready always to give an answer” to religious questions (1PET 3:15).
- **Yes, provided that you *do not* prepare for religious debates.** Instead, you should just let the Holy Spirit do all of the work (MAR 13:11).
- **No.** You should “stop disputing about words” (2TIM 2:14) because professing faith has caused people to deviate from it. Instead, you should protect your own belief (1TIM 6:20).

Should Christians curse their enemies?

- **No.** “Bless them who persecute you: bless, and curse not” (ROM 12:14).
- **Yes.** “He that saith unto the wicked, Thou art righteous; him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him” (PRO 24:24).

Can Christians charge interest on loans?

- **No.** It is immoral to charge interest on loans (LEV 25:37).
- **It depends.** It is only immoral to charge interest to the poor (EXO 22:25) and to other Hebrews (DEU 23:19-20).
- **Yes, but only to a certain degree.** Usury was declared to a sin by the Councils of Lyons (1274) and Vienne (1312), which placed harsher penalties on the usury edicts of the 3rd Lateran Council (1175). Usurers had three months to make amends or be excommunicated as heretics, made into outlaws, and denied sacraments and funerals. [132]
- **Absolutely yes.** In fact, it is immoral to lend money *without* charging interest (LUK 19:23).

Should you expose someone's foolishness when rebuking him?

- **No**, because then you will be just like them (PRO 26:4).
- **Yes**, "lest he be wise in his own conceit" (PRO 26:5).

Should Christians swear oaths in the name of God?

- **No**. Oaths serve no purpose, since lying is already punishable by damnation (JAM 5:12).
- **Yes**. Swearing oaths in the name of the Lord is acceptable practice (EXO 22:11; DEU 6:13); Abraham (GEN 21:24, 31), Jacob (GEN 31:53), God himself (ISA 45:22-23; HEB 6:17), and the angels (REV 10:5-6) all swore oaths. However, those who swear bind their souls to the oath, and breaking such an oath is a sin (NUM 30:2).

Is it wrong to call anyone but God "father"?

- **Yes**. Jesus taught that you should "call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, who is in heaven." (MAT 23:9).
- **No**. John did this in one of his epistles (1JOH 2:13).

Should men have long hair?

- **No**. It is shameful for men to have long hair (1COR 11:14).
- **Yes**. God likes it:
 - God granted Samson superhuman strength on the condition that he grew long hair (JUDG 13:5).
 - The Nazarites grew long hair as a symbol of their total devotion to God (NUM 6:5), in compliance with God's hair-care regulations (LEV 19:27).

Is it wrong to celebrate non-Christian holidays?

- **Yes**. Celebrating non-Christian holidays is no better, worse, or different than divination, enchantments, witchcraft, or human sacrifice (DEU 18:10). Those who celebrate non-Christian holidays turn their backs on God and all he has done (GAL 4:9-11).
- **No**. Celebrating non-Christian holidays is fine, provided that you keep God in mind (ROM 14:6).

Is it wrong to call someone a fool?

- **Yes**. Anytime you call someone a fool, you are "in danger of hellfire" (MAT 5:22).
- **No**. Jesus (MAT 23:1, 17, 19; LUK 11:40; 12:20) and Paul (1COR 15:35-36) both called people fools.

Should you follow your own heart?

- **Yes.** You should “trust in the Lord with all thine heart” (PRO 3:5), because following your heart is the key to reclaiming the joy of youth (ECC 11:9).
- **No.** Don’t follow your heart, because it always ends with going after whores (NUM 15:39).

Should adulterers be executed?

- **Yes.** Adultery is a capital crime for everyone involved (LEV 20:10).
- **No.** Jesus explicitly stopped a known adulterer’s execution, since such executions are an immoral practice (JOH 8:7).

Should you try to please others?

- **Yes.** Everyone should “please their neighbor” (ROM 15:2), and Paul mentioned how he pleased everyone while preaching (1COR 10:33).
- **No.** Trying to please everyone is ultimately incompatible with the realities of serving Christ (GAL 1:10).

Is anger wrong?

- **Yes.** Men should be slow to anger, because the angry cannot perform the works of God (JAM 1:19-20). Angry men are fools (ECC 7:9) who die early deaths (JOB 5:2). The irrationally angry will be judged poorly (MAT 5:22), and should you should not befriend them (PRO 22:24).
- **No.** In fact, anger *prevents* you from committing sins (EPH 4:26).

Should a man marry his brother’s widow? If so, who is considered the father of their children?

- **Yes.** Men should marry their widowed sisters-in-law (DEU 25:5), though the dead brother should be listed as the father of their first child (DEU 25:6; RUT 4:5, 9-10, 13, 17).
- **No.** It is unclean for men to marry their sisters-in-law (LEV 20:21).
- **No one seems to care.** Obed was a child of such a relationships (RUT 4:21; MAT 1:5), but was not considered to be the dead brother’ son (LUK 3:32).

Can Christians divorce?

- **Yes, unconditionally.** No-fault divorces are an accepted practice (DEU 24:1).
- **Yes, conditionally.** Jesus taught that divorce is only acceptable as a response to adultery (MAT 19:9).
- **No.** Divorce is impossible, because God unites people in marriage, and man lacks the power to undo this (MAR 10:7-12).

Can the divorced remarry?

- **Yes.** The Book of Deuteronomy explicitly states that divorce and remarriage are both acceptable practices (DEU 24:1-2).
- **No.** Jesus explicitly stated that remarriage after divorce constitutes adultery (MAR 10:11-12).

What happens to those who have sex during menstruation?

- **They are unclean.** The man and the bed are to be considered to be unclean for seven days (LEV 15:24).
- **They are to be banished** (LEV 20:18), because this is a forbidden practice (LEV 18:19).

Is incest wrong?

- **Yes.** Incest “is a wicked thing” (LEV 20:17), and those who practice it are cursed (DEU 27:22).
- **No.** Lot committed incest (GEN 19:36), and was later described as being both “just” and “righteous” (2PET 2:7-8). Both Aaron and Moses were the products of incest (EXO 6:20), and they were chosen — not cursed — by God.

Can castrates enter heaven?

- **No.** The Bible explicitly states that men with testicular injuries and/or severed penises “shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord” (DEU 23:1).
- **Yes.** God will not discriminate against eunuchs who follow his laws and customs (ISA 56:4-5; MAT 19:12).

Should men take care of their families?

- **Yes.** Men who cannot provide for their families have denied the Christian faith worse than any infidel (1TIM 5:8). One of the measures of a man is ensuring that he leaves his family an inheritance upon his death (PRO 13:22).
- **No.** Hating your family was required to be one of Jesus’ disciples (LUK 14:26), because his disciples were ordered to sell all that they had (LUK 12:33), and to neglect basic needs such as food, water, and clothing; they were even forbidden from making plans to meet these basic needs (MAT 6:31), since they were to have absolutely no plans for the future (MAT 6:34).

How should children be treated?

- **Harshly.** Stubborn or rebellious children should be stoned to death, DEU 21:18, 21). While this may sound extreme, be mindful that bashing your children against stones will bring happiness (PSA 137:9).
- **Tenderly.** Wrathful children are difficult to indoctrinate (EPH 6:4), and angry children become discouraged (COL 3:21).

Should you honor your parents?

- **Yes.** Jesus reiterated the Commandments, and explicitly stated that you should honor your parents (LUK 18:20).
- **No.** Hating your parents was required for being one of Jesus' disciples (LUK 14:26), because Jesus claimed that anyone who loved their parents more than him was automatically unworthy of him. (MAT 10:34-37). Jesus expected his disciples to devote all of their time and energy into serving his every whim, even if it meant leaving their parent's dead bodies unburied (MAT 8:21-22).

Should children be punished for the sins of their fathers?

- **Yes.** This is a normal practice (ISA 14:21), which God endorses (JOS 7:20, 24-26).
- **No.** No one can be punished in the place of another since "every man shall be put to death for his own sin" (DEU 24:16) and judged by their own deeds (ROM 2:5-6). Since a sinner's soul dies upon bodily death, sin cannot be transferred to one's decedents (EZE 18:4, 20).

Are children innocent?

- **No.** Children are entirely accountable for their actions, and should face punishment for any of their indiscretions. This was demonstrated when Elisha invoked the name of God to curse 42 children, as vengeance for joking about his baldness. The children were all promptly mauled to death by two female bears (2KIN 2:23-24).
- **Yes.** Jesus taught that children are intrinsically innocent, and therefore good. Reclaiming this childlike innocence was one of his requirements for salvation (MAR 10:13-16).

Should you believe as a child does?

- **Yes.** Jesus explicitly taught that those who do not believe in him in with a child-like faith are banned from entering Heaven (LUK 18:16-17).
- **No.** Children are naïve, and prudent people question their beliefs (PRO 14:15).

Should you hate your brother?

- **No** (LEV 19:17-18). Anyone who hates their brother will be judged (MAT 5:22) as though they were a murderer (1JOH 3:15), since anyone claiming to love God while hating their brother is a liar (1JOH 4:20).
- **Yes.** Hating your brother was requisite for discipleship (LUK 14:26).

Should you love your wife?

- **Yes.** Husbands should love their wives as much as Christ loved the church; giving up their lives for their wives, if needed (EPH 5:25).
- **No.** Hating your wife was requisite for discipleship (LUK 14:26).

Is marriage good?

- **Yes.** Marriage is honorable (HEB 13:4). Finding a wife is a good thing, which earns favor with God (PRO 18:22), since God explicitly stated that loneliness is a bad thing (GEN 2:18).
- **No.** Paul claimed that men should not touch women (1COR 7:1) and vice-versa (1COR 7:8). Single moms are more interested in marriage than following Christ, which makes them prone to nosiness, gossip, idleness, and other Satanic activities (1TIM 5:14).

Does God allow polygamy and/or polyamory?

- **Yes.** These are both common practices in the Bible:
 - Abraham possessed concubines (GEN 25:6).
 - Jacob was a polygamist (GEN 31:17).
 - David impregnated six women (12SAM 3:2).
 - Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines (1KIN 11:1-3).
 - The Bible offers special guidance for polygamous families (DEU 21:15).
- **No.** Christians are to remain monogamous (MAL 2:14-15), as per God's intention (MAR 10:7-9), in order to avoid committing adultery (1COR 7:2), and because young love is the most enjoyable (PRO 5:18-19).

Are men and women equal?

- **Yes.** This is a re-occurring theme throughout the Bible:
 - Jesus did not take gender into consideration (ACT 2:17-18; GAL 3:28).
 - Women can receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit, e.g., prophesy (ACT 21:9).
 - Women can hold important positions:
 - Deborah, the wife of Lapidath, served as both a prophetess and as a judge (JUDG 4:4).
 - Women can be "servants of the church;" i.e., a deaconess (ROM 16:1-2).
- **No.** Men are to rule over women (GEN 3:16), just as Christ rules men (1COR 11:3; EPH 5:22). Women are to remain silent in churches (1COR 14:34), and are forbidden to teach or hold authority over men (1TIM 2:11-12).

Should the poor be favored?

- **Yes.** The Bible states that people who favor the poor are blessed; they will be delivered in times of trouble (PSA 41:1), and are guaranteed happiness (PRO 14:21).
- **No.** The Bible states that the rich and the poor are to be held to the same standards in lawsuits (EXO 23:3).

Should Christians eat leavened bread?

- **Yes.** Leavened bread is so good, that Jesus used it to explain what Heaven is like (MAT 13:33; LUK 13:20-21).
- **No.** Unleavened bread is holy (LEV 10:12), so conditionally, unleavened bread is “of malice and wickedness” (1COR 5:6-8).

Is it even possible to avoid sinning?

- **Yes.** God's laws are well-known (DEU 30:11), and anyone who tried to follow them could avoid sin (DEU 30:11-14).
- **No.** It is impossible to completely follow God's laws, and all have fallen short and sinned (ROM 3:19-20, 23). Even Jesus did not consider himself to be good (MAR 10:18).

Is it wrong to consume an otherwise-permitted food or drink that was offered to a pagan idol?

- **Yes.** The Holy Spirit itself explicitly forbade this practice (ACT 15:28-29), because “Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils” (1COR 10:20-21).
- **No.** Nothing is intrinsically unclean; they are only unclean if you think they are unclean (ROM 14:14).
- **Possibly?** Doubtters are definitely condemned if they eat or drink pagan offerings, since they didn't consider the theological implications of their actions; anything done outside of faith is a sin (ROM 14:23).

Is circumcision necessary?

- **Yes.** Circumcision is absolutely required, since it serves as proof of membership in the covenant between God and man (GEN 17:11). Those who forego the practice automatically break their covenant with God, and are to be banished (GEN 17:14).
- **No.** There is no reason for ritualistic genital mutilation:
 - The entire Hebrew population stopped the practice during the 40 years of wandering in the desert (JOS 5:5, 7).
 - Paul and Titus were both uncircumcised (GAL 2:3-4). Paul stated that those who need a circumcision cannot profit from Christianity, since compliance with the old covenant implied doubts about Christ's new and everlasting covenant (GAL 5:2).
- **It is if you want to look the part.** Circumcision is only necessary for Gentiles who want to pass for being Jewish (ACT 16:1, 3).

Should slaves desire freedom?

- **Kind of.** If they can win their freedom, then they should; but they shouldn't worry about it (1COR 7:21).
- **No.** Since all men are slaves to Christ, freedom is irrelevant (1COR 7:23).

Must one observe the Sabbath?

- **Yes.** God commanded man to observe the Sabbath (EXO 20:8), and those who do are blessed (ISA 56:2).
- **No.** Jesus taught that “the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath” (MAR 2:27-28), and that no one has the right for judge another for what they do, or do not do, on the Sabbath (COL 2:16).
- **It's irrelevant.** The exact form of religious traditions are irrelevant; they just need to be conducted with God in mind (ROM 14:5), because God dislikes things which are done without meaning (ISA 1:13).

Can one work during the Sabbath?

- **No.** In fact, performing any form of work on the Sabbath is a capital crime (EXO 31:15), though details regarding the punishment are sketchy; violators are to be:
 - Stoned (NUM 15:32-36).
 - Shunned (EXO 31:14).
- **Yes.** This occurs throughout the Bible:
 - The siege of Jericho lasted a full week, which implies that everyone involved worked on the Sabbath (JOS 6:14-15).
 - Jesus harvested food to eat on the Sabbath. When confronted by the Pharisees about this, he reveals their hypocrisy; priests are required to work on the Sabbath (MAT 12:1-8).
 - Jesus pointed out that God is always at work, even on the Sabbath (JOH 5:16-17).

Is it wrong to lie?

- **Yes.** God explicitly commanded man not to lie (EXO 20:16).
- **No.** God places “a lying spirit” into the mouths of his prophets (1KIN 22:23).

Is idolatry wrong?

- **Yes.** God explicitly commanded against making any of sort of graven image (EXO 20:4-5), or creating “the likeness of anything” which he had forbidden (DEU 4:23). Those who do so are cursed (DEU 27:15).
- **No.** God explicitly demanded the construction of idols. Specifically:
 - God ordered that the Israelites build golden cherubims, to decorate the Ark of the Covenant (EXO 25:18).
 - God commanded that Moses to make a brass serpent on a pole, to bless his people with (NUM 21:8:9).
 - Solomon's throne, and the steps leading to it, were decorated with statues of lions (1KIN 10:19-20).

Is it wrong to covet?

- **Yes.** God explicitly commanded man not to covet (EXO 20:17).
- **No.** Paul advocated coveting spiritual gifts (1COR 12:31), especially the gift of prophecy (1COR 14:39).

Does the Bible endorse slavery?

- **Yes**, but the details are sketchy at best:
 - Hebrews can be sold into slavery, but:
 - Male slaves must be set freed during their seventh year of service (EXO 21:2).
 - Females must remain slaves for life (EXO 21:7).
 - Enslaved Hebrew men and women are to be considered equals, and *both* are to be freed in their seventh year of service (DEU 15:12).
 - Hebrews cannot enslave other Hebrews (LEV 25:39-40).
 - Non-Hebrew slaves are your property for life, as are their children (LEV 25:44-46).
 - All slaves must be emancipated after 50 years of service (LEV 25:10).
 - Slaves, and their children born while in your service, must be circumcised (GEN 17:13). Slaves are to obey their masters in every task, at all times, even when their masters are away (COL 3:22). Slaves must treat their master like a god, since God is said to oversee man like a slave owner (LUK 12:47).
 - Permanent slavery is the accepted punishment for homosexual rape. Additionally, *all* of the rapists decedents will be also permanently enslaved as punishment for this crime (GEN 9:25).
- **No**. Slavery is immoral:
 - No one can be called the master of another man, since the only master of men is Christ (MAT 23:10).
 - The oppressed are to be freed (ISA 58:6), since the Israelites were once an oppressed people (EXO 22:21).

Is it wrong to steal?

- **Yes**. "Thou shalt not steal" (EXO 20:15; LEV 19:11-13; DEU 5:19).
- **No**. God advocated stealing from your enemies. Specifically:
 - The Hebrews looted the Egyptians after the tenth plague, and before starting the Exodus (EXO 12:35-36).
 - God commanded the Israelites to "spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them" (EZE 39:10).
- **Maybe?** Paul "robbed other churches" (2COR 11:7-8). However, this might be a euphemism for being paid wages for his services, or for the preaching the televangelist's "prosperity gospel."

Can Christians defraud their neighbors?

- **Yes**. God commanded Moses to have the Israelites to rob and loot the homes of the Egyptians, whom they were living with at the time (EXO 3:21-22).
- **No**. "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbor, nether rob him" (LEV 19:13) because the Lord will avenge such transgressions (1THE 4:6). Although "defraud not" (MAR 10:19) nor "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (MAT 19:17-19) were never one of the Ten Commandments (LEV 19:18),

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Jesus thought that they were, because he always struggled to remember the Ten Commandments (in LUK 18, he could only remember five.)

What happens to those who do not follow the law Old Testament?

- **They are cursed** (DEU 27:26, JER 11:3).
- **Nothing**, because the crucifixion broke the curse (GAL 3:10-14).

Should we fear God?

- **Yes**. We are explicitly told to fear God (1PET 2:17).
- **No**, because “there is no fear in love” (1JOH 4:18).

Is it wrong to worship those who are not God?

- **Yes**. Only God is to be worshiped, and to him “every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear” (ISA 45:23). It is wrong to have other gods beside him (EXO 20:3), or to worship or serve anyone else (EXO 20:5).
- **No**. Worshiping non-God entities is permissible:
 - Joshua fell to his knees and worshiped a swordsman he met, because he wanted to fight for God (JOS 5:13-14).
 - Everyone and everything in Heaven, Earth, and Hell must bow and worship every time they hear Jesus’ name (PHIL 2:10).

Are Christians required to follow the laws of the Old Testament?

- **Yes**. Jesus explicitly taught that he did not abolish, but fulfilled the Old Testament laws, and every character of every law remained in full effect (MAT 5:17-18). Jesus’ teachings only supplemented and enhanced the old laws.
- **No**, because “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law” (GAL 3:13) and “now we are released from the law” (ROM 7:6). The old law and the works of all the prophets only existed to establish a framework and context Jesus’ teachings. All of God’s previous laws and covenants were only valid up until the coming of John the Baptist (LUK 16:16).
- **Irrelevant**. People who guided by the Holy Spirit are above the old law (GAL 5:18).

What is the interrelation between sin and the law?

- **Sin is the cause of laws**, because laws exist solely to prevent sin (GAL 3:19). Violators who are ignorant of the law are still sinners (ROM 2:12).
- **Sin is a by-product of the law**, because violating laws is the definition of sin (1JOH 3:4). Although sin exists independently of the law (ROM 5:13), men cannot be branded as sinners in the absence of laws (ROM 4:15).

How should one serve the Lord?

- **With “fear” and “trembling”** (PSA 2:11).
- **With “gladness” and “singing”** (PSA 100:2).

Is it wrong to test God?

- **Yes.** Both the Old (DEU 6:16) and New Testaments (MAT 4:7; LUK 4:12) explicitly concur that people “shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”
- **No.** Gideon (JUDG 6:36-37) and Isaiah (2KIN 20:8-11) both looked for physical indications of God’s power.
- **It’s only wrong to tempt the Christian God.** Elijah tempted Ba’al, and Ba’al’s lack of response was cited as evidence of Ba’al’s non-existence (1KIN 18:37).

What should be done with those who hate God?

- **They should be hated.** You should hate those who hate God (2CHR 19:2) with a perfect hatred, since they are your enemies (PSA 139:21-22).
- **They should be loved.** You should love your enemies, and be kind to the unthankful and evil (LUK 6:35).

How does one learn right from wrong?

- **By following your heart and conscience** (ROM 2:15).
- **By being anointed by Jesus** (1JOH 2:27).

Should we obey only God?

- **Yes.** Obedience to God is paramount:
 - God should be obeyed rather than men (ACT 5:29), because Christians are not the servants of men (1COR 7:23).
 - Jesus was explicit about this (MAT 4:10), because even Christ must obey God (MAT 23:10).
- **No.** Others should be obeyed with the same intensity and zeal:
 - Servants should obey their masters (TIT 2:9) with the same fearful, trembling, and single-purposed manner that they show Christ (EPH 6:5; 1PET 2:18).

Since only God is powerful, everyone with power thus has a divinely ordained right to rule (ROM 13:1), and serving them is to serve God (COL 3:22). Therefore, God demands compliance with all secular laws (1PET 2:13).

How should Christians view earthly power?

- **With trepidation.** The powers of the world are the enemies of the Christians. They are spiritually wicked (EPH 6:12) because of their tendency to not completely submit to God and Jesus (MAR 15:15; LUK 23:35; ACT 4:26). Secular authorities are to be defied, since God is more fearsome than any earthly power (EXO 1:17; DAN 3:18, 6:7; MAT 2:16).
- **With respect.** Since all power originates from God, anyone who acquires earthly power is therefore ordained by God, and anyone who resists them is damned (ROM 13:1-2). For this reason, Christians are expected to comply with every secular law (1PET 2:13), and submit to the whims of their superiors (1PET 2:18).

What can Christians eat or drink?

- **All living things are permissible to eat** (GEN 9:3).
- **All food and drinks are permitted.** Jesus taught that nothing that can go into a person's mouth can defile them; Christians are only defiled by what comes out of their mouths, i.e., harsh words (MAT 15:11; MAR 7:14-15, 18-19). This was meant both metaphorically and literally; Jesus pointed out that the heart was not a part of the digestive system, and that defiling foods are eventually pooped out, so they can have no permanent ramifications (MAR 7:18).
 - All of God's creation is good, including all foods, which he explicitly created for man to eat (1TIM 4:1-5).
 - Christians should eat whatever they're offered (LUK 10:8).
- **Meat is forbidden.** Any and all seed-bearing herbs and fruits are to be consumed in place of meat (GEN 1:29). However, this diet will admittedly make you weak (ROM 14:2).
 - The following classes of animals are explicitly forbidden:
 - Animals which do not "chew their cud" *and* have cloven hooves (DEU 14:7). They *must* do both.
 - Aquatic animals lacking both fins and scales (DEU 14:7).
 - Birds-of-prey (DEU 14:7).
 - Carrion feeders (DEU 14:7).
 - Winged insects (DEU 14:19), excluding those with jumping "legs above their feet"; i.e., locusts, grasshoppers, and some beetles (LEV 11:20-25).
 - Consuming blood or fat is forbidden (LEV 3:17).
 - Catholics are required to drink blood, since their sect is partially defined by their Dogma of Transubstantiation, whereby priests magically transmute communion wine into the actual, literal blood of Jesus Christ (MAT 26:27-28).
- **It is immoral to consume intoxicating and/or poisonous substances.** (ROM 14:20-21).
 - Drinking alcohol is frowned upon (ROM 14:21), as it will "take away the heart" (HOS 4:11) and cause mockery, brawling, and poor decisions (PRO 20:1). Alcohol is considered to be no better, worse, or different than snake venom (PRO 23:29-32).
 - Drinking alcohol is entirely acceptable (DEU 14:26; JOH 2:7-9) and enjoyable (PSA 104:14-15); especially when it is used medicinally (1TIM 5:23) or as a coping mechanism (PRO 31:6-7).
- **Anything that can be sold is considered safe to eat** (1COR 10:25). Killing your customers is a bad business model.
- **This entire issue is irrelevant;** no one is permitted to judge you based on what you eat or drink (COL 2:16). Dietary restrictions are based on worldly laws and customs, which are too trivial to base one's eternal salvation upon (COL 2:20-22).

Please note that Jesus explicitly stated that all of the Old Testament dietary restrictions are to be observed, since every single character of the old law remains in effect (LUK 16:17).

Is it wrong to kill/murder?

- **Yes.** "You shall not kill/murder" (EXO 20:13) is a precept accepted by most human societies, Christian or not.
- **No.** God, via Moses, commands the Levites to systematically kill all of the Israelites who worshiped the golden calf — *and their siblings, spouses, friends, and neighbors* (EXO 32:27).

Should murderers be put to death?

- **Yes.** God orders the execution of all murderers (EXO 21:12). Seeking revenge is only acceptable against murderers (NUM 35:19), because those who cause bloodshed should receive bloodshed (GEN 9:5-6).
- **No.** Performing an evil act will not correct an evil act (ROM 12:17). Vengeance should be reserved for God to carry out (ROM 12:19). Specifically, whoever kills Cain will face God's vengeance seven times over (GEN 4:15), for unspecified reasons.

Is it right to be lenient on the death penalty?

- **Yes.** Cash settlements are acceptable punishments for those who cause the death of an innocent person out of negligence, not malice (EXO 21:29).
- **No.** Killers are to be put to death, and sparing the condemned will bring no satisfaction (NUM 35:3).

Should the adherents of false religions be killed?

- **Yes.** Practitioners of other religions are to be immediately killed on sight, without hesitation, upon their discovery (DEU 17:2-3, 7). Elijah ordered the killing of Ba'al's prophets, taking special care to ensure that no one could escape (1KIN 18:40).
- **No.** "A slave of the Lord should not quarrel, but should be gentle with everyone, able to teach, tolerant, correcting opponents with kindness. It may be that God will grant them repentance that leads to knowledge of the truth" (2TIM 2:24-25).

What should Christians do with non-believers?

- **Kill them** (DEU 13:6, 9).
- **Avoid them** (2COR 6:14, 17).
- **Love them as much as you love yourself** (GAL 5:14).

What should be done with suspected witches and wizards?

- **Witches and wizards are to be put to death**, preferably by stoning (LEV 20:27) because "thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (EXO 22:18).
- **Witches and wizards are to be merely refused** (1TIM 4:7) **and avoided** (1TIM 6:20).

Are people from other cultures or religions expected to obey God's Laws?

- **Yes.** It is explicitly stated that God's laws apply to all people who associate with the Israelites, without exception (EXO 12:49; LEV 18:26).
- **No.** The Israelites are expressly forbidden from eating animals which died of natural causes, but they are permitted to sell this meat to any resident aliens who wished to buy it (DEU 14:21).

What should be done with homosexuals?

- **They are to be executed** (LEV 20:13).
- **They are to be merely exiled** (1KIN 15:11-12).

How should non-Christians be treated?

- **Poorly.** The Bible explicitly states that strangers near the tabernacle should be put to death (NUM 1:51; 3:10, 38; 18:7). Outsiders are to be smited and utterly destroyed without any sort of mercy. It is forbidden to form any covenant with a stranger (DEU 7:2).
- **Well.** Strangers should not be oppressed (ZEC 7:10) or mistreated (JER 22:3), because the Israelites were considered strangers during their time in Egypt (EXO 22:21; 23:9; LEV 19:32-34, DEU 10:19).

Should you pay close attention to the scriptures?

- **Yes.** "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2TIM 3:16).
- **No.** In fact, the Bible actively discourages its own readers from paying attention to its own genealogies, since they stir up so many difficult questions (1TIM 1:4; TIT 3:9).

What determines a godly spirit?

- **Godly spirits are determined by their willingness to declare that Jesus is divine** (1JOH 4:2).
- **Unclean spirits will also fall before Jesus and proclaim that he is the Son of God** (MAR 3:11).

Chapter 7

Arguments for the Existence of God

"When people are fanatically dedicated to political and religious faiths or any other kind of dogma or goals, it's always because these dogmas or goals are in doubt."

– Robert M. Pirsig, Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance

Apologetics is the branch of theology devoted to rationalizing religious belief. This is intrinsically difficult, since religious belief is based on faith, which exists independently (and in spite) of evidence. As such, apologists tend to rely on philosophical, metaphysical, and historical arguments. The scholarship of these claims is dubious at best: anecdotes — even those of anonymous persons — are uncritically accepted as data; and historical events and scientific theories are intentionally misrepresented to their advantage.

Be aware that Christians are notorious for using intentionally undefined terms, so they can move the goalposts to suit their needs. Getting clergymen to clearly define their terms is necessary for a proper discussion — and it automatically grants you a quantum of victory, since defining things limits them.

Again, do not argue with the clergyman. Our strategy is not one of confrontation; but of malicious cooperation. Victory will be determined by the length and fruitlessness of your conversations. Arguing will reveal yourself as a troublemaker, and you will be denied any further opportunity to consume their time, ending your journey. Besides, you can't directly deconvert a priest; they're pot-committed. **Deconversion and burnout are processes of erosion.** However, discussing these issues in front of others can aid in their deconversion processes.

Refutations for the most common arguments for believing in God are provided below. This is *not* an exhaustive list, but it should be sufficient; most seminarians are not required to study apologetics, and those who do often take a single 3-credit course.

7.1 — The Cosmological (First Mover) Argument

The Cosmological Argument, also called the "**First Mover**" **Argument** or "**First Cause**" **Argument**, is the go-to argument for God's existence, cited by both theologians and laymen of all denominations to persuade their own members, and serve as the primary tool apologists use against atheists. Cosmological Arguments are the most popular arguments for God's existence. [133] In particular, Catholic philosophers tend to be predisposed to make Cosmological Arguments, since they are utterly convinced by them. The Cosmological Argument is credited to St. Thomas

Aquinas, as this argument is a refined combination of three of his five proofs for God's existence listed in his *magnum opus*, *Summa Theologica* (1274). [18]

In its most general form, the Cosmological Argument states that causality (i.e., the Law of Cause and Effect) dictates that the creation of the universe requires a creator (a "first mover"), who is then assumed to be the God of Abraham. As such, the Cosmological Argument is an *a priori* (before-the-fact) variation of the Teleological Argument. [87] Cosmological Arguments are often used in conjunction with the Argument from Ignorance [30] and the God of the Gaps Argument, [133] since they answer mysteries with more mysteries, and thus answer nothing. The Cosmological Argument is commonly deduced from St. Thomas' arguments, or restated as the Kalām Argument.

Aquinas made the following arguments for God's existence: [18]

1. **Motion.** Since nothing moves by itself, there must be a "first mover" who set the universe into motion.
2. **Causality.** Every effect can be traced back to some cause, which in turn has its own cause. This causal regression must lead back to a "first cause" which set all events into motion.
3. **Possibility and Necessity.** Everything in existence had previously not-existed at some point. However, if nothing existed, it would not be possible for everything to be brought into existence. Therefore, a creator must necessarily exist in order to create everything.

The Kalām Argument is more straightforward, taking on the form of a syllogism: [92]

- All existing things have a beginning and a cause.
- The universe has a beginning.
- Therefore, the universe has a cause.

However, each of these arguments has their shortcomings, which are listed in order of importance:

- **Cosmological Arguments require *ad hoc* reasoning to avoid infinite regressions.** Who moved the first mover? What caused the first cause? If a creator necessarily exists, then who created him? While apologists may claim that God had no cause, or that he was only an effect, but this only highlights the problem — **the Cosmological Argument makes a causal argument based upon the non-existence of causality.** [87] If God always existed and needs no causal explanation, then the original premise of the Cosmological Argument — that everything needs a cause — is false, since something can and does exist without a cause. If everything except God requires a cause, then the Cosmological Argument becomes *ad hoc* (i.e., inconsistent and prejudicially applied) and is thus logically impermissible, and unable to advance our understanding of universal causation. [30]
- **There is nothing specifically Christian about the Cosmological Argument.** The Cosmological Argument offers no clues to the first mover's identity or origin; this could equally refer to *any* god from *any*

religion, the collaborative effort of several gods, or some not-yet-understood physical phenomena. [134]

Non-existence is assumed to be the default state. Existence of the universe as a proof of divinity only works under the assumption that non-existence is the default state. What if the universe always existed by default? [30] While apologists will oppose this notion, it is no better, worse, or different than assuming that God also had no cause. [30] If God's existence can be self-caused, then why can't the world be self-caused? [134]

7.2 — Teleological (“Intelligent Design”) Arguments

The Teleological Argument, also called the **Argument from Design**, or “**Intelligent Design**” is the creationist's favorite argument; the entirety of creationism consists of cataloging Teleological Argument paraphrases. This was the most popular argument for the existence of God, [135] which Christian apologists of all denominations used to persuade their members and combat atheists. However, its use fell out of vogue following the Dover Trial. [72] The Teleological Argument is credited to St. Thomas Aquinas, who described this argument as the fifth and final proof for God's existence in his *magnum opus*, *Summa Theologica* (1274). [18]

In its most general form, the Teleological Argument states that the structures and processes observed in the nature are orderly and complex to such a degree that they must have been deliberately engineered. [134] This design thus requires a designer, who is assumed to be the God of Abraham. As such, the Teleological Argument is an *a posteriori* (after-the-fact) variation of the Cosmological Argument. Teleological Arguments are often used in conjunction with the Argument from Ignorance [87] and the God of the Gaps Argument, [135] since it answers mysteries with more mysteries, and thus answers nothing.

The Teleological Argument is commonly stated in one of three ways: the Analogical “Watchmaker” Argument, and its variations; the Anthropic Principle (Fine-tuning Argument); and the Argument from Universal Truths and Natural Laws. Each of these arguments has a few common shortcomings, which would be addressed first:

- **There is nothing specifically Christian about the Teleological Argument.** The Teleological Argument offers no clues to the identity and origin of this designer; these results could be equally attributed to *any* god from *any* religion, or the collaborative effort of several gods. [133]
 - This designer might not even be divine; they could be an actual, literal engineer from an earlier civilization. [133]
 - There is no way to prove or disprove the notion that life was divinely created and/or inspired since there is no rigorous definition as to what constitutes “life” or “divinity.” (e.g., are viruses alive? Were the divinity claims of Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, and Ramesses II (Ozymandias) legitimate?) [27]

- Like in the Cosmological Argument, **if there is evidence of a designer, then causality requires this designer to also have a designer**, [87] who is of equal or greater complexity. [92] Just as a watch implies the existence of a watchmaker, a watchmaker implies the existence of a watchmaker-maker, which in turn, implies the existence of a watchmaker-maker-maker, *ad infinitum*. [133] The Intelligent Designer also requires a creator to explain how it came to be, [136] leading to an infinite regression.
 - A violation of causality (i.e., the law of cause-and-effect) has never been observed.
 - While apologists may claim that God had no cause, or his existence is just an effect, they only contradict themselves by making a causal argument based upon the non-existence of causality. [87]
 - Assuming the designer's existence cannot be a premise of any credible design argument, since citing the desired conclusion as a premise would “beg the question.” [92]
- **The Teleological Argument only argues for the *previous* existence of a designer, and not their continued existence and/or presence.** There is no indication that this designer oversees their creation, which may just continue plodding along well after their designer's absence and/or death. [133]
- **Design arguments tend to be weak analogies.** For example: [134]
 1. Natural objects and archaeological artifacts both have colors.
 2. Archaeological artifacts are painted or dyed.
 3. Therefore, natural objects are all colored by a great painter-dyer.

There is no limit to these kinds of arguments, all of which hold the same weight.

7.2.1 — The Analogical (“Watchmaker”) Argument

The Analogical Argument from Design draws an analogy between natural objects and man-made items. This argument is credited to William Paley, who popularized it in his book, *Natural Theology*, [137] and its example of finding a watch lying on the ground. How would one go about determining its origin? Since both the watch and living things display an intricate combination of specialized parts working in defined processes, they must both be consciously designed. [133] Just as a watch implies the existence of a watchmaker, life implies the existence of a creator god.

A key feature of this argument is how living things are assemblies of distinct parts, which perform specific, specialized functions; the failure of any one part causes a domino effect which kills the organism. The existence of these specialized components is claimed to be “irreducibly complex;” that is, they are allegedly inexplicable by evolutionary or iterative processes, since any living systems requires the absolute “irreducible” basic set of these specialized parts to be alive in the first place. Intelligent Design advocates claim that natural selection could not create this system from some evolutionary pathway of successive, gradual modifications, because their functionality only exists when all the parts are assembled. [138] Removing any component from a

complex biological structure renders that system inoperable. Since only fully-functional body parts offer survival advantages, natural selection wouldn't perpetuate eyes, wings, etc. "under construction" or "on the verge of working." This is what led creationists to frequently ask "What good is half an eye/wing/etc.?" The limit to which science can provide complete explanations on the formation and functionality of living systems is cited as proof of an Intelligent Designer, which is assumed to be God.

However, this is the literal definition of the God of the Gaps Argument, which is an extension of the Argument from Ignorance — the fact that something is unexplained doesn't mean it's inexplicable. Science is a process for discovering information, which is still in progress. [27] Evolutionary biology is rich with counterexamples of how earlier structures were re-appropriated, adapted, and gradually refined and optimized to fit new roles. Each component of a Rube Goldberg machine is also irreducibly complex; and gradual refinement of such a system would eventually lead to a sleek, efficient mechanism. [138] Analogously, each watch component had a previous alternate use, which was modified and adapted to fit that particular application. The watch's gears are miniaturized mill components. The watch's face is a window. The strap is a shrunken belt. Likewise, the historical record shows plenty of "fossil" evidence of primitive timepieces (e.g., sundials, water clocks) which preceded the watch, and influenced its construction. [136] Nature herself flatly contradicts the creationist's all-or-nothing argument. For example:

- **Biology is rich with hideously bad designs.** For example, if the human eye were Intelligently Designed:
 - Why is there a 50/50 chance that you are reading this through glasses or contacts lenses? [137]
 - Why are 1 in 12 men colorblind? [137]
 - Why are so many people afflicted with the misty, blurry view resulting from astigmatism? [137]
 - Why does the eye transmit an inverted signal? [139]
 - Why does the eye need so many parts? [139]
 - Why is there a blind spot in the center of our field of view? [139]Other animals (e.g., squid, octopi), have eyes without this limitation.

These are *exactly* the results that one would expect from evolution's *ad hoc*, Rube Goldberg, do-whatever-works-right-now design ethos. If there is an intelligent Designer, he's probably MacGyver

- **Biology is rich with examples of structures in various stages of development**, or of radically different designs. For example: birds, bats, and insects each independently developed wings. Evolution has no long-term goal, no target, and no final perfection to work towards. "Progress" only appears in hindsight, based on the summation of reactions needed to fulfill the short-term goal of surviving long enough to reproduce. [137] Again, using eyes as an example, there are animals who have: [30]
 1. No eyes (e.g., some moles and cave-dwelling fish).
 2. Simple light-detectors (e.g., planarians). [137]

Smiting Shepherds

3. Eyes with low resolution (e.g., the compound eyes of insects and horseshoe crabs).
4. Eyes with poor focusing (e.g., the rhinoceros).
5. "Pinhole camera"-style proto-eyes, with no focusing (e.g., the chambered nautilus). [137]
6. Eyes that cannot see color (e.g., most dog breeds).
7. Human-like eyes.
8. Superhuman eyes (e.g., eagles, owls).

Since any degree of environmental awareness provides a tremendous competitive advantage, natural selection permits the propagation of these "half eyes," because having half of an eye is a superpower in the world of the blind. Even a simple patch of light-sensitive cells enables an organism to vertically orient itself, and to detect potential predators or prey which eclipses the light source. This eyeless lifeform will produce eyeless offspring — but suppose that a mutation caused a few of the offspring to possess light-sensitive skin cells. These offspring would have a competitive advantage to avoid predators and reproduce more easily, and thus be more likely to perpetuate this characteristic. Suppose now that a few of this creatures offspring suffered a mutation where their light-sensitive cells were concentrated into a single location, thus amplifying their sensitivity. Again, this competitive edge would quickly spread throughout the future generations, since the offspring which did not display this characteristic would be more likely to die before reproducing (from increased predation, reduced food-finding). Next, let us suppose that a tiny percentage of the next generation of offspring possess a slightly concave shape to their light-sensitive regions, to help discern the direction of light sources, conferring another reproductive advantage. Since cells are filled with semi-transparent liquids, it wouldn't be too surprising if this liquid occasionally found itself within the concave surface of these light-sensitive regions, thus gradually developing an eye. [30]

Lungs developed from a similar process, by lining the mouths of early fish with blood vessels to allow them to gulp air when in shallow muddy waters, and eventually to travel across land from puddle to puddle. Fish also retained and modified this proto-organ, which evolved into the swim bladder. "Fractional" wings also confer benefits, since they can act as airfoils for gliding and/or for slowing and controlling jumps and falls. [137]

7.2.2 — The Probabilistic ("747") Argument

Creationists argue that the particular combinations of atoms which form the basis of living things are simply too complex to have emerged from random processes. Furthermore, it would be impossible for life to ever develop if any one of these narrow windows of opportunity had closed. A purely random selection and combination of atoms which results in life-generating chemical processes was been calculated to be far less than the probability of one person winning a billion state lotteries, every day, for a billion millennia. Therefore, it would be "an act of faith" to believe that conscious design *was not* involved. [133] This is the "747 Argument," since it is usually

illustrated with the whimsical analogy of a tornado striking a junkyard and assembling a fully-operational Boeing 747 jumbojet.

This argument is a false dilemma between design and chance, based on the Principle of Indifference (i.e., the Principle of Insufficient Reason), which assumes if there are n possibilities in an unbiased system (i.e., there's no reason why any one result should be more or less likely to occur), then the probability of each occurrence is then $1/n$. If a biological structure is a combination of m atoms, then the probability of its spontaneous formation is $(1/n)^m$, which becomes vanishingly small for large values of m , like the number of atoms comprising DNA, proteins, or other complex molecules. However, the **creationists incorrectly assume that all logical possible cases are equally probable, when the process of assembling biochemical structures is restricted by several intrinsic biases**, such as: [134]

- **Governing factors.** The results and rates of the chemical reactions forming these structures are influenced and controlled by a number of factors, including: reactant concentrations, reactant surface areas, temperature, pressure, activation energy, and the presence of catalysts and electromagnetic radiation (especially UV light). These biasing factors favor certain chemical reactions and forbid others, limiting the number of possible outcomes. While the creationist's "winning the lottery" analogy is still apt, this reduction in the number of available outcomes changes the game from Powerball to Pick 3.
- **The large quantity of reactants involved.** The entirety of the Earth's crust and oceans were available for proto-life to build from; [134] and while the spontaneous self-formation of life from these materials may be unlikely (like winning the lottery), the sheer abundance of these materials makes the miraculous inevitable (like buying a 100 million lottery tickets). [27] While the chances of being hit by any one specific, individual raindrop are unfathomably small, people still manage to get wet in rainstorms, without having to invoke Intelligent Design. [133]
- **Natural selection of the results.** Complex biochemical molecules can be assembled from the cumulative selection of their results. Rather than waiting for n components to spontaneously arrange themselves, "correct" combinations become saved and propagate themselves. With no redundant work, this random process is reduced to an iterative process, analogous to being able to re-use old lottery tickets week after week. [30] If the tornado assembled only two airplane components, those combined parts would make the task easier for future tornadoes.
- **Hindsight bias.** Voltaire quipped that the human nose was irrefutable proof of intelligent design, since it was perfectly shaped to support eyeglasses. [20] A tornado hitting a junkyard will most likely make a mess, dumping a heap of parts onto the landscape. However, no two scrap heaps are the same, and an assembled 747 is also a heap of parts. All scrap heaps are unique in hindsight, and all are equally improbable. The creationists who see life as being improbably rare only count the hits and ignore the misses; [137] 99.9% of all of species have gone extinct,

and the myriad of lifeforms which still exist exhibit a broad spectrum of congenital gifts and defects. [133]

7.2.3 — The Anthropic Principle (Fine-tuning Argument)

The Anthropic Principle, or Fine-tuning Argument, claims that any slight variation of the universe's physical parameters would have prevented the formation of life; that quite literally, this is the best of all possible worlds. This "fine-tuning" of the universe's parameters necessitates a "tuner;" and this indication of design is evidence of an Intelligent Designer. [92]

However, the fine tuning argument fails because it is based upon a series of false or flawed assumptions: [72]

- Our universe is the only existent universe. This claim has been neither proved nor disproved.
- Our universe's physical parameters are/were variable.
- Huge variations in the ranges of the physical parameters are/were possible; making it extremely unlikely that the parameters were set to the current configuration by chance.
 - String theory indicates that there could be up to 10^{500} possible parameter sets. [139]
- Our universe possesses the one, perfect, slot-machine like combination of parameters which can make life possible.
- Humans and other life could not exist if the universe has slightly different parameters. Admittedly, this is true for many parameter sets.

From this, two conclusions are drawn: [72]

- **The Weak Anthropic Principle:** If the universe had different parameters, we could not exist to discuss it.
 - This name reflects the fact that this is a tautology, and thus an admittedly weak argument.
- **The Strong Anthropic Principle:** Because the universe's physical parameter set is unlikely to have occurred by chance, it thus likely occurred by design, and the existence of humanity is one part of that design.

There are a number of general refutations to the fine-tuning argument: [139]

- Since physicists have not finalized the Theory of Everything, it is unknown if universes with different parameter values could even be possible.
- Since we only have experience with our universe and its one parameter set, we have no way of knowing what the possible parameter ranges and distributions are. As such:
 - There was no way of determining if our parameter set is likely or unlikely.
 - There is no way of knowing what parameter sets could also result in intelligent life.

- If multiple universes exist, then the chance other universes harbor intelligent life could be as high as 100%, even if life is rare, due to the very large sample size.

Additionally, there are some specific arguments which apply to specific parameters and parameter sets: [139]

- **Defined quantities** (e.g., golden ratio, π), by definition, cannot be varied.
- **Constants of Proportionality** (e.g., c , G , h) are frequently described in Fine-tuning Arguments, but these are arbitrary numbers tailored to align observations with measurement systems. These constants can be assigned to any real, non-zero number without affecting physics; they would only affect the measurement systems used to express physics. Thus, no fine-tuning is involved.
- **Electron to Proton Ratio** (1:1). Theists claim that a larger ratio would cause electromagnetism to dominate over gravity, preventing galaxy formation. Additionally, theists claim if the ratio were any smaller gravity would dominate, preventing chemical bonding. However, the number of electrons must equal the number of electrons because the Conservation of Charge requires the universe, as a whole, to be electrically neutral. There is no fine-tuning involved.
- **Magnitude Ratio of the Electromagnetic Force to the Gravitational Force** ($\sim 10^{39}$). While varying any one parameter may cause problems, computer simulations have shown that varying *all* parameters results in stable universes >50% of the time. Simulations have shown that these universes require ratios between 10^{34} and 10^{44} , and would be capable of forming stars with 10^{10} year lifetimes, and are thus capable of supporting life.
- **Expansion Rate of the Universe.** Theists claim greater rates would prevent galaxy formation, and the universe would collapse if the rate were any smaller. However, no fine-tuning is involved, since the Expansion Rate of the Universe is limited by the Conservation of Energy and the fact that the original total energy of the universe was zero. All celestial bodies in the universe are receding from one another at rates such that they will come to rest at a vast distance, exactly like a rocket traveling at escape velocity.
- **Mass density of the universe.** Theists claim that if this quantity were larger, the Big Bang would have produced too much deuterium (i.e., Hydrogen-2), and the stars would have burned too rapidly to give rise to life. Likewise, if this quantity were too small, then the Big Bang would have produced insufficient helium, resulting in stars that produce too little of the heavier elements needed for life. The mass density of the universe is precisely determined by the fact the universe starts out with zero total energy. There is no fine-tuning because this is the consequence of the Conservation of Energy.

The Fine-tuning Argument is actually one of the better arguments *against* the existence of God, since an all-powerful God would have no need to fine tune the universe. If God is all-powerful, he could have created us to live in any environment. The Fine-tuning Argument only highlights how life was specifically made to fit the Earth, and not vice-versa. To claim otherwise is like claiming that God created rivers to perfectly align with state borders, and to provide water supplies for major cities. [92] If God created the Earth as a perfect sanctuary where life could flourish, then why is the so Earth hostile, rather than facilitating, to human life? 75% of the Earth's surface is covered with unpotable water, and great portions of its landmass (e.g., Antarctica, Siberia, the Sahara) are uninhabitable, or close to it. [30] Furthermore, the Earth was also fined-tuned to create earthquakes, volcanoes, hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, droughts, desertification, and other disasters with such frequency that man cannot help but to ponder the Problem of Evil. [133]

7.2.4 — Argument from Universal Truths and Natural Laws

Theists often claim that the existence of universal truths (e.g., $2+2=4$) and physical laws (e.g., Newton's Laws, Maxwell's Equations, the Laws of Thermodynamics, etc.) are proof of God's existence, as laws imply the existence of a lawgiver.

However, this argument is a false equivalence, since it ignores the differences between *prescriptive* laws and *descriptive* laws; i.e., between "rules" and "practice". [92]

The universe is not governed by *anything*. Natural laws, like the Laws of Physics, are human inventions. They are *not* restrictions on the behavior of matter; they are restrictions on how physicists can formulate their mathematical models to describe their observations of matter. The laws of physics are just statements regarding observations of matter in regards to the symmetries and objectivity of nature. When a law is broken, it is because a symmetry has been broken, or because some observation is being described from a unique or subjective viewpoint. These laws must also be a part of *any* mathematical system. Emmy Noether proved that the laws of conservation of linear momentum, angular momentum, and energy follow automatically from, and must be part of any mathematical theory that does not single out any particular position in space, direction in space, or moment in time, respectively. [72] Einstein's General Relativity extended Noether's Theorem to 4D space-time. [139] Again, it is worth restating that these are all human inventions — *including the notions of space and time*. Time is by definition, what a clock measures. Space is defined by the time light takes to travel between points. Despite this, the results of their observations are not arbitrary; they must yield consistent results, or the model is falsified. [72]

If God exists, then he must have a functioning mind, which must also be "governed" by laws, lest God have a randomly-constructed mind, akin to a randomly-wired brain consistent entirely of randomly-firing synapses. The laws which govern God's mind would thus require an even higher lawgiver, leading to infinite recursion, unless universal truths exist independently of God. [92]

7.2.4.1 — The Entropic Argument

The Entropic Argument for Intelligent Design claims that Darwinian evolution defies the Laws of Thermodynamics, and is therefore impossible. Countering this argument requires a basic conceptual understanding of the Laws of Thermodynamics, which is provided below:

- **Zeroth Law of Thermodynamics (Law of Equilibrium):** If two systems are in thermal equilibrium with a third system, then all three systems are in thermal equilibrium with each other.
 - While this is intuitive, it must be explicitly stated in order to define the concept of temperature.
- **First Law of Thermodynamics (Conservation of Energy):** Energy can be neither created nor destroyed; it can only be changed between its various forms, and/or flow to or from other systems. As a consequence of this:
 - The total energy of an isolated (or closed) system does not change.
 - The introduction or removal of matter, work, or heat from the system affects the system's internal (or potential) energy. Therefore, perpetual motion machines of the first kind (i.e., machines which produce work without energy inputs) are impossible.
 - Real systems which perform work will inevitably generate from their internal friction and viscosity. The use of lubricants and anti-friction coatings can only mitigate this effect; it will always exist to some degree.
- **Second Law of Thermodynamics (Law of Entropy):** Entropy is a measure of the number of possible particle configurations; it is a measure of the disorder within a macroscopic system (e.g., the lattice of an ice crystal is more ordered than the freely-moving water molecules of steam). Entropy corresponds to the amount of a system's thermal energy which is unable to be converted into work. The entropy of isolated (or closed) systems never decreases. As a consequence of this:
 - Perpetual motion machines of the second kind (i.e., machines which spontaneously convert thermal energy into equal amounts of work) are impossible.
 - Natural processes are irreversible (e.g., once bread becomes toast, it can never go back to being bread. Eggs can't be undropped).
 - Heat naturally flows from a hot body to a cold body, until both bodies reach equilibrium.
 - Heat transfer from a colder body to a hotter body is impossible without performing work on the system (via pumps, etc.).
 - No engine can ever be more efficient than a Carnot cycle engine.
 - This ideal efficiency is unrealizable, since it would require pumping liquid-vapor mixtures, and the engine would quickly destroy itself from the resulting cavitation.
- **Third Law of Thermodynamics:** The entropy of a system approaches a constant value as the temperature approaches absolute zero; and the entropy of a perfect crystal at absolute zero is exactly equal to zero.

- However, cooling any real body to absolute zero is impossible, since it will always possess its zero-point energy. The complete absence of thermal motion which defines absolute zero implies that position of these atoms or molecules could be known with complete certainty, and thus violates Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle.

The Entropic Argument for Intelligent Design states that: [134]

1. All physical processes are entropic.
2. All entropic processes have a tendency for dissolution and disorganization.
3. Therefore, all physical processes have a tendency for dissolution and disorganization.
4. Some processes, like evolution, have a tendency towards synthesis and organization.
5. Therefore, some processes are anti-entropic and not physical.
6. The mind is the only known anti-entropic factor currently known.
7. Therefore, evolutionary processes are probably mind-directed.

The Entropic Argument for Intelligent Design is based on the invalid assumption that the Earth is an isolated (or closed) system.

Energy is being constantly added to the Earth via the sun's light and warmth, and many "anti-entropic" processes are permissible in non-isolated (or open) systems. Your kitchen's freezer can perform the "anti-entropic" process of organizing liquid water into ordered lattices of ice crystal because it draws energy to perform work from the power grid. **Even if God drove all of the "anti-entropic" evolutionary processes on Earth, the Second Law of Thermodynamics would still hold.** This would be a literal instance of the Maxwell's Demon thought-experiment; if God performed work on the Earth, it would again cease to be an isolated (or closed) system.

When someone tries to make an Entropic Argument, always ask how many Laws of Thermodynamics there are. This will reveal if they have *any* scientific familiarity, or if they are just parroting from creationist readers and copybooks. [92] If the creationist tries to prove that the existence of Laws of Thermodynamics is itself evidence of design, again, cite Emmy Noether's proof that the Conservation of Energy follows automatically from and must be part of *any* mathematical theory which doesn't single out any particular moment in time.

Some especially arrogant creationists may argue that the Laws of Thermodynamics are somehow wrong. [30] Experience has shown that it's best to point out how all of the world's engines, motors, power plants, refrigerators, air conditioners, pumps, and compressors were designed under the assumption that the Laws of Thermodynamics were valid. The fact that *any* of these devices function is experimental evidence which verifies that the Laws of Thermodynamics are valid; otherwise *any and all* machines built and operated since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution could only function as-designed through a fantastically whimsical and strangely-reliable series of coincidences. The creationist must then prove that this is indeed the case in order to continue.

7.3 — Pascal’s Wager

“What’s the big deal about going to some building every Sunday?
 ...And what if we’ve picked the wrong religion? Every week we’re just making
 God madder and madder.”

—Homer J. Simpson, Homer the Heretic (9F01)

Pascal’s Wager uses game theory to demonstrate that people should believe in God, because it offers the best cost-to-benefit ratio. The argument is summarized in the table below:

	God Exists	God Doesn’t Exist
You Believe	Eternal heavenly bliss.	You wasted all the time you spent worshipping.
You Disbelieve	Eternal damnation.	You saved all the time you would have spent worshipping.

However, there are three crippling problems with this argument:

1. **Pascal’s Wager was never intended to prove God’s existence; it is just an argument for going to church.** Even then, it never actually solves or answers anything — it just changes the question from “why?” to “why not?”
 - Admittedly, this is a problem with the use of this argument, and not a flaw in the argument, *per se*. However, this problem appears frequently enough to merit mentioning.
2. **Argument from Inconsistent Revelations. Pascal’s Wager is only valid under the *a priori* assumption that you’ve selected the correct god.** If the Old Testament prophets *really* screwed up, and it turns out that Ba’al is the Lord, then even the saints are damned. Many of the world’s religions independently developed their own equally-valid versions of Pascal’s Wager, which replaces the word “God” with “Ra,” “Odin,” or “Zeus”.
 - Pascal’s Wager can even be used to *disprove* the need for religion. If there is no God, or if God does not reward belief (e.g., deism, dystheism), then religion becomes a huge waste of time and resources.
3. **Argument from Inauthentic Belief.** If you only believe because of Pascal’s Wager, then your religious devotion is just a fire insurance payment. An all-knowing God would realize that you’re only paying him lip service to win a big payout later. Pascal’s Wager is insufficient to “save” anyone, because it requires you to live a lie, and in turn, lie to God himself.

7.4 — The Ontological Argument

“The study of theology, as it stands in Christian churches is the study of nothing; its founded on nothing, it rest on nothing; it proceeds by no authorities; it has no data; it can demonstrate nothing.”

— Thomas Paine, The Age of Reason

The Ontological Argument for the Existence of God was first developed by St. Anselm of Canterbury in 1078 CE, based off of ideas seeded by Plato and St. Augustine of Hippo. There are several formulations of the Ontological Argument, which are based on the notion that God is the greatest thing imaginable, and therefore must exist, because existence is greater than non-existence.

This argument has been widely panned by critics — and even by fellow clergymen in St. Anselm’s own time. [140] Despite its flaws, the Ontological Argument remains popular because it *seems* convincing; it takes some time to explain, and it can confuse those without the critical thinking or discrete math skills needed to dissect the argument. This effect is often compounded by using obfuscating language.

Ontology is the branch of philosophy concerned with the abstract nature of being. [141] The classic Ontological Argument takes the form of a proof by contradiction: [140]

1. Assume the idea of God, which is defined as a “maximally excellent being,” for which no greater being can be conceived, and who possesses every form of perfection (e.g., omnipotence, omniscience, omnibenevolence, and sovereignty).
 2. Assume the idea of such a being exists, and the possibility that such a being may or may not exist in reality.
 3. Assume that it is necessarily greater to exist in reality than it is to merely be an idea.
 4. If this greatest conceivable being were merely an idea, then it would be possible to think of even greater beings (i.e., one which also existed in reality). This is a contradiction, since a being greater than God cannot be imagined.
 5. Therefore, if God exists in the mind as an idea, then God necessarily exists in reality.
 6. God exists in the mind as an idea.
 7. Therefore, God necessarily exists in reality.
- However, there are numerous flaws with this argument:

7.4.1 — The Island Argument

The most popular and damning response to the Ontological Argument is the “Island Argument” proposed by St. Anselm’s contemporary, Guanilo of Marmoutiers, in his book On Behalf of the Fool. (Let that sink in — the Ontological Argument is so flawed that it could be openly mocked and derided

during the height of the Middle Ages *without* the fear of heresy.) Guaniolo argued the following: [140]

1. Picture a tropical island, defined to be a “maximally excellent place,” which possesses every form of perfection (e.g., plentiful food and drink, sunshine, all your friends from school are there, innumerable disease-free sex partners to choose from, no travel costs, etc.) This is a place for which no greater place can be conceived.
2. Assume the idea that such a place exists, and the possibility that such a place may or may not exist in reality.
3. Assume that it is necessarily greater to exist in reality than it is to merely be an idea.
4. If this greatest conceivable place were merely an idea, then it would be possible to think of even greater places (i.e., one which also existed in reality). This is a contradiction, since a place greater than this island cannot be imagined.
5. Therefore, if this island exists in the mind as an idea, then this island necessarily exists in reality.
6. This island exists in the mind as an idea.
7. Therefore, this island necessarily exists in reality.

The Ontological Argument is a non-sequitur, which can be used to “prove” the existence of literally *anything*. As such, rather than attacking the argument itself, you should accept all Ontological Arguments at face value, and use their form and structure to “prove” all sorts of absurdities. This turnabout cannot be turned back around against you, because you aren’t using the argument to support any claims. By using their own argument in unintended ways, you can force the clergyman into arguing against themselves, eroding their credibility. [87] For example:

- a. Superman is the greatest of the heroes.
- b. A hero that exists is greater than one that does not.
- c. Therefore, Superman is real.

Similar arguments can be used to prove the existence of unicorns, faeries, etc. **Ontological Arguments can “prove” the existence of every god, because there is nothing Christian-specific about the Ontological Argument.** You could even assume the existence of a perfect void, and use the Ontological Argument to prove that nothing has ever existed at any time!

7.4.2 — Problems Concerning the Greatness of Existence

The Ontological Argument invalid because relies on the use-mention error when the idea of God is equated with the greatest conceivable being. There are two independent ideas being discussed:

1. The greatest possible thing is arbitrarily labeled "God".
2. God is greater when compared to every other object.

The Ontological Argument is essentially a rhetorical shell game which masks the change from the first statement about God to the second.

Additionally, **the Ontological Argument is invalid because it affirms the consequent** by assuming that existence confers greatness, and concluding that greatness confirms existence. As a result, **the conclusion is not guaranteed to be true, even if the premises were true**. At best, **the Ontological Argument only demonstrates that God exists while we are thinking about him**; it does not prove that there is an independent being which actually matches this idea.

There is no justification as to why existence is considered to be “greater” than non-existence. Without such a justification, this assumption is an unsupported assertion. Furthermore, the term “greatness” is undefined. What constitutes “greatness”? Is a fat man greater than a skinny guy, or vice-versa? Does God have infinite mass? Because if not, larger, more massive gods could be imagined, and if God does have infinite mass, then his existence can be empirically disproven. [87]

These problems are what led Bertrand Russell to become a skeptic, and later argue that all Ontological Arguments are cases of bad grammar. [87]

7.4.3 — Circular Reasoning / Begging the Question

Immanuel Kant pointed out that the Ontological Argument *does not* prove the existence of God; it merely proves that if any entity were God, then they would exist, and vice-versa. The Ontological Argument says nothing regarding if there are or are not any entities which actually match this definition; it can only prove the existence of what is known to exist. **The Ontological Argument is invalid because it is a circular argument**, which only proves its own assumptions. [87]

7.4.4 — Inconceivability

The Ontological Argument assumes and requires mankind to be able to fully comprehend the infinite power and wisdom of God’s nature. This is beyond human capability, since that level of comprehension would require having a mind as complex as all-knowing God’s.

7.5 — The Argument from Common Consent

“What struck me so forcefully was the realization that ‘the Christians’ react to your questioning as they do, not because you have lost their faith, but because you have lost theirs.”

—Dan Barker, *Losing Faith in Faith* (1992)

The Argument from Common Consent admittedly does not claim to prove God’s existence; instead it tries to demonstrate that God *likely* exists. It argues that if the vast majority of all people believe in something, then that something is likely true, otherwise it would not have been adopted as a best practice. Therefore, since the majority of all humans throughout history

believed in some form of God, the divine is likely to exist, and “to be an atheist you have to be a snob. You have to believe that most of the people who have ever lived have guided their lives by an illusion. And you must believe that you and your few fellow atheists are the only ones clever enough to have discovered this gigantic hoax.” [135]

However, this is the exact, literal definition of the *argumentum ad populum* fallacy, which powers the Bandwagon Effect. If all your friends jumped off a cliff, that doesn’t mean you should.

When confronted with the Argument from Common Consent, and immediately mention the problems caused by religious plurality; ideally phrased in a way that mirrors the clergyman’s argument. For example: “Do you really believe that two billion Christians could all be wrong?” should be countered with “Do you really believe that a billion Muslims could all be wrong? Do you really believe that a billion Hindus could all be wrong? Do you really believe that a billion atheists could all be wrong?” This is especially effective, because a tyranny of the majority requires a majority status, or the perception thereof, in order to operate.

In addition, this is a circular argument, because it claims that people should believe in God because people believe in God. Additionally, the associated snobbery claims often attached to this argument are an *ad hominem*; the fact that an atheist may be a snob is independent of the truth or falsehood of any of their claims or statements.

7.6 — Argument from the Idea of God

“Is man one of God’s mistakes? Or is God just one of man’s?”

— Friedrich Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols

Descartes’ Cosmological-Ontological Argument (“The COA”)

states that God exists because the idea of a God exists in human minds. This even applies to the minds of atheists; while they don’t believe this idea is true, they still possess the idea. [135] The argument goes, as follows:

Every event has a cause, including thoughts. An infinite, perfect being must then exist to give people the concepts of perfection and infinity. Otherwise, something infinite and perfect was created by finite, imperfect beings. [135]

However, Freud argued that wishful thinking allows humanity to dream of all sorts of things more perfect than ourselves, by imaginatively extending our desires to infinity — including the desire for an immortal father-figure. [142] Lenin (through Marx’s framework) argued that the God concept originated from the desire to legitimize economic possessions and oppression; divinity was created to justify the divine right of kings. [143]

7.7 — There are Souls and/or the “Spark of Life”

Objections to the existence of souls and the “Spark of Life” are addressed in §8.5.

7.8 — The Argument from Miracles

“Men think epilepsy divine, merely because they do understand it. But if they called everything divine which they do not understand, why, there would be no end to divine things.”

— Hippocrates of Kos

All of the miraculous claims made by Christianity and other world religions share one commonality — they are all bound by the law of cause-and-effect. **Miracles may defy physics, they never violate causality.** Since effects cannot be more than the sum total of their causes, miracles thus require supernatural causes to render its supernatural effects. [135] Miracles are necessary for religious belief, because people need to be reminded that the process works.

- The Israelites feared and believed in both God, and his servant, Moses, simply because of the wondrous feats they performed to defeat the Egyptians (EXO 7:10-12; 8:7; 14:31).
- Jesus only performed miracles to convince others of his divinity (MAT 11:2-5; JOH 4:48, 5:36, 20:30-31; ACT 2:22; HEB 2:4), because that was the only way to attract followers (JOH 3:2).

Christians *need* miracles so they can have something to believe in, since Christianity doesn't have much else to offer:

- The biblical creation story conflicts with most, if not all, of fields of study (see §8.4).
- The gospels contradict themselves (see §6.4).
- Christian tradition is mostly usurped pagan stories, beliefs, and practices (see §8.73).
- Thomas Paine argued that scripture cannot be a revelation. While they may have been revealed to the author; their copied manuscripts are second-hand accounts, told by those authors and translators. [144]

The most powerful arguments against divine miracles ironically comes from the Bible itself, which warns that miracles, signs, and other wonders are the hallmarks of false prophets, who are trying to make themselves look credible. These Satanic people (LUK 11:19; 2THE 2:9) will only deceive you (REV 13:13-14) and turn you away from God (DEU 13:1-3). Likewise, anyone who performs miracles and claims to be the Christ is just one of the many false Christs who will appear from time to time (MAT 24:24). Jesus coined the expression “wolves in sheep's clothing” to describe these people (MAT 7:15).

Many miracle stories are exaggerations or hoaxes meant to attract followers. The Star of Bethlehem was likely a white lie (or “pious fiction”), written by the author of Matthew, or penciled in by a forgotten monk-copyist, to make his Gospel coincide with the Star Prophecy, which the other Gospels overlooked. The Gospel of John freely admits to being propaganda (JOH 20:31).

Additionally, many “miracles” have rational explanations. While it seems incredulous for all these unusual events to occur by chance to a specific ethnic group, in a small corner of the world, recall that the Biblical genealogies demonstrate that these events took place over a 4000-5500 year period. Each “miracle” is spaced apart by several generations of un-noteworthy dirt-farming, which credits the idea of miracles as freak occurrences. This is one reason why the Bible actively discourages its own readers from paying attention to the genealogies (1TIM 1:4; TIT 3:9).

Examples of explainable miracles include, but are not limited to:

- Much of the miraculous healing which occurs after praying to saints is attributable to spontaneous regression/remission. A small percentage of cancer sufferers are able to “just walk it off,” without anyone’s help.
 - Millions of pilgrims have visited Lourdes, only 65 have ever been “miraculously” cured (as of 1997). Of these, only 3 were cured of cancer — if anything, their pilgrimage made them *less* likely to be spontaneously cured. [106]
 - Spontaneous regression/remission is a credible explanation because only miracles only address certain diseases and conditions, while ignoring the rest (e.g., Amputees never fully regenerate their limbs; Down syndrome has never been cured by god or man). [9]
 - Pat Robertson’s faith-healing is statistical, not mystical; he just lists combinations of names, places, and ailments, and then declares people cured. Getting a combination that matches to a home viewer in the US market is entirely analogous to playing 370,000,000 slot machines at once; he could hit that jackpot without divine intervention. [9]
 - Praying for healing is unnecessary, since an all-knowing God already knows who is sick and suffering. [106]
- Stories of demonic possession can be attributed to migraines, epilepsy, and/or Tourette syndrome. Any of these diseases can trigger mystical visions, transcendent feelings (i.e., the sensation of leaving the body) and the sensation of being controlled by otherworldly forces. Epileptic seizures and Tourette’s can make their sufferers appear possessed (with uncontrollable seizures and unintelligible shouts), and closely match the symptoms of demonic possession as described in the Malleus Maleficarum (1487). [145]
- The gift of prophecy is just people ad-libbing. Upon hearing recordings of people (or even themselves) speaking in tongues, those with the gift of prophesy fail to produce the same “translation” twice. [145]

Smiting Shepherds

- Much of God's wrath (e.g., the destruction of Jericho; stopping the River Jordan) is attributable to earthquakes, especially since the entire region rests on a fault line.
- Isaiah's miracle of briefly reversing a sundial was due to a passing cloud, which refracted the sunlight.
- Sodom and Gomorrah were likely destroyed by the comet/asteroid impact which created Umm al Binni Lake. While this accurately describes God's power and wrath against the residents of those cities, it was also inadvertently extended to countless innocent people the world over. Even by conservative estimates, this impact was 10 times greater than the Tunguska Event. This impact likely triggered the 4.2 Kiloyear Event, which disrupted or destroyed most of the world's civilizations; Old Kingdom Egypt, the Akkadian Empire, and the Indus Valley Civilization fell simultaneously due to this event. Surviving cultures developed a sudden interest in astronomy, and with building large stone structures.
- Manna was the discarded cocoons of the trehala manna mealybug (*Trabutina mannipara*): [146]
 - The cocoons themselves are golden or brown colored, and are a nutrient-rich protein source.
 - The beetles secrete trehalose, a white crystalline carbohydrate, which is still used as sweetener in fine Turkish cuisine.
 - An insect-based origin explains why Moses was so adamant against hoarding manna — because eventually "it bred worms, and stank" (EXO 16:19-24).
- The resurrections of Lazarus and Jesus were cases of premature burial, which was more common in the past, since pre-1900's medical science was basically voodoo.
- The Plagues of Egypt were brought on by the Minoan (Thera) Eruption, a volcanic eruption so powerful that it destroyed the Minoan Civilization and inspired the myth of Atlantis. This event introduced colossal amounts of dust and particulate ejecta into the stratosphere — 4 times as much as the 1883 Krakatoa Eruption, and 100 times that of the 1980 Mt. St. Helens Eruption. The resulting global weather pattern disruptions stopped the rains, causing the Nile to slow and stagnate, leading to insect swarms and algae blooms. The swarms and blooms spread disease to humans and spiked the insect-eating frog population. Airborne particulates served as nucleation sites for hail in the new disrupted weather patterns. The environmental impacts of the later "plagues" were equally inflicted on all Bronze Age civilizations; even the Chinese reported summer frosts and famines at this time. Simulations of these disrupted weather patterns have shown their winds were sufficient to part the seas. [147]

7.9 — The Argument from Beauty

While many of the ancient Greeks abandoned their gods once philosophy and science arose, they were so impressed by the beauty of art (especially music) that their belief in the Muses endured. [135] The drive for

artistic expression is thought to be divine, since it is innately human — it occurs in all human societies and cultures, making it a “cultural universal.” [148]

However, the cultural universals have their bases in human evolution. For example, the Westermarck Effect (i.e., an unconscious anti-inbreeding imperative which causes sexual disinterest in the people you knew closely between ages 3-6) explains the incest taboo which spans across all faiths and cultures. Likewise, art evolved a means to attract mates, since art is a means to: [148]

- Directly induce pleasure.
- Display skill and virtuosity.
- Exhibit style.
- Express novelty, creativity, and imagination.
- Invite criticism.
- Expresses individuality and emotion.
- Emotionally saturate.
- Embrace intellectual challenge.
- Relate to existing artistic traditions and institutions.
- Display affluence.
- Display badassery, via "peacocking." The extreme weight, energy cost, and conspicuousness of a peacock's tail render them more vulnerable to predation. However, these flamboyant tails show peahens which peacocks would produce the most powerful offspring, since he can endure despite living his life on hard mode, and therefore, must be a badass.

Even a slight sexual preference towards artists causes artistic traits to flourish and propagate throughout a species. A variant which produces 1% more offspring than its alternative would increase from 0.1% to 99.9% of the population within 4000 generations. **Subtle changes, which are unobservable within any individual or a single generation, can completely alter a species over thousands of generations.** This is a double-edged sword; a 1% difference in mortality rates among geographically overlapping Neanderthal and modern human populations could have led to the extinction of the former within 30 generations, or a single millennium. As a result, **humans have unknowingly selectively bred themselves to be artists.** [148]

7.9.1 — Visual Arts

Children prefer portraits to landscapes, because they are dependent upon other people for their survival. Children still enjoy landscapes, just to a lesser degree than adults. Children hold a distinct preference for savannahs, deciduous forests, and coniferous forests over jungles and deserts. Children under age 8 love savannahs, even if they've never been to one. Savannahs are imprinted into human brain structure, because humans understandably

evolved strong preferences for ideal African survival condition, especially when they depict: [148]

- Open spaces of low or mown grasses, interspaced with thickets of bushes or trees.
- Water sources nearby, or in the distance. There is a universal cultural preference for blue landscapes.
- An opening in at least one direction to allow an unimpeded view of the horizon.
- Evidence of animal and bird life.
- Diverse greenery, especially flowering and fruiting plants.

At age 15, people's preferences shift from portraits to landscapes, and they view all landscape types as equally pleasing (e.g., seascapes). Still, there is a distinct preference for idealized conditions; the most pleasing landscapes tend to offer a vantage point for prospecting a large area, and a place of refuge from apex predators. [148]

7.9.2 — Literary Arts

Human reproduction is two-fold, in that in addition to seducing females, males must outcompete other males. Courtship has done more to affect the evolution of the mind and personality than any other factor. Females biased the selection process to reward mates capable of long-term commitments, since humans have the longest maturation time of all animals. As a result of women selecting men who are kind, intelligent, attractive, wealthy, exciting, adaptable, generous, dependable, industrious, creative and funny, **humans are self-domesticating animals.** [148]

Human speech evolved to a high degree of refinement to serve as a fitness signal — a marker of health and intelligence. **The English language has 170,000-220,000 words, even though 4,000 words are responsible for 98% of daily communication,** and only 850 words are needed to conduct international business. Large vocabularies evolved because eloquence is seductive, like a peacock's tail. Likewise, metaphors, analogies, jokes, memory, and telling narratives with relevance, coherence, and drama were all developed for this same end. This is what drives average Britons to spend 6% of their waking life viewing fictional dramatic performances (e.g., TV, movies, and plays). [148]

Storytelling in particular, is a valuable, evolutionarily advantageous experience because: [148]

- **Stories provide a low-cost, low-risk surrogate experience.** They satisfy a need to experiment with answers to “what if?” questions regarding problems, threats, and opportunities life might present to as individuals or collectives, or might have presented to our ancestors. Fiction prepares us for life and its surprises.
- **Stories are informative.** Whether overtly fictional, mythological, or representing real events, stories can be rich sources of factual (or at least accepted) information. The didactic purpose of storytelling is diminished in literate cultures, but prior to writing, a vivid and memorable way of

communicating information had actual survival benefits. Hunter-gatherer life was “a never-ending stream of tasks, obstacles, and hazards, the local situations to which the individual is not born knowing.” The folklore of contemporary foragers uses stories to enable “people to acquire information, rehearse strategies, or refine skills that are instrumental in surmounting real-life difficulties and dangers.”

- **Stories offer alternate perspectives.** Stories allow the exploration of viewpoints, beliefs, motivations, and values of other human minds, inculcating their potentially adaptive interpersonal and social capacities. Stories provide regulation for social behavior.

Likewise, there is a constant repetition of elements, themes, situations, and plots in all of the world’s literary traditions as indicated by Campbell’s monomyth of the Hero’s Journey, Polti’s 36 Dramatic Situations, and Booker’s 7 Basic Plots. Christians have ruthlessly exploited this, as it is *extremely* difficult to write *any* story that cannot be construed as an allegory. [148]

7.9.3 — Music

Music is enjoyable because the human brain is hardwired to scan for language, and to pick up spoken words out from background noise. Music and vowel sounds are both pure tones. The complex and unique sound from the “attack” of an instrument is like the more complex consonant sounds, after which the pure tones of instruments are hard to distinguish apart from one to another. The words “play”, “bay”, “stray”, “day”, and “stay” all have a few milliseconds of complexity followed by a pure tone. [148]

Music ruthlessly exploits this language perception instinct through a degree of repetition that no other art form allows. 94% of all musical passages longer than a few seconds are repeated at some point within the same work. [148]

7.10 — Atheism Leads to Totalitarianism

There are only three defensive arguments against critiques of religion: [18]

1. Religion is true.
2. Religion is useful.
3. Atheism is morally and socially corrosive.

The third option has grown increasingly popular, since the first two options are harder to sell. Commonly, this takes the form of linking atheism to other (typically political) beliefs, allowing Christians assign the current enemy’s label to atheists and questioners of faith. This label can take on any form, since theism is the only thing which is incompatible with atheism. Typically, this label is that of a detested totalitarian group, usually one which was responsible for one of the great crimes of the 20th century (e.g., Apartheid, the

Holdomor, the Holocaust, the Rwandan genocide, etc.), [19] this practice of “guilt by association” is fallacious at best, and malicious at worst, since atheists disagree among themselves on *many* issues. [133] The average atheist is no closer to becoming an Adolph Hitler or a Joseph Stalin than a typical Christian is to becoming the next Jim Jones or David Koresh. [27] The wanton rationalization of violence — the concept of a “just war” was introduced to the Western tradition by St. Augustine, [82] and it doesn’t take much imagination to see how the Christian kings of medieval Europe could have been as terrible as any 20th century tyrant, had they access to assault rifles and tanks instead of pikes and trebuchets — especially since the Christian kings of 19th century Europe were capable of similar horrors on continental scales (e.g., the Congo Free State).

Machiavelli was the first to (indirectly) argue that totalitarianism and atheism were linked, claiming that Christianity’s universal love and acceptance would subvert the nationalism required to build powerful states. [13] However, **totalitarianism is not exclusive to atheism, because totalitarianism will arise in any system which can make laws which are impossible to obey.** The resulting tyranny is even more impressive if it can be enforced by a highly-zealous error detecting privileged caste. George Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four (1949) was inspired by his childhood experiences at a Christian private school, where it wasn’t possible to know when you had broken the rules. [36] People with authoritarian personalities have greater tendencies towards ethnocentricity, xenophobia, sexual repression, and a love of hierarchy and dogma. [44] **Christianity will not make anyone into an authoritarian or a totalitarian, but Christianity caters to the exact wants, needs, and desires of such people; it is an enabler. Nazism and Communism took hold in part, because churches had conditioned the population to accept dogmatism.** [20]

7.10.1 — Hitler and the Nazis were not Atheists

Out of his countless monologues, **Hitler never claimed to be an atheist.** If anything, the opposite is true, as evidenced by the fact that: [18]

- Although he lamented the Bible’s effect on the German people, **Hitler never outlawed Christianity, and never renounced the church** — excluding its teachings about aiding the infirm, and how Jesus was a non-Aryan Jew.
 - In particular, Hitler was infatuated with Christ scourging the temple’s moneylenders. The Bible only mentions Jesus’ using a scourge once — in the notably anti-Semitic Gospel of John. [82]
- Hitler claimed he was subject to “Divine Providence” from “almighty God” as an explanation for surviving his 22 assassination attempts.
- Hitler was a devout child and choirboy, who always attended mass with his mom.
- Hitler’s rallies were inspired by pageantry of the church [82] and ancient Rome. [149]

- Eva Braun's aunt was a nun cloistered in a convent which Bormann closed. Upon hearing this, Hitler ordered the convent to be reopened, claiming that such measures did more harm than good.
- The German Army fielded Catholic and Protestant chaplains.
- Proof of membership to either the Catholic or Protestant churches was required to join the SS.
- Nazi soldiers had "God is with us" inscribed on their belt buckles. This paraphrases DEU 20:4, when God addressed the Hebrews to fight their Egyptian enemies, to whom God promised an extermination (DEU 20:13). [82]
- Hitler admired Islam, for its military tradition.
- When overzealous Nazis removed the crucifixes from Bavarian schools, Hitler ordered them rehung. Hitler thought secular schools were intolerable, because they offered no religious instruction. Hitler viewed faith as the foundation which general moral instruction and character training were built upon. [14]
- As soon as Hitler came to power in 1933, the Catholic Church entered Reichskonkordat, where the church agreed to remain politically neutral, in exchange for its independence and allowing Catholic schools to remain open. As a result: [82]
 - **The Catholic Church approved of German rearmament in the 1930s**, which was contrary to both the spirit of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles and Jesus's teachings of peace, mildness, and loving of one's neighbor.
 - The Catholic Church remained silent over:
 - The boycotts of Jewish businesses.
 - The proclamation of the Nuremberg Laws.
 - The Kristallnacht.
 - The discovery of the mass graves, the gas chambers, and the death camps.
 - The Catholic Church provided its genealogical records to the Nazis, which listed all German Christians (i.e., non-Jews). The Catholics Church only defended Jewish converts and Jews married to Christians by using pontifical secrecy as means of information withholding.
 - The Catholic Church supported, defended, and aided Ante Pavelić's pro-Nazi Ustachi regime in Croatia.
 - The Catholic Church gave absolution to France's collaborationist Vichy regime in 1940.
 - The Catholic Church endorsed Operation Barbarossa (i.e., the Soviet invasion), which they perceived as a means of literally combating atheism.

- **The Catholic Church was fully aware of the Holocaust, and did nothing to condemn it in private or in public**, nor was any priest or bishop ordered to give a condemnation. Even after the Allies discovered and liberated the extermination camps, the Vatican continued supporting what remained of Hitler's defeated regime.
- Hitler was never publicly excommunicated for his crimes against humanity. According to most versions of Christianity, spending a few of his final moments repenting was all he needed to be saved. [27]
 - Likewise, any Holocaust victims who failed to convert to Christianity in their final moments are damned. [27]
 - Himmler and Reinhard Heydrich were Catholics, who were never excommunicated for their roles in starting the Holocaust.
- The Catholic Church set up a network of "ratlines" to smuggle Nazi war criminals (e.g., Eichmann, Mengele) out of post-war Europe. The Vatican used its fascist-granted nation-state status to issue travel visas to fugitive Nazis, and used Europe's monasteries as an "underground railroad" for former Nazi dignitaries and officials.
- The Catholic clergy who worked on behalf of Hitler's regime were never reprimanded for their involvement, and their promotions within the church's hierarchy went unimpeded.
- The Catholic Church has never acknowledged their involvement, despite historical evidence to the contrary. Although the Vatican Secret Archives have been opened to scholars, **the Vatican still forbids access to all its documents from 1939 onwards** to mask their crimes of complacency.

The Christian-Nazi link sadly persists into modern day; as the Aryan Nation is itself a branch of the Church of Jesus Christ-Christian. [14]

7.10.2 — Stalin *did not* Repress Christianity

Although the USSR was "officially atheist" because of its commitment to Marxist dogma, the term "atheistic communism" has always been a misnomer, since Jesus never endorsed any particular economic system. [88] If anything, the opposite is true; the founder of capitalist thought (Adam Smith) and its most vocal defender (Ayn Rand) were non-believers. [87] Atheism *seems* linked to communism because Christian doctrine has been twisted and all-but-rewritten to place the practice of unrestricted capitalism before the needs of people and their communities. Income taxes are now denounced as "idolatry," and property tax as "theft," and inheritance (estate) taxes are anti-Christian for bewildering ways which have been inadequately explained to the author of this book. (Requests for better explanations invariably result in angrier, *verbatim* restatements.) [19]

While the early Soviet leaders **were** militantly anti-religious, this was reversed when **under Stalin's orders — the USSR officially supported the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC)**. [72] On September 8, 1943 — with Stalin's permission — Metropolitan Sergius was elected Patriarch of the ROC, thus normalizing Soviet-ROC relations. Stalin, and his successors up to and

including the current Russian regime, recognized the ROC kept the people in line, and this was why the czars were able to maintain power for so long. Additionally:

- Priests were allowed in the Soviet encampments during the sieges of Stalingrad and Leningrad.
- The icon of Our Lady of Kazan was carried in a procession on the streets of Leningrad.

If anything, Christians keep the "atheistic communism" narrative alive to distract its capitalist parishioners from Christianity's numerous commonalities with the communists: [136]

1. Both claim all answers are found in revered books (e.g., The Bible; Das Kapital, the "Little Red Book") which are fanatically accepted without critical analysis. Rejecting these books results in savage persecution. [20]
2. Both worship "saviors" (e.g., Jesus; Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Castro, *et. al.*)
3. Both exalt the philosophers defending their systems (e.g., Augustine, Aquinas; Marx, Lenin)
4. Both believe in the physically impossible (e.g., miracles, transubstantiation; "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat")
5. Both rationalize their actions via citing abstractions (e.g., "the word of God"; "the will of the people").
6. Both will use direct force and/or institutionalized force (i.e., legislation) to impose their beliefs upon others.
7. Both have vendettas against the teaching of Darwinian evolution (e.g., creationism; Lysenkoism).
8. Both routinely falsified their history.
9. Any progress and/or improvements were only made in response to their enemies (e.g. Council of Trent, Vatican II; *glasnost*, *perestroika*). [20]
10. Both are ideological systems which demand followers to ignore their numerous flaws and shortcomings, all of which were caused by their system's lack of error detection and self-correction mechanisms. [18]

Modern Christians are harder to rally with Red Scares, since the Soviet Union is fading from living memory — **everyone under age 28 has lived in a Soviet-free world**. Still, there are some stragglers, holdouts, and John Birchers who persist.

Chapter 8

Arguments Against God's Existence

“Every now and then a man’s mind is stretched by a new idea or sensation, and never shrinks back to its former dimensions.”

— Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table

Philosophers and theologians have spent much time considering God’s existence. These difficult questions endure because Christian philosophers and theologians have never been able to answer them to anyone’s satisfaction — especially their own. This is intrinsically difficult, since many of these questions boil down to a call for evidence, whereas religious belief is built upon faith, which exists independently (and in spite) of evidence.

Again, do not argue with clergymen. Our strategy is not one of confrontation; but of malicious cooperation. Victory will be determined by the length and fruitlessness of your conversations. Arguing will reveal yourself as a troublemaker, and you will be denied any further opportunity to consume their time, ending your journey. Besides, you can’t directly deconvert a priest; they’re pot-committed. Deconversion and burnout are processes of erosion. However, discussing these issues in front of others can aid in their deconversion processes.

Synopses of the most common arguments against the belief in God are provided below. This is not an exhaustive list, but it should be more than sufficient; most seminarians are not required to study apologetics, and those who do often take a single 3-credit course.

8.1 — The Problem of Evil

“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?

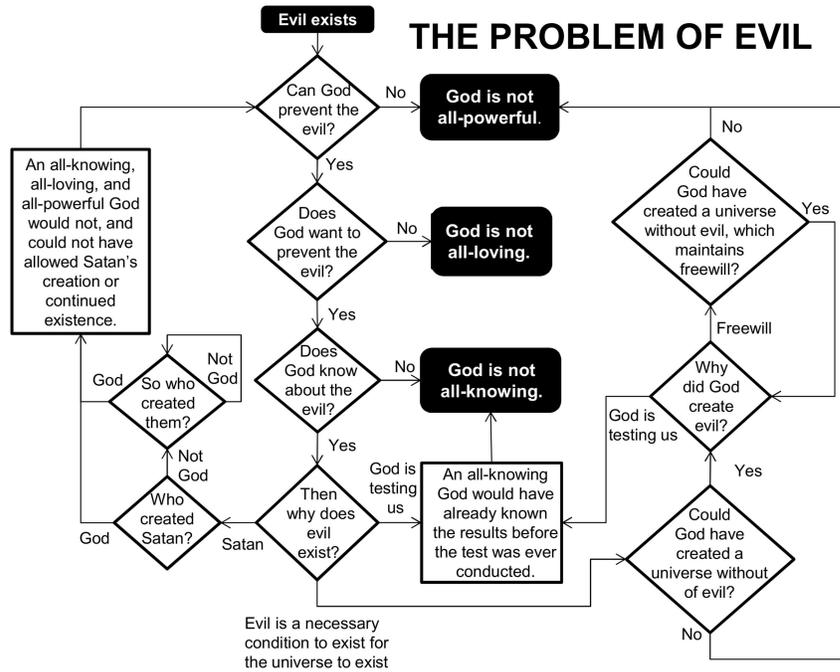
Is he neither able nor willing? Then why call him God?”

— attributed to Epicurus

The Problem of Evil is the highest-value anti-theistic argument; it is responsible, in whole or in part, for the majority of deconversions. In its simplest form, it makes an Argument from Incompatible Properties to demonstrate that the existence of evil is incompatible with the existence of an all-knowing, all-powerful, all-loving god, such as the God of Abraham. An

entire branch of theology (theodicy) has been devoted to solving the Problem of Evil, with no success.

Experience has shown that discussing the Problem of Evil will tie up any believer for an hour or more. In the interest of saving *our* time, the typical conversation has been flowcharted below:



Please review this image until you have fully grokked its contents.

8.1.1 — Holocaust Theology

God performed miracles to save the Jews from the Pharaoh, but not from Hitler. The inability to explain why an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving God sat on his hands and allowed the Holocaust to occur is now a major sticking point in theology. How could *anyone* have *any* kind of faith after the Holocaust? Holocaust Theology is the greatest problem which the tumultuous 20th century has imposed upon philosophers and theologians. Multiple theodicies have been, and are being, developed to explain Holocaust Theology, but to no avail. Even if a Holocaust Theology could be devised, it would not be a theology of hope. Offering a paradise after death as a means of escaping a despised world which was ruined and wracked by privation, violence, and all forms of cruelty is *not* a theology of hope — it is a *theology of despair*. [19]

This problem is compounded by the fact that God has condoned previous genocides (EXO 34:11-13), because he freely admits to being evil (ISA 45:7). Even if answers could be found, it would still be “wrong” to punish any person or group associated with those crimes against humanity, since compliance with Christ’s maxim of “judge not lest ye be judged” requires completely abandoning jurisprudence, on a conceptual level. [20]

8.1.2 — Resolutions to the Problem of Evil

The Problem of Evil has been approached from many angles, and each one has been developed in extreme detail. These counter-arguments fall into two classes — and Christians find neither of them palatable.

God has Limitations

The existence evil is inconsistent with the existence of a being with all three attributes of the God of Abraham (i.e., all-knowing, all-powerful, all-loving), but it *is* consistent with a being that only has two or less of these attributes. **God *can* exist, but not “as-advertised,”** because he is a limited, “lowercase-g” god. A limited god also handles the additional constraints imposed by the Omnipotence and Omniscience Paradoxes, as illustrated in the truth table below: [150]

All Possible Gods				
All-knowing?	All-powerful?	All-loving?	Possible?	Why?
True	True	True	NO	The Problem of Evil demonstrates that one or more of the three propositions must be false.
True	True	False	NO	The Omniscience Paradox demonstrates that an all-knowing God lacks the ability to change his mind, and is therefore, not all-powerful.
True	False	True	NO	An all-powerful God would have the power to make himself all-knowing.
True	False	False	NO	An all-powerful God would have the power to make himself all-knowing.
False	True	True	NO	An all-knowing God would know how to make himself all-powerful.
False	True	False	NO	An all-knowing God would know how to make himself all-powerful.
False	False	True	YES	Type-1 God
False	False	False	YES	Type-2 God

Type-1 gods are tragic, saintly figures who genuinely want to invoke positive change, but lack the means or ability to do so. While they may have

great knowledge (e.g., Cassandra) or great power (e.g., Odin preparing for Ragnarök), these ultimately prove insufficient.

Type-2 gods are not all-powerful, all-knowing, or all-loving; so they cannot truly be considered gods *per se*, since any and all humans also meet this criterion. If beings with immense knowledge or power existed, it is unclear why anyone would want to worship them, as their literary counterparts tend to be:

- **Absorbed in their private agendas and concerns;** e.g., Q from Star Trek: The Next Generation, Dream from Sandman, or Dr. Manhattan from The Watchmen.
- **Largely indifferent to human affairs;** e.g., Crom from the Conan the Barbarian novels.
- **Overtly malevolent;** e.g., H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu, or Marvel's Thanos (while in possession of the Infinity Gauntlet).
- **Mundane.** David Hasselhoff is a Type-2 god who possesses miraculous power, as indicated by the abnormally-high CPR success rates of his Baywatch pantheon. While seems like a joke, the miracles of the saints are based on less evidence than what any grainy VHS tape could provide.

Worshiping a Type-2 god is functionally the same as having no god at all. The creation of man could have occurred through natural processes independently of a Type-2 god, who in turn, may have been the product of natural processes.

The Non-existence of Evil

Unwilling or unable to accept the conclusions drawn by the Problem of Evil, the Christian's only other recourse is attacking the underlying assumption that the argument rests upon, and deny the existence of evil.

Apologists speculate that God has a divine plan, which is *overall* good; and isolated parts of this larger plan are misidentified as evil by humans who cannot see or grok the big picture. Therefore, the concept of evil does not exist, and everyone and everything is objectively good. While humans may perceive genocide (DEU 13:15), slavery (EPH 6:5; TIM 6:1), and ordering bears to maul children (2KIN 23:24) as evil, it is only because humans are just unable to see the objective, intrinsic good in these allegedly evil acts. This is because divine morality differs from human morality, and what is "evil" for humans may not be evil for God. According to this Divine Command Theory, *anything* God does is *de facto* good, regardless of its context or consequences. Therefore, the concept of evil cannot apply to God, for any reason. Although it is wrong for man to violate any of God's laws, God is can do so on a whim, maiming and killing innocents in natural disasters ("Acts of God") and untimely deaths ("God's will"). [151] **If a priest attempts to use this line of reasoning, by all means, let them.** This is the golden opportunity of a lifetime; draw as large of an audience as you can, because the clergyman *will* say something that compromises their credibility. Arguing this viewpoint is a *de facto* endorsement of moral relativism or moral nihilism. The case for

biblically-approved moral relativism is strong, based upon how God keeps changing his rules. To deny the existence of evil is to defend every form of physical, mental, financial, sexual, social, political, and economic abuse; this places the clergyman in the bewildering situation of painting themselves into every corner, *all at once*.

Some apologists (e.g., Gottfried Leibniz) argued that humans are unable to discern good from evil, since mankind's limited experience prevents us from judging the overall state of the universe. However, this is a *non-sequitur*, since our limited experience tells us that evil can and does exist on a local level (e.g., selling heroin to orphans). Again, **God explicitly admitted to creating evil (ISA 45:7); and feeling horrified by any of God's conduct in the Old Testament implies that morality exists outside of God.**

Experienced apologists re-frame the Problem of Evil as "the Problem of the Absence of Good." However, this is fruitless, as an all-knowing, all-powerful, all-loving God would still be prompted to intervene. This is further compounded by the fact that there are situations where **good can exist without evil**. Buying toys for children is good, and not buying them toys when they have a playroom full of them is not evil. Evil is unnecessary to understand good. Children understand that having toys is good, even without the experience of not having toys. [139] A person who does not rape and murder is not considered virtuous for meeting society's minimum baseline expectations.

8.2 — The Omnipotence and Omniscience Paradoxes

By definition, omniscience requires knowing every past, present, and future thought of every being, including the self.

The Omnipotence Paradox and the Omniscience Paradox are separate arguments, but they are both variations of a common theme — **that the popular conception of God cannot exist because the intrinsically self-contradicting properties of omnipotence (being all-powerful) and omniscience (being all-knowing)**. These arguments cannot prove God's nonexistence; they prove that God suffers from limitations — **God can exist, but not "as-advertised,"** because he is a "lowercase-g" god. However, these limits synergistically reinforce each other, and contribute to the Problem of Evil (see §8.1). The end result demonstrates that god is not all-knowing *and* not all-powerful, because the nature of omnipotence and omniscience requires the two to come as a matched set. Since God cannot be both or either, he is then neither, as illustrated in the truth table in §8.1. [150]

8.2.1 — The Omnipotence Paradox

The Omnipotence Paradox discusses the theological implications of the Irresistible Force Paradox, commonly stated as the Paradox of the Stone ("Could God create a stone so heavy that even he could not lift it?"), or as a

question of that form (e.g., "Can God create a prison so secure that he could not escape from it?"). This argument has existed since antiquity, but was not relevant to Christianity until the late-1100s, when counterarguments were needed to stop the influence of emergent sects, such as the Cathars, who did not believe in an all-powerful God.

Scripture credits the notion that God is not all-powerful:

- God was unable to overcome the people in the valley, who possessed iron chariots (JUDG 1:19).
- God required 6 days to create the earth (GEN 1:1-31). An all-powerful God could have done this in an instant. [139]
- God rested after creating the Earth (GEN 2:2). [139] An all-powerful being would not require rest, or need to feel refreshed.
- Assuming that Trinitarianism is true, then God is not omnipotent, since Christ was not all-powerful, despite being imbued with all of God's powers and abilities.
- The fact that God even needs to invoke power is evidence that he faces challenges, problems, hurdles, and needs. [92] Power, in any of its forms, is something that is used to influence one's environment to solve problems. An all-powerful God would have the power to preclude such events, and thus avoid the need for exercising power. [152]

Additionally, the idea that God is not all-powerful is a reoccurring theme in the Christian tradition:

- Christians claim that God has a plan for all of us, but why would an all-powerful being need plans? Such a being would not need to take steps to meet their goals; they could just outright create the final result.
- If God can be moved by prayer, then mankind has acquired and shares in his omnipotence. [83]
- The fact that God so desperately wanted to be loved that he (via his son) would die for each of us implies that we each have some degree of power over God. [26]
- God is unable to stop his followers from being unjustly harmed from natural disasters and other "Acts of God." [151] Christian apologists have tried to reconcile this by:
 - Variations of the "God works in mysterious ways" platitude.
 - Accepting scientific explanations of natural phenomena — but only because it can absolve God from direct responsibility for anything tragic or disorderly. [30]
 - Ignoring the death, destruction, and mayhem, and focusing on "miraculous" survivor stories. [30]

Those who would claim that God does not have to be infinitely powerful to counteract the largest possible force in the universe are forgetting that God supposedly created the universe out of himself. [92]

The argument of limited omnipotence (i.e., that God possesses finite power which is sufficient to do anything that he would ever do) implies that God has a

restriction on how large of a universe he could create. Could he have created a universe 20 times more massive than the current one? 5,000 times more massive? If not, then he is not omnipotent. The old riddle is not entirely inapt: can God create a stone so large that he can't lift it? Either way, God emerges short of omnipotence. Theologians have tried to counter this argument, but they establish limits while doing so, which inadvertently verifies the argument. For example:

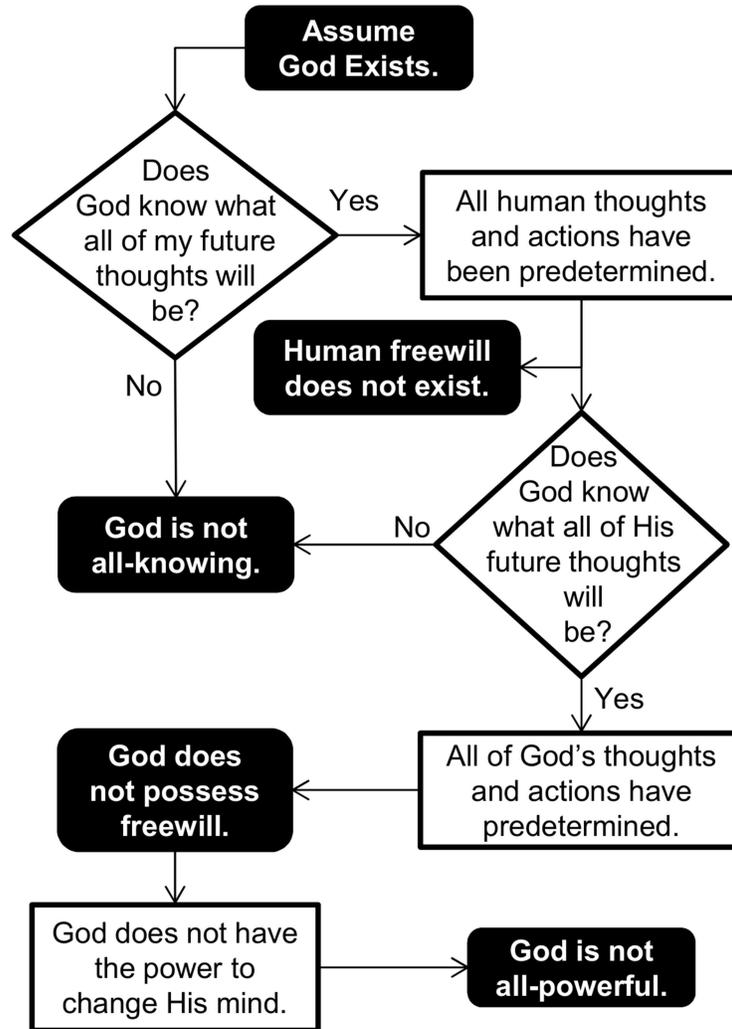
- Theologians work to redefine the term "omnipotent" to only refer to the logically possible, since being all-powerful, by definition, includes being able to do impossible tasks (e.g., drawing square circles). This inability, and the lack of these impossible creations is (strangely) cited as a proof of God's existence, since only an impossible being could perform these impossible tasks. [133]
- The Paradox of the Stone is often countered by avoiding the question, and claiming that "God would never want to do such a thing." However, this implies that God's power has bounds, since he is a slave to his own character and predictability. [92]

8.2.2 — The Omniscience Paradox

The property of omniscience comes bundled with a number of unresolvable problems and conundrums, because they are intrinsic properties of omniscience itself. These are outlined in the flowchart on the next page. Please review that image until you have fully grokked its contents. An all-knowing God leads to a number of unsettling conclusions:

- **God is willingly complacent in all human suffering.** If God knows everything, then he must know what all future thoughts will be, otherwise he would be *some*-knowing instead of *all*-knowing. This implies that God remained complacently silent in the face of fascists, Klansmen, and the whole litany of horrors which mankind has dealt upon itself; [20] God knew all of these things would happen, yet did nothing to stop them. Likewise, God knew how many children he would kill with each earthquake and tsunami, and knowingly sits on his hands as these tragedies unfold.
- **Prayer is a waste of time,** since God already knows your wants and desires. Prayer is then reduced to busywork to keep the conscious mind too preoccupied to think or cause trouble. [22]
- **Humankind does not possess freewill.** If God knows all of your future thoughts, then he already knows what you will think, act, do, and say *before* you ever do it. There is no reason for God to test or to try any man, because God would already know what the outcome will be. As a result of this, humans would have no freewill; we would merely carryout the orderly, clockwork actions of God's pre-determined plans. While apologists may argue otherwise, it is only an illusion because their predetermined opinions regarding freewill are a part of God's plan

OMNISCIENCE PARADOX



- The Bible offers no solace to this dilemma, speaking in ambiguities and hedging its bets. While there are fleeting references to human freewill in both the Old (JOSH 24:15; PRO 1:29) and New Testaments (LUK 7:30), God never explicitly ascribed that power to man (Paul spoke about making a choice in PHIL 1:22, but this was still in the context of having no real choice.) [22]

- **God goes not possess freewill.** To be all-knowing entails knowing *all* thoughts — including all of God's future thoughts. **An all-knowing God would then have no freewill; God could not change his mind, because he would already know every one of his future thoughts and his final decisions.**
 - However, if God lacks the power or ability to change his mind, then he cannot be all-powerful.

The only real way to quell these disquieting thoughts is to deny the omniscience of God, since these problems are caused by the concept of omniscience, and not with God *per se*. God can exist, but not “as-advertised.” This notion is reinforced by scriptures, which gives multiple examples of things which God did not know.

8.3 — All the Arguments for God are Weak

The arguments for believing in God are weak and unconvincing, since they tend to rely on ambiguous terms, false premises, and/or logical fallacies (see §7.1-7.10).

8.4 — Creationism is False

“Believe only half of what you see and none of what you hear.”

— Bruce Lee

Creationism was intentionally ignored for most of the 20th century, while creationists patiently waited for the shame of the Scopes Monkey Trial to fade from living memory. In that time there were a number of landmark court cases regarding church-state separation which eventually prohibited creationism and/or the mandatory religious practice and promotion from ever returning to US public schools. These cases included: [27] [153]

- *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947)
- *McCollum v. Board of Education* (1948)
- *Engle v. Vitale* (1962)
- *Abington School District v. Schempp* (1963)
- *Epperson v. Arkansas* (1968)
- *Lemon vs. Kurtzman* (1971)
- *Stone v. Graham* (1980)
- *Wallace v. Jaffree* (1985)
- *Edwards v. Aguillard* (1987)
- *Lee v. Weisman* (1992)
- *Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe* (2000)
- *Good News Club v. Milford Central School* (2001)

Creationism was forced to rebrand itself as “Intelligent Design” to circumvent these rulings. Intelligent Design increased in popularity until the *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District* (2005) ruling, which declared that Intelligent Design was a form of creationism, and therefore banned from schools. Since then, creationists have been pigeonholed back into the lunatic fringe, where they occasionally engage the public to recruit enough members to keep the flame alive in hopes of trying again years from now, once the Dover Trial fades from living memory. [72]

This guide *will not* list refutations of individual creationist arguments and talking points, because that would be redundant work. The Talk.Origins Index of Creationist Claims has an organized, cataloged collection of highly-polished refutations to creationist talking points, written by scientists for you to use at no cost. Instead, this guide will explain techniques for dealing with creationists, and explain the motives which drive them; these are important considerations which are not being adequately discussed in non-theist literature.

Strangely, creationism is mostly an American phenomenon. This is even stranger, since American science education is among the best in the world; this is why students from all over the world travel to study at American universities. **The crux of the problem is that this scientific training only extends to science majors; non-STEM students and the general population have poor science literacy.** Fighting creationists is only a symptomatic treatment of a larger societal disease; reforms in science education are necessary, and these reforms must be tailored for a popular audience. [154]

• 8.4.1 — Techniques for Dealing with Creationists

If confronted with creationists, use the following plan-of-action as a template to work from, until you can develop your own personal style. You should discover what does and does not work for you, but experience has shown that the below-listed best practices should not be ignored.

Only Argue with Creationists in Front of Small Groups

It's impossible to win a large, public creationist debate, because by simply agreeing to a debate, you acknowledge that their views contain some quantum of merit. However, creationists must still be engaged and publicly challenged, because we need to reach out to sheltered members of the religious communities, who would otherwise never open a science book. [18]

Force a Stalemate

Religious debates can never be “won”, because there is no victory condition — there is no way to definitively verify anyone's claims, because theologians have no labs. [106] Furthermore, creationists admit that their views are both unprovable and “inaccessible to the scientific method” because

the creation was an impossible-to-replicate, one-time event from the ancient past. [155] Besides, conducting a true debate is impossible, because the Creationists seek a platform, not a dialogue. [19] Creationists don't want to talk *to* you — they want to talk *at* you. This is because creationists are used to sermons, where questions are not permitted, and everyone but the speaker is socially obligated to passively listen and comply.

Instead, employ the Smiting Shepherds strategy (see §5), and get the creationist to talk to you for as long as humanly possible; **each minute of their time that you consume is a minute they cannot spend indoctrinating a young person.** This is easy because religious debates are tangent-rich environments which can easily drift into discussions about history, philosophy, psychology, morality, biblical criticism, medicine, astronomy, biology, linguistics, economics, and politics with little to no effort. [87] For best results, be sure to incorporate the following:

- **If miracles are cited as proof, cite the miracles of other religions.** [87] This sends the creationist off-script, heedlessly entering error-likely situations where they will misspeak in ways which erode their credibility and/or can be capitalized upon. At worst, disproving the other miracles bogs down the creationist with an additional task.
- **Ask the creationist to define every term.** [87] In addition to taking up more time, defining things imposes limits, which is a great value when arguing against the clergy.
- **Always ask for evidence.** In the end, **all faith is blind, because faith, by definition, is belief on insufficient evidence; if there were proof, there would be no need for faith.** Creationists and apologists are aware of this dilemma, and will try to escape the need for evidence with lengthy arguments about the criteria needed for something to constitute evidence. [19] This will help you eat up their time.

Make Themselves Look Ridiculous

While making jokes at the creationist's expense will win friends and influence people, this will be turned back against you by framing you as disrespectful and mean-spirited. Recall that **the goal is to keep the clergyman talking for as long as possible, because by holding them to their own declarations about biblical authority, they can be made to take on absurd, indefensible positions.** [22] Allow the clergyman to place themselves into no-win scenarios where they have to argue against their own positions to stop from digging themselves deeper. This can be achieved by steering the conversation towards one of creationism's funnier beliefs, such as:

- **There were no carnivores in the Garden of Eden,** because this was before the introduction of sin, and the wages of sin is death. Therefore, everything was a herbivore, since there was plenty of "green herb" to eat. The 6" serrated fangs of *T.Rex* were allegedly intended to shred cabbages and pierce rind fruits (e.g., cantaloupes, watermelons). [19]
- **The Noachian Flood explains most, if not all geological phenomena,** notably:

- The flood created coal deposits by uprooting and adiabatically compressing all of the world's vegetation. [155] The Old Testament authors were not fully aware that plants were lifeforms, which is why Noah made no attempt to save any of Earth's plant life from being crushed from the weight of thousands of feet of seawater. [87]
- 10,000 years is a short period on geological time scales. If the Genesis flood occurred, there should be a worldwide sediment layer, which is absent. [27] However, creationists claim such a layer exists (despite all evidence to the contrary) and explains fossil stratification by:
 - The relative ability of different creatures to struggle to escape the flood's massive sediment deposits. More complex creatures were better at clawing their way out. [155]
 - A direct relation between biological complexity and buoyancy, despite that no such relationship exists. [87]
 - The fossils were organized by the receding floodwaters, exactly unlike the aftermath of any other flood or tsunami. [87] The flood swept away the rest of humanity, yet no one was in any low-lying valley, or swept into the sea, or was on the same elevation as any of the allegedly still-existent dinosaurs, or was involved in any other situation that would cause human skeletons to appear in lower strata. [87]
- **All radioactive dating methodologies are invalid**, because decay rates are not constant. The decay rates of all the Earth's atoms were altered due to the effects of neutrino interactions. This explanation is uncritically accepted without proof, or without any description or discussion as to how neutrino emissions alter decay rates, despite the Nobel Prize-winning consequences of such an explanation. Given the neutrino's incredibly small absorption cross-section, *this is probably the only physical explanation which is less credible than a miracle*. [155] Other creationist groups maintain that the Noachian Flood somehow "reset Earth's radioactive time clock," without explaining how a *flood* could alter the properties of *all* the nuclei of *all* the atoms comprising the Earth's crust. The creationists also make no effort to explain why the flood would have also affected lunar and Martian rock samples, which also agree with a 4.5 billion year-old Earth. [87]
 - Our experience has shown that this argument is popular because creationists are convinced that decay rates are "all made up" because "you can't determine if an atom has a billion year half-life without observing it for a billion years." This ignores the fact that observing the decay of billion atoms for one year is effectively the same, because of Poisson statistics. **Always bring this up, because it frames the creationist into arguing that mathematics is false.**
- **The Law of Inertia is invalid**. Creationists ignore and oppose Newton's First Law (i.e., the Law of Inertia), by claiming that the constancy and regularity of planetary motion is not due to *the absence* of external forces, but is direct evidence of a *supernatural external* force. [30]

- **The Cambrian Explosion disproves evolution.** The Cambrian Explosion was a period in Earth's geologic history (~570 MYA), when many new lifeforms first appeared. Creationists interpret this period as the Creation Week from the Book of Genesis. Though creationists now begrudgingly acknowledge the existence of simple Precambrian lifeforms, they maintain that the biblical account remains accurate, since these fossils are of neither reptiles nor mammals. God then progressively created more and more sophisticated animals, in a deterministic fashion which entirely, coincidentally, and precisely mimics the end results of evolution via the natural selection of inherited traits. [30]
- **Creationists are often confused about the mechanism of natural selection**, which they perceive to be a circular argument. This is due to the erroneous popular interpretation of “survival of the fittest” as meaning “only the strong survive”; this implies that only survivors are fit, and fitness is determined by surviving. [156] However, **biological fitness is actually determined by an organism’s ability to reproduce; “survival of the fittest” actually means “those who produce the most babies the quickest will endure.”** Rabbits and gerbils are fundamentally weak creatures, yet they persist, through numerical superiority.

Use the Entire Conversation to Set Up a Powerful Conclusion

While **the true goal is to waste as much of the clergy’s time as possible**, if other people around, you need to cause the creationist, and creationism, to lose face at the end of the show to end. Fortunately, this isn’t hard to do, provided that you do the following:

Learn About Science

Clergymen typically have little to no scientific training, and even fewer clergymen have made original contributions to *any* field of study. [30] As a result, most **creationists are just literary critics**, since that mirrors their training. Creationists merely scan the scientific journals for any professional disagreements to fuel *non-sequitur* arguments.

Ask the creationist to explain creationism to you; this will tie them up for several hours. You can then tie them up indefinitely by making follow-up visits for “clarification” because you are “confused” by what you’ve read and heard elsewhere; e.g., the [Talk. Origins Index to Creationist Claims](#). (It should go without saying that you **should not** mention visiting this site; it is (in)famous in creationist circles, and you *will* blow your cover.)

For best results, you need a basic working knowledge of astronomy, geology, and biology. Introductory-level college textbooks for each of these subjects should be available at your local public library; and if not, talk to the librarian about an inter-library loan. If you live in a rural area without convenient library access, write or call the nearest university or community college, and ask the department secretaries what introductory texts they use. While textbooks are expensive, used copies of previous editions can be purchased at a nominal cost. While reading three introductory-level textbooks

may sound like an insufficient science education, it doesn't take much to throw creationists into a spin; we have personally been told by creationists that "there's no gravity in space," and hung them up by asking what keeps the moon bound to the earth, and the earth bound to the sun.

To keep the clergyman lured in, only cite the natural sciences. There is tendency among Christians to perceive social sciences as subversive and morally compromising. [31] Additionally, it would be useful to have a basic working knowledge of Biblical studies and counter-apologetics. In particular, creationists tend to make heavy use of design arguments. [138]

Lure the Creationist into Going Off-script

Contrary to popular belief, the clergy has no advantage, no inside track, no superior abilities, or sublime knowledge. Ministers are only successful if people want them to be; no preacher can succeed without a following. **Much of the zeal shown by creationists and the extremely devout is borne from insecurity.** In their inner thoughts, they know there is something illegitimate about belief; they have doubts, and spend a disproportionate amount of time and energy trying to suppress these doubts. This is why preachers constantly admonish believers to keep their faith strong, and bury critical thinking habits and feelings of uncertainty beneath a mountain of faith, traditions, and fear. [87] **The clergy only appear skilled and superior because they rehearse and polish all of their talking points. They must work from a script, because their training does include the technical and critical thinking skills needed to devise real-time responses to new scientific arguments.** With a little bit of science reading and imagination, you can knock creationists off-balance, and watch them lose face as they flounder before the small group. **Don't humiliate them in private;** this will only waste future opportunities and reveal yourself as a troublemaker.

There are two ways to challenge a creationist: [87]

1. Deny the validity of the assumptions which they base their arguments upon, or
2. Accept their assumptions as valid, but use them in unintended ways to form your own conclusions.

The situation determines which approach to choose. Ideally, you need to alternate between both approaches, to continually off-balance the opponent by denying them the chance to adapt and recover.

If the creationist begins to verbally attack and/or defame you, it means you're winning. *Ad hominem* arguments are always the last-ditch defense of the losing side. [87] In particular, pseudoscientists will often label skeptics as being "closed minded" for their unwillingness to accept shoddy data, sloppy methodology, and academic dishonesty. [157]

End by Discussing the Philosophy of Science

When confronted by any psudeoscientist, its best to explain to onlookers what science is and is not. [154] When explaining science to groups of non-scientists, please be sure to do the following: [154]

1. Begin with, and stay focused on, the “big picture.” This avoids dangerous misconceptions which will create more problems (e.g., economists keep luring the country into investment bubbles because they don’t understand exponential growth).
2. Always provide context.
3. Emphasize conceptual understanding.
4. Proceed from the more familiar and concrete, to the less familiar and abstract.
5. Recognize and address misconceptions. Rather than arguing points, demonstrate situations where the misconception fails; **counter-examples are more effective than examples**. For example, simply dropping a rock and a paper ball is more effective than explaining how they will fall at the same rates.
 - These simple demonstrations are a huge advantage, since a creationist counter-demonstration, if even possible, would “tempt the Lord thy God” (LUK 4:12). Creationists can claim that humanity was created via breathing into a dirt-mannequin’s nostrils, but they cannot explain the mechanism by which that works, and they surely cannot replicate it in real time [27] The best the creationist can do is to coax you into stopping, but since science encourages simple demonstrations, they have no power to do so.
 - Please note that this technique doesn’t work on young children (i.e., Grade 3 and below), because their maturing brains do not understand conservation laws (e.g., they can’t tell that balling up paper doesn’t affect its weight.)
6. Use plain language. Reducing jargon will not “dumb down” the material, because it allows the students to grasp the core concepts without having to stop and translate everything in to their own terms. When the jargon is unavoidable, explain the etymology of the word to help make its concept stick. Place special emphasis on how the jargon differs from its common usage, as shown in Table 1.

In particular, creationists and psudeoscientists are prone to using “it’s just a theory” as a thought-terminating cliché to dismiss ideas, arguments, or entire fields of study which they do not agree with. [87] This has power because there is a general misunderstanding as to what does and does not constitute a theory. Take time to explain this *to the small audience*, not the creationist; assume control of the conversation, and use it to explain the philosophy of science. While this may make the creationist angry, their anger only reveals their desire for power, which can be used to frame them as repressive.

As shown in Table 1, a *model* is a mathematical representation or computer simulation intended to explain or predict observed phenomena. A *theory* is a particularly powerful model which has been extensively tested and verified, leading to a high confidence of its validity. **Theories are not opinions.** Theories, like gravitation, atoms, relativity, evolution, pathogenesis, plate tectonics, etc., are models with evidence so overwhelming that everyone who has studied the issue has come to agree with that conclusion. *It's this consensus that allows theories to be taught.* Arguments only exist where evidence is weak; **No one dismisses gravity as "just a theory."**

Science is successful because it learns from its mistakes, via a built-in error-correcting mechanism, in the form of hypothesis testing. [19] A theory's predictions are compared against careful observations of reality. When theory matches observation, it reinforces the confidence in the theory. When a theory doesn't match observations, it indicates that the theory must be modified, improved, or discarded. The history of science is littered with once-revered discarded theories (e.g., geocentrism, miasma, at least six versions of atomic theory, etc.) This has a number of interesting consequences:

- **No theory can be proven to be true.** Only falsifiable theories are valid; that is, a theory must contain self-imposed limits which explain when and how the theory can fail. [157] **A valid theory must predict what will happen, and it must be able to predict what will not happen.** Non-falsifiable statements yield no valuable information, since they are all circular arguments, tautologies, or Catch-22's (e.g., "this towel will dry quickly unless it remains damp"). Because of this need for falsifiability, **theories can only be proven false.** [158] A successful theory is just the best theory available at the time; as a more exact, useful or powerful undiscovered theory may still exist. **Science cannot uncover the truth, but it can discover what is not-false,** and not-false functions as truth in every way. [19] Scientific truths are always "true until proven false"; unlike religious truths, which are eternally true, and therefore, non-falsifiable. [19] Astrophysics is accepted as a mainstream science because it makes falsifiable predictions which are verified through rigorous observation, and can be confirmed through collaborations with other sciences (e.g., astrophysicists discovered helium inside of the sun before chemists discovered it on Earth.) Astrology is not accepted as a science, because while it makes many falsifiable predictions, the overwhelming majority of them are wrong. Creationism makes *no* falsifiable predictions; as a result, creationism is "not even wrong" [157] because it is so incomplete and ill-defined that it can't be used to make any predictions of any kind. [159] While **Creationism can never be disproven — it can also never be proven, never grow, and never progress.** This great variety and disparity of the world's religions is also attributable to the fact that religion has no error-correcting mechanism to confirm dogma; **there are no experimental theologians.** [106] If a creationist tries to dismiss anything as "just a theory," ask why the Theory of Creationism is not *equally* discredited; their only way out is to admit that creationism is not even a theory, [27] since it makes no predictions. [136] Alternately, show how

scientific methodology influence non-technical disciplines (e.g., does music theory imply the non-existence of music?).

- **All scientific theories converge and mutually reinforce one another.** They must, or they would be used to invalidate each other, which would mean that all scientific developments since the 1700s, and their applications, would just be an amazing series of coincidences. The fact you are reading this electronic document is proof of electron theory's validity. In that same vein, chemistry supports biology and geology, physics supports limnology, etc. Because of their arbitrary nature, there has been no real convergence on faith propositions; if anything, religions have only splintered further. [19]
- **Science is never finished**, because the answers uncovered by the search for not-false inevitably lead to more questions, which in turn leads to more exploration, and more progress. While science is thus incomplete and incompletable, the results it generated in the process are both rewarding and fruitful.
- **The inability to disprove is not a proof.** [19] When a clergyman or creationist states that you can't prove that God doesn't exist, ask for what kind of proof they seek — specifically, what would that proof look like? If they cannot give a quick response, it demonstrates that they have no basis for their beliefs; [19] they are the philosophical and scientific analogues of a man who built his house upon the sand. While atheists have never disproved the existence of God, they've never had too, since **the believers bear the burden of proof. Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.** Besides, how does one disprove the existence of *any* God? The Christians believe that other gods (Zeus, Ra, Odin, etc.) don't exist, but have nothing to back this claim. [27]
- **By definition, science must be useful.** Creationists accomplish very little with their science; they have made no progress, and their results cannot be applied to further the development of medicine or technology. [27] **While there are many "creation scientists," there are no "creation engineers."** When the conversation reaches its head, ask creationists to demonstrate the predictions their theory will make. [87] Experience has shown that the creationist will cite biblical prophecies, but these described past events, or are cryptic references to one-time end-times events. Regardless, most prophecies predict things that were bound to happen anyway (e.g., earthquakes, war, moral decay, etc.). Prophecies never mention anything explicit or specific. [27]
- **Creationists are prone to making false dichotomies**, in that they assume that Darwinism and creationism are the *only* viewpoints, and that anything disproving Darwinism *de facto* proves the validity of creationism, and *vice versa*. However, **disproving Darwinism would only disprove Darwinism; it would say nothing about the validity of creationism, or the validity of some not-yet-conceived third option.**

Table 1: Comparative Word Usages		
Term	Everyday Meaning	Scientific Meaning
Model	Something you build (e.g., a toy airplane).	A mathematical representation or computer simulation intended to explain or predict observed phenomena.
Hypothesis	A guess or assumption.	A proposed, unconfirmed model to explain observations.
Theory	Speculation.	A particularly powerful model which has been extensively tested and verified, leading to a high confidence of its validity.
Bias	Distortion or political motive.	Tendency towards a particular result.
Critical	Extremely important or involving (negative) criticism.	Right on the edge.
Deviation	Strangeness or unacceptable behavior.	Change or difference.
Enhance/Enrich	Improve.	Increase or add more, without necessarily making things better.
Error	Mistake.	Range of uncertainty.
Negative feedback	Poor response.	A self-regulating cycle (e.g., engine governors).
Positive feedback	A good response or praise.	A self-reinforcing cycle or "vicious circle."
State (n.)	A place or location.	A description of the current condition.
Trick	Deception or prank.	A clever approach.
Uncertainty	Ignorance.	A range of possible values around some central value; a measurement's "give or take."
Values	Ethics or monetary values.	Numbers or quantities.

8.4.2 — The Psychology of Creationists

Before dealing with creationists, you need to understand *why* they believe in creationism. While it's easy to write creationists off as being stupid or brainwashed, that is not the case; **complex problems never have simple answers.**

A Non-literal Genesis Has Dire Theological Implications

As discussed previously, reading the Bible is a tricky endeavor, regardless of the version, since there are several different types of stories and lessons interlaced throughout. These stories fall into four categories: [22]

1. **Explicit Devotional Program Instructions.** Explicit commands to perform concrete acts (e.g. "Thou shalt not steal").

2. **Implicit Devotional Program Instructions.** Commands given in figurative, non-literal terms (e.g., “turn the other cheek”).
3. **Direct Suggestions.** Explanation of the expected mindset via allegories. These are especially important; as the crux of Protestantism is that all Biblical events are allegories for the reader's inner life.
4. **Reverse Suggestions.** Biblical allegories which reinforce the negative psychological consequence of belief (e.g., those involving animals, demons, and disasters). These provide the believer with feedback to make sure they are “on target.”

However, it is unclear how to determine which passages fall into which category. While some passages are literal, others can be explained away to make the stories more believable — but what drives this “selective literalism”? [40] How can anyone tell what is real, and what is a metaphor? For example, some Christians take the story of Noah's Ark literally, while others view the story figuratively. Which group is correct? What criteria do priests and biblical scholars use to determine the status of a given passage or story? [27]

This is problematic, because **if the events of Genesis are not completely, literally true, and there was no Garden of Eden, and no Fall of Man, then there would be no Original Sin, and Christ would have died in vain.** The selective literalists draw lines to breakup this line of reasoning, but these lines are arbitrary, and therefore meaningless. A literal Genesis is the *only* true way to stop this problem, by immediately halting this line of reasoning before it can start.

Creationists refuse to compromise with the scientific community since “it seems completely incongruous that He would use evolution as His method of creation,” since evolution is inconsistent with: [155]

- **God's omnipotence;** since God is all-powerful, he would be capable of creating the universe in an instant, rather than having to spend eons.
- **God's omniscience.** The fossil record is filled with extinction events, misfits, evolutionary cul-de-sacs, and other evidence of poor planning. The very essence of evolution, the natural selection of random mutations, is neither planned nor directed.
- **God's love.** The fossils record shows that Earth has always been a harsh world, filled with storm and upheaval, disease and famine, struggle for existence, and violent deaths. No loving God would be this inconsiderate to his creatures.
- **God's purpose.** If God's purpose was the creation and redemption of man, it seems incomprehensible that he would waste billions of years in aimless evolutionary meandering before doing so. Why would God even bother the hundred-million-year reign and eventual extinction of the dinosaurs? What greater purpose did the dinosaurs serve?
- **God's grace.** The struggle for survival in the physical world fits perfectly with the notion of salvation by works, which is contrary to Calvinist interpretations of Christianity, where salvation comes through grace alone.

- **God's image.** No organism is considered to be "more evolved" than another, because evolution is not an upward or goal-directed process. Humans *are not* the pinnacle of evolution, since bacteria also evolve, and have been doing so longer than humans have. Man is just another beast. Creationists claim that because of this "Evolution offers man 'freedom' from right and wrong, while the Creator God demands accountability form his creation," without stating how they reached this conclusion. [156]

Darwinism implies that death and suffering always were, and always will be, an inescapable part of human existence. Evolution exemplifies and demonstrates what Christians fear the most: *that the universe is a morally neutral place.* [19]

Genesis Keeps People from Believing

Genesis contains 40% of the Bible passages which people take issue with. In particular, the following percentages of the population reported taking issues with the following portions of Genesis: [57]

- Contradictions (22%).
- Mistakes made by the Biblical authors (18%).
- The age of the Earth (10%).
- The Bible contains too much death and suffering (6%).
- Science has disproved the events of Genesis (5%).
- Miracles do not occur (2%).
- There was no Noachian Flood (2%).

Therefore, convincing people that the events of Genesis were real is a high priority, since it is a root cause of many deconversions and missed conversions.

Creationists Want to Imprint, Not Convert

Childhood religious influences imprint themselves on the mind, permanently influencing how a person thinks. [56] This explains the paradox of how 50% of the creationists who eventually quit attending church will still believe in creationism. [57] Imprinting is a higher-value activity than converting adults, because:

- Adults have more experience to draw upon, and they've learned more "misconceptions," which must be unlearned with "discrepant events," (i.e., demonstrations with unexpected results which definitively prove that their preconceptions were false). [154] However, most evangelists take a "shotgun" approach, spreading the word of God to as many people, over as many media as possible, rather than working with individuals.
- Sudden conversions are usually environmentally-induced (e.g., brought on by peer-pressure or the desire for conformity when isolated from

competing influencers), and will fade as soon as the subject is removed from that environment. [22]

As a result, only 3-16% of those converted by evangelists will remain religious; the rest will relapse, [56] especially those who were not fully-imprinted as youths. Young people are unusually prone to crises of faith because they are constantly confronted with new experiences which result in dichotomies between their values and life experience, forcing the re-evaluation, twisting, or abandonment, of those values to make their worlds congruent again. [56] Insufficient imprinting makes religious ideas easier to discard; this is why 90% of de-converts rejected the Bible *prior to going to college*; ~40% will lose their *faith in high school*, and ~44% will lose their faith *in middle school*, and ~6% are already gone *while they're still in elementary school*. [57]

These deconversions occur as early as ages 7-11, when children become extremely focused on the concept of fairness. Children deconvert when a traumatic event (e.g., divorce, abuse, etc.) challenges their basic notion of fairness, which religious leaders either fail to acknowledge, or use theology to rationalize and/or reframe it as a positive thing. God's failure to enact change the trauma imprints the notion that God, and his followers, are intrinsically unjust. [67] The failure to imprint has caused the prominence of US religious institutions to decline by every metric. Between 1978 and 2008, the percentage of the population that were church members dropped from 70% to 65%; Bible literalists decreased from 40% to 30% of the population, and Bible skeptics grew from 10% to 20% of the population. While the LDS/Mormon church has seen some growth, it has been negligible compared to the rise of non-belief. Only 1 in 4 Americans will attend mass on a typical Sunday. By their own admission, the Southern Baptists, the largest born-again sect, are baptizing at the same rate as they did 50 years ago, when the US population was half of what it is today. [72] Creationists must imprint their ideas into the minds of the youth, because any other course of action would be insufficient to mitigate the existential threat facing Christianity.

In general, fringe groups of all types will target certain population subsets, which experience has proven to be the most susceptible to imprinting. Those who join fringe groups are typically: [17]

- **In a transitional period**, which renders them lonely, afraid, and too caught up in their own situation to detect any deceit. [24] This includes, but is not limited to: [17]
 - The grieving.
 - Recent graduates or flunkies.
 - People who have recently moved and/or started at a new school.
 - Those undergoing a breakup and/or divorce.
- **Usually from normal, functioning families.**
- **Demonstrate no aberrative or abnormal behaviors.** While 5-6% of fringe group members have psychological problems, the remainder only suffers from the diagnosable, treatable, and temporary depressions that eventually affect everyone (e.g., personal losses resulting in a transitional period, career trouble, age-related sexual dysfunction, etc.). [24]

- **Well-educated.** Educated people tend to have greater social concern (i.e., idealistic tendencies), which is exploitable. [17] Creationism's worst crime is the diversion and burden it has placed on our society's best minds, who must place future progress on the backburner to keep mankind's previous achievements from eroding away. [24]
- **Naïve, curious, trusting, and/or child-like,** [17] because they are easier to persuade and manage. Insubordinate, disobedient, self-centered people are weeded out, because they are more trouble than they are worth. [24]
- **Indecisive.** They are neither strong nor confident, and seek others to depend on and make decisions for them. [17]
- **From well-to-do families.** Since groups need money to survive, they target and cater to the rich. [17]
- **Risk-takers,** since these people tend to accomplish more. [17]
- **Typically introduced to the group by a friend or relative.** Most recruits are found by the group; recruits do not seek fringe groups out, nor do they respond to ads. [24]
- **Unaware they are joining a fringe group.** [17]

Creationists are Empowered by the Backlash Against Them

The Bible warns Christians that they will be persecuted (2TIM 3:12), because Jesus expects his followers to be able to endure tribulations (JOH 16:33). As such, any efforts against Christianity or creationism will only reinforce and validate their faith. Instead, **devalue faith on a conceptual level.** [76]

Darwinism is Perceived to be a Precursor to Atheism

Science can say nothing about the existence of God, because science describes nature, and not the supernatural. Clergymen originally accepted this notion, and embraced Darwinism as an enhancement of Christian theological themes. Darwinism only traumatized the laity, as Darwin seemed to challenge the inspiration and veracity of the Bible (i.e., the creation myth), which was perceived as degrading to human dignity and the notion of the human soul. [160] This led to increased tension between science and religion, which ultimately came to a head in 1860 at the British Association in Oxford, when Bishop Samuel Wilberforce debated the issue with Thomas Huxley. Wilberforce "largely disgraced himself in the eyes of the audience and left a firm impression that the whole clergy was opposed to Darwinism," setting the scene for the world today. [160]

The only true Christian argument against evolution is that it bears some superficial resemblances to Hinduism, [29] or sun worship (since the sun ultimately powers all biological processes). [19] However, in order to combat atheism, the clergy needed to link atheism to something in order to make it

tangible, [66] since atheism is the religious equivalent of having “clear” as your favorite color. Christians chose to link Darwinism to atheism because:

- **Darwin was a deconvert.** Darwin rejected God and became an atheist following the death of his children. Darwin had 10 children; but 2 of them died very young, and he was extremely close to his daughter, Annie, who died at age 10. (Such losses were common in the Victorian era.) [66]
- **Darwinism is easily linked to atheism**, since only 9% of biologists believe in a god that plays an active role in the world. [66] All the other topics which Christians vocally campaign against — homosexuality, abortion, pornography, divorce, etc. — existed well-before Darwinism, [27] so there is no way to demonstrate a causal link without ignoring all of human history.
- **Scientists are perceived as secretive, and therefore, untrustworthy.** Despite the fact that science operates through the share of data and information, scientists are perceived as secretive because many of them work on industrial and military projects, which are bound with non-disclosure agreements. [106]
- **Many believers cannot imagine themselves as nonbelievers**, so they seek ulterior motives for atheism. This is why Christians are prone to assuming or positing various *ad hominem* arguments to explain atheist beliefs and behaviors (e.g., they are just atheists are sinners, troublemakers, have authority issues, are arrogant, cold, angry, stupid, blind, limited, “simple,” hurt, disappointed, etc., *ad nauseum*). [92]

Creationists Haven't Decided What to Believe or Teach

Creationists simply want to be in control, even though they have no idea what to do once they come into power.

The Scopes Monkey Trial inadvertently shattered Fundamentalism, since the Fundamentalists could not agree on a set of common goals to help them recover from the humiliation they suffered during the trial. In particular, they could not agree with whether to engage with or separate from popular culture, until evangelicalism finally won in the 1950s. While Fundamentalists have decided to engage the public, [76] they've never decided on *how* to go about this. Anger is a major part of all Fundamentalist religions, as Fundamentalism maintains control via the fear of retribution. However, Christian Fundamentalists are unsure how to direct this anger, since they view the world through the lens of their religion, and cannot see themselves, their religion, or anything else objectively. [34]

Creationists want to be taken as seriously as any other science, and to be taught alongside, or in lieu of, science in all schools. Yet, creationists freely admit that creationism is unprovable and “inaccessible to the scientific method” because it was a one-time event that happened in the past, which is impossible to replicate in a lab. [155] Creationists wish to maintain their unscientific attitudes; rather than engaging in open-minded investigation to figure out how nature operates, they continue to throw their hands up at the first glimmer of mystery, say it is beyond understanding or comprehension. [30]

This only teaches youths to be ignorant on technical matters, and not to question those in authority; in other words, to embrace feudalism. [106]

Within the last 50 years, there has been a tendency for creationists to abandon their historical position that God is a hands-on participant in all cosmic and earthly events; God is portrayed as passively supervising Nature. Since God merely watches Nature from the sidelines, he is absolved of responsibility for the consequences of any "Acts of God," like earthquakes and tornadoes, which are now natural phenomena, and not supernatural wrath. Even though creationists believe that God retains the power to forestall such natural disasters, God "works in mysterious ways," and thus escaped criticism or blame for allowing these tragedies to happen. It is no coincidence that creationism assumed this new position exactly when science began to provide concrete, verifiable explanations of these natural events. This change-of-heart was not motivated by a newfound acceptance of science, but as a necessary evil to remain relevant in an increasingly educated society. [30]

While Conservatives exist to resist societal change, in favor maintaining the *status quo* in hope of eventually restoring the by-gone "good old days," these "good old days" are an imagined, idealized past which do not correspond to any historical period. [31] For example, 17th century England, "the Golden Age of Puritanism," was a time rife with superstition, astrology, and witchcraft. Spiritually, it was hardly a *consistent* age, let alone a *golden* age. This same idea applies to many other places and eras. [31] If Christianity were measured by high standards of orthodox beliefs and consistent behavior, then there were never any Christians; *not even Christ would qualify*. [31]

Since creationist audiences tend to be Fundamentalists, creationist doctrine must be tailored to fit their worldview. Fundamentalism is a set of prescribed thinking patterns and behaviors based on strict and legalistic interpretations of holy texts, to the point of immunity from the influence of any evidence that contradicts their beliefs. Fundamentalism is exclusive, in that individuals and groups see themselves as the only true believers, or at least most righteous and accurate. Fundamentalism is often parasitic, using force, coercion, ostracism, or political power to impose its beliefs, even at the expense of lost or ruined lives. [34] The use of control and force is designed to raise obedient, unquestioning and fearful children, who will not be tempted to challenge powerful authority male figures later in life. These children are conditioned to rely on external authority for moral choice, and to distrust outsiders. In many ways Fundamentalists fear love the most, because love unleashes passions and bonds that defy their carefully constructed edifices to keep followers trapped and enclosed. [19] These cultures of fear depend upon narrations, vivid imagery (especially about atmospheres), and verisimilitude to convince audiences. This enables the Fundamentalists to play upon pre-existing fears and concerns; they rely on presumptions more than facts; they need to dramatize and sensationalize to maintain continual state of alertness in their audiences. [76]

Creationists are Cranks

While this seems like an *ad hominem* attack, creationists tend to satisfy many, if not all, of the criteria which cranks possess, in that: [161]

- **They consider themselves to be geniuses**, because it is strangely a rational behavior. Likewise, everyone with contrary views is considered ignorant, stupid, dishonest, or fueled by other base motives. They consider being ignored a victory, as this is perceived as having un-refutable arguments. Any retaliation reinforces the notion that they are battling scoundrels because...
- **They exhibit paranoia and persecution complexes**, which synergistically fuel one another in a vicious circle. Being refused to speak at conferences or to publish in respected journals is perceived as a conspiracy against them by the established hierarchy of "high priests of science" who fear their orthodoxy overthrown — and not due to errors or general low-quality of the creationist's work.
- **They focus on attacking the greatest scientists and the best-established theories** (e.g., Einstein's relativity; Darwinian evolution). Like the fox to whom the grapes are sour, they declare what any greater fellows accomplish is bad, the performance of their duty defective, and it aims are contemptible. [162]
 - Typically, they do not address the consequences of those theories being false (e.g., those challenging Einstein can't explain how nuclear reactors work. This is important, as reactors were designed, constructed, and operated for decades under the assumption that relativity is true).
- **They work in isolation**, outside the closely integrated channels through which new ideas are introduced and evaluated. They do not send their findings to the recognized journals, and if they do, they are rejected for legitimate reasons, usually due to being unable to write well enough to meet publication standards. Reputable scientists are usually unaware of the creationist's existence until they receive widespread publicity through non-academic channels, unless the scientist collects crank literature as a hobby. (Like B-movies, these self-published, self-reviewed, and self-edited books and journals provide a guilty pleasure.)
- **They tend to write in neologisms** (i.e., a complex jargon of mostly self-coined terms and phrases). While is not damning *per se*, in that science and engineering frequently use neologisms, the scientific use of these terms have rigorous definitions, whereas crank neologisms are undefined, poorly defined, or used in a way which is contrary to their common or technical usages.

Creationists are "Pot-committed"

Creationists have succumb to what psychologist Philip Zimbardo termed "Not-Me Syndrome" (The Illusion of Personal Invulnerability). People tend to ignore direct evidence that they've been cheated simply to avoid the pain and shame of admitting to themselves that they've been cheated. [103]

As a result, creationists perpetuate or create new falsehoods to give themselves the appearance of having been right all along. [106] **Creationists and apologists aren't trying to convince others; they are trying to convince themselves.** [19]

In a changing and varied environment, following and copying the old ways is not enough; those who can adapt their ways always hold the advantage. [106] Religions must change when its culture changes or the religion loses its influence and the ability to propagate; **religions must evolve to maintain their fitness.** This has always been the case with Christianity, and the origin of Christianity itself — the Jews needed to merge with the Zoroastrians to survive the Babylonian captivity, [34] as evidenced by the adoption of Babylonian myths into their own religion (e.g., the story of Noah was adapted from the much older Epic of Gilgamesh). [87] To meet this end, massive upheavals of personal and societal values occur; and moral issues will disappear, as demonstrated by how few pastors preached against birth control in the last 10 years. Creationism is one of these “sunset values” — a passionately regarded viewpoint or value, which gains much of its intensity from the fact that it is about to disappear or be changed forever. Like the setting sun, such values make a flamboyant show at the end. [31]

In 2010, 52% of young Christians reported that they wanted to pursue science-related careers as adults, but only 1% of youth pastors/workers have bothered to address any scientific issues, to the point that **a significant portion of young Christians are convinced that their churches are anti-science organizations**, as seen in Table 2. [65] These youths view opposing fundamental, curiosity-driven science for the sake of boosting church attendance as “eating the seed corn” (i.e., forsaking future bounties to solve near-term trivialities) [106] and an active, wanton rejection of God's gift of the ability to reason. [65] Additionally, many young people are all too aware that many of their friends, relatives, or even themselves would not be alive today without antibiotics, pacemakers, and the rest of medical science; and many more would be made wretched without their eyeglasses. [106]

We live in a post-Christian era, where Christianity no longer plays a significant role in shaping our culture. **To be a devout Christian is to participate in a counterculture movement, and many of the old ways were not designed for such a counterculture era; they were borne from a time of Christian dominance, or at least of a favored status.** [54] Creationists are fully aware that they are a fringe group, and that if they do not win mainstream popularity within this generation, everything they value will soon be reduced to a footnote in history books. **Creationist zeal is fueled by the knowledge that they are running out of time.** This is compounded by a Christian tendency to be culturally short-sighted, in that they are unable to tell where their Christian principles end and where their cultural perspectives begin. [31]

Smiting Shepherds

	Completely True of Me	Completely or Mostly True of Me
Christians are too confident that they know all the answers	17%	35%
Churches are out of step with the scientific world that we live in	12%	29%
Christianity is anti-science	9%	25%
I have been turned off by the creation vs. evolution debate.	11%	23%
Christianity makes complex things too simple	9%	20%
Christianity is anti-intellectual	8%	18%

Science is moving forward. Even the largest, most influential megachurch in the country isn't powerful enough to stop or even slow the progress being made in Europe, South Korea, China, and India. Science, and the proliferation and propagation of its ethos and worldview, is beyond religion's ability to stop or even influence on a global scale, because religion provides little to no guidance that a rational person could not have devised on their own. [34]

Ironically, **American conservatives have become so preoccupied with mitigating secular cultural influences that they have ignored their own secularization**— politics and wealth are now their primary tools. **By seeking to protect themselves, they have lost themselves.** This is one manifestation of a large trend where by Conservatives become so preoccupied with defending certain points that they will ignore the defense of other points. This allows Conservatives to be manipulated into performing any action or assuming any viewpoint; since Conservatism defines itself as the resistance to cultural changes, culture is neither uniform nor monolithic; culture can be pushed or pulled in any direction to provoke equal and opposite reactions from conservatives. [31] This is no different than controlling one's reflection in the mirror.

8.5 — There is no Afterlife

“Millions long for immortality who don't know what to do with themselves on a rainy Sunday afternoon.”

— Susan Ertz, Anger in the Sky

Admission to the afterlife has been the major selling point for most of the world's religions, both ancient and modern. Without the promise of an afterlife, the conditions of Pascal's Wager change, and religious practice becomes a waste of time.

8.5.1 — Materialism Explains All Spiritual Phenomena

While the afterlife takes on as many forms as there are religions and denominations, all of these conceptions are based upon the notion that the soul survives the body's death. However, this is unlikely because of the overwhelming support for materialism.

The personal self is dependent upon consciousness, which is dependent on a functioning brain. Since the brain dies when the body dies, so does the self. There is no "spiritual" event that cannot be accounted for by some material event occurring within the brain. Altering the brain alters the consciousness. If an independent detached self-consciousness were possible, it would still require a brain and sensory organs to experience and interface with the world; otherwise this disembodied consciousness would be unaware of its own existence. Besides the self is uniquely identifiable, but the soul is immaterial — so how could individual souls tell one another apart? Even the best theologians have to resort to speculations about inter-soul telepathy, which is no different than asking how many angels dance on the head of a pin.

If souls did exist, they could just be a product of material processes, just like how wetness is an emergent property of water, without the need for an immaterial thing called wetness. [30]

The Arguments Against Materialism are Weak

Compounding the strength of the arguments for materialism is the weakness of the arguments against materialism. For example:

- If materialism is true, then truth is either unreal or material, since according to materialism, all that is real is material. However, truth has no material qualities.
- Materialism is illogical because it cannot be proven via logical arguments, since arguments are not material things.
- While I can speak of some thoughts as being my own thoughts, what am I? The "I" that is thinking this is itself a thought. Generating the self can't just be one of the brain's tasks, since that means your brain possesses you, rather than you possessing a brain.
- Thought transcends matter in many ways — thought can be in many places at the same time and within many minds at once. Since no material thing can do that, thought is real, but not matter, and materialism is thus false.
- Thought transcends physical laws via abstraction, since abstract, timeless, universal truths (e.g., $2 + 2 = 4$, and the notions of equality or truth) have no spatial or temporal dimensions.

These and most other arguments against materialism can be dismissed by viewing thought, truth, consciousness, etc. as being information, which *is* a physical thing. Death, and its resulting decomposition of the brain, definitively destroys the self, just like how burning a newspaper destroys the words written in it.

8.5.2 —The Arguments Supporting the Afterlife's Existence are Weak

While materialism does not definitively prove the non-existence of an afterlife, the arguments supporting the belief in an afterlife are extremely weak; in general, they are either logically fallacious or explainable via materialism. These include:

Argument from Common Consensus

The vast majority of all people who have ever lived have believed in life after death. This is just the “common consent” argument for God, which says nothing about the actual truth of the matter; if a hundred million people do a foolish thing, it is still a foolish thing. As my mother liked to point out, “if they jumped off a cliff, would you do it too?”

Argument from the Sages

Most of the great sages and wise men throughout history have believed in life after death, and it seems unlikely that this one belief should be the exception to their wisdom.

Appeals to authority are not logical fallacies *per se*, but they are in this case, because these sages are giving “expert opinions” outside of their experience, which is a *non sequitur*. Since expertise requires experience, only the dead can be experts on what occurs after death.

Argument from the “Spark of Life”

Many ancient languages use their “breath” as their word for “life” or “soul”, because they defined life as being the ability to breathe. This *je ne sans quoi* is not a material thing, and not composed of parts, because the living and the (un-mutilated) dead have equivalent sets of organs. Since this *je ne sans quoi* is not composed of parts, it cannot decompose, and thus persists.

However, this would equally apply to *all* life, so every animal, plant, fungus, and microorganism also has an immortal soul, which would necessitate their own version of the afterlife. Additionally, there is nothing about this “Spark of Life” which implies that it is immortal, and it is likely extinguished upon bodily death.

God's Love Ensures the Soul's Immortality

When you love someone, you don't want their existence to cease. Since God is all-loving and all-powerful, he will prevent such destruction.

However, this pre-supposes a loving God, and his conduct and demeanor as recorded in the Bible demonstrates that this assumption is questionable at best (see §8.1).

Argument from the Robustness of Souls

In Book 10 of The Republic, Plato describes how everything has its own natural, intrinsic weakness, which will eventually destroy it (e.g., rust destroys ironworks, the body succumbs to disease, etc.). However, souls are not destroyed by their intrinsic evils (e.g., vice, ignorance, and wickedness); therefore, souls are invincible.

However, **this is not a useful argument, since it only demonstrates that souls are never destroyed while their bodies are alive;** it states nothing about what happens after death. Additionally, this assumes that bodies and souls are two discrete and separate things. This argument cannot refute materialism, since it assumes that materialism is false, which begs the question.

Argument from Justice

Christians operate under the assumption that justice is objective, and that we live in a just world. To explain why justice is unfulfilled in the short-term (i.e., when bad things happen to good people and vice-versa), an afterlife is often necessary to meet this fulfillment in the long-term. However, the truth is rarely black or white, but a shades of grey. While justice may demand immortality to confer an eternity of punishments or rewards, justice is ultimately a human construct, which is why it has many (and often contradictory) definitions. Outside of human civilization, the world is harsh and unjust, a "nature red in tooth and claw."

Argument from Near-Death Experiences

About 20 million Americans have had some kind of near-death experience, which convinces them of an afterlife. While this could be a hallucination, theologians argue that they are true since because of the invariance of the stories. Almost everyone has a similar experience, in that:

- The "afterlife" does not resemble its popular portrayal in art. There are no golden streets, angels, clouds, harps, or halos.
- The people involved tend to abstain from psychedelic drugs.
- When allegedly out of their bodies, these people remain aware of their surroundings.
- These people experience profound, positive personality changes. While they do not become saints, they:
 - Are convinced of life after death.
 - No longer fear death.
 - Have a strong sense of meaning, because they feel as though were sent back for a reason.
 - They take on a new sense of values, emphasizing truth/wisdom/knowledge and love/compassion.

However, research has shown that the dying brain experiences a flurry of activity and chemical dumps as it attempts to reboot itself and/or cope with damage. This damage model explains the profound personality changes due to self's dependence on the brain — they are literally changed into different people. Likewise, the commonality of experiences is a further proof of materialism, since they all involve a common set of hardware (i.e., human brains) entering their failure modes, much like how different units of the same game console model will experience similar glitches. These near-death experiences are hallucinatory trips caused by the trauma of almost dying. A lack of oxygen causes the visual cortex nerves to fire in stripes, causing concentric circles or spirals to be seen (the “tunnel of light”). [93]

8.6 — Hell Does Not Exist

“If you can scare someone, you know you have control over them.”

— Tom Araya, lead vocals / bassist for Slayer

There has never been any evidence supporting the existence of Hell. The only “proof” is from Bible quotes, which are posited as true simply because they are in the Bible. Jesus invented the idea of Hell (MAR 9:43; MAT 13:41-42), so he could gladly damn his opponents (JOH 15:16) to suit his all-or-nothing mindset. Hell was arguably Jesus' only truly original idea; all of his other teachings were paraphrased or discovered beforehand by other religions or philosophers; and the harshest Old Testament punishment was a (comparatively simple) death penalty. [139]

Despite these facts, many argue that Jesus was not that cruel or vindictive. Many liberal Christians have stated that Hell is just a metaphor for a total isolation from Christ and his love. However, if Christ is omnipresent, then this separation is impossible; if Christ is everywhere at all times, then he must also be in Hell (MAT 28:20). Besides, Jesus was emphatic that Hell was a real place (MAT 25:46, 41; 10:28; 13:42), to the point that he allowed himself to be crucified because he was convinced that it would somehow help keep other people out of there (JOH 5:24; 8:24). [29]

Synopses of the most popular arguments against the existence of Hell are provided below.

Hell Reveals God's Hypocrisy

Hell is incompatible with God's unconditional love. One of Christianity's major bulletpoints points of is that you should love everyone — even your enemies — and to bestow forgiveness and mercy even to the undeserving. Yet God sends people to Hell, because he is a God of wrath — *meaning hate* — which is a contradiction: The God of Love is hatred personified. [135]

The common counterarguments are based on: [135]

- Denying the notion of God's wrath, and re-interpret it as a projection of our own wrath.
- Reframing God's wrath to apply to sin, and not to sinners. The defender could also say that God really has wrath, but not to sinners, only to sins.
- Using doublethink to rectify the issue, by stating that "the fires of Hell are made from God's love," so that sinners are tortured with the love of God, for sinners have made themselves the enemy of love.

However, if God's wrath is not objectively real, is Hell not objectively real as well? Can Hell be interpreted non-literally? While that seems reasonable, Jesus clearly stated that Hell is a real, literal place (MAT 25:46, 41; 10:28; 13:42).

Heaven Becomes Miserable if Your Friends and Loved Ones are in Hell

This could occur in four ways: [135]

- Those in Heaven are unaware if anyone is in Hell; but then their "happiness" is based on a lie.
- Those in Heaven are aware their loved ones are in Hell, and are happy about it; but these people would be too selfish and cruel to deserve Heaven.
- Those in Heaven are aware their loved ones are in Hell, and are unhappy about it; but if the inhabitants are unhappy, what is the point of Heaven?
- The Amish rectify this issue by believing that everyone in Heaven is permanently anonymous, which would be lonely.

Theologians counter-argue that since Heaven and Hell exist in different realms, they experience the flow of time at different rates; Hell just *seems* like eternity, and those in Heaven are so caught up in the moment that they fail to notice the plight of the damned. However, this is pure speculation, and can't guarantee that no one in Heaven would or could mourn for those in Hell. [135]

An All-knowing, Hell-creating God Must be Sadistic

If God is all-knowing, he knows all aspects of the future, and thus has predestined everyone. If God predestined some people for Hell before they were born, he is a cosmic sadist, who willingly created some people just to damn them.

Theologians argue against this with doublethink and try to redefine predestination into not being "pre-" anything, via their unverified declaration that God exists outside of linear time. [135]

Hell Indicates that God Values Justice Over Mercy

Hell may be just, but it's not merciful. We usually think of mercy as a relaxation, compromising, or even a contradiction of justice. How can divine attributes ever be compromised? Justice must discriminate between those who do and do not deserve mercy. Christian scriptures clearly state that Hell is a punishment; and counterargument is just playing word games with the different concept of law: [135]

- Positive laws are posited or willed by some man or god. Positive laws have changeable and negotiable punishments, which can be influenced by mercy.
- Natural laws are not willed, and could not be different; they are necessary because they govern the nature of a thing. Natural laws are unchangeable and necessary, and violations of natural law are unpunishable because nature acts in such a way that natural laws cannot be violated (e.g., gravity can't make things go up). Natural laws are invariant, and are thus mercy-exempt.

Hell contradicts God's mercy for his positive laws, though it is a natural and necessary punishment for being a contrary-to-God kind of person. [135] However, since God is the creator of all things, these natures, and this dichotomy, were also posited.

Hell is too Extreme to be a Just Punishment

The punishment does not fit the crime: infinite, eternal punishments for finite, temporary crimes. Theologians counter this by arguing against themselves, and claiming that Hell isn't *that* bad, because: [135]

- Since eternity is not quantitative, no one can calculate the quantity of punishment dealt.
- The popular working definition of justice, "the punishment fits the crime" implies that both crime and punishment are finite, since "fits" means "proportionate," and all proportions are finite. Thus, Hell cannot offer infinite punishment, because only God is infinite.
- The intense images (e.g., fire and brimstone) are not literal; they are just metaphors for a terrible fate. However, Jesus was overt about Hell being a real, physical place (MAT 25:46, 41; 10:28; 13:42), and he allowed himself to be crucified because he was convinced that would somehow stop people from going there (JOH 5:24; 8:24). [29]

Sin is not just a violation of a rule or law, but a negative relationship with and deliberate divorce from God. Those who object to Hell as too severe a punishment for sin thus do not understand the meaning of sin.

An All-Powerful God That Wanted to Save Everyone Would Do So

Theologians argue that since God is all-good and all-powerful, he thus created the best of all possible worlds, which apparently requires a Hell. However, this is a self-contradictory argument; just as you can always add one more to any finite number, you can always find ways to improve the world.

Apologists argue that God *did* create a world without Hell, but it was ruined by Original Sin. However, a truly all-powerful God would be able to compensate for that. [135]

- There is no Advantage to Believing in Hell

Traditionally, Christians believed that more people went to Hell than to Heaven, even though there was never any census data. Jesus said that the way to Hell is wide and that many find it, but the way to Heaven was narrow and only few find it (MAT 7:13). However, this means that Satan is victorious, having won more souls than God. [135]

There is no Advantage to Believing in Hell

Hell only creates fear, hate, despair and oppression; even the most naïve person agrees that Hell was invented to control and manipulate people.

Theologians argue that any idea, true or false, can be misused, and that its use does not affect its truthfulness. The fear of Hell is not bad *per se*, because in the presence of danger, the absence of fear is more dangerous than fear. The fact that Hell produces fear has been cited as proof of its existence, but children are often afraid of imaginary monsters. [87] Nightmares are also frightening and unreal. [27]

This is compounded by the fact that believing in the Christian Hell requires rejecting the Hells of all other religions. Faith is an assumption, and avoiding the Christian Hell may lead to being sent to the Muslim Hell, Hel, any other places which the one true religion might send you. [27] Cultural relativity further complicates this matter; the first Christian missionaries to Alaska experienced great difficulty trying to convert the Inuit, who yearned for Hell's lakes of fire. [151]

8.7 — The Bible is not Credible

Most Christians don't know where their Bible came from, and sadly, don't think to question this. [80] This is highly problematic because the crux of Protestantism is that all Biblical events are allegories for the inner life of their readers, [22] a worldview which is complicated by the facts that: [92]

- **There is no external historical confirmation for the existence of Jesus or his alleged events in the New Testament.** Even the often-cited report in Josephus' Antiquities of the Jews (c. 94 CE) has been revealed to be a forgery [72], because it is just so unlike Josephus' writing style. Antiquities of the Jews spans *twenty volumes*. This work spent forty

chapters on a single king, and devoted whole pages to petty robbers and obscure seditious criminals. Yet Jesus Christ, the messiah, the most important man who ever lived, son of the all-powerful God of all-creation, King of Kings, was only ever mentioned in passing, over a total of twelve lines. [163]

- Skeptics of the historical Jesus (i.e., one who walked the Earth as a man) point out that **there is no direct physical evidence of his existence** — no clothes, no handwritten letters, no house with his name on it — no artifacts of *any kind*. This is admittedly unsurprising for a tradesman from that era and region; the Roman histories of the time don't even mention Pontius Pilate. [27] However, given Jesus' degree of local fame and notoriety, *something* should have been recorded *somewhere*, by *someone* who actually knew Jesus. Even the Gospels don't qualify as reliable written sources; as we will demonstrate below; biblical scholars agree that the Gospels were written well after Jesus' death, by unknown persons who never saw him in the flesh. [27] Thomas Paine pointed out that everything in the Bible is hearsay; even if the message at the tomb were true, it would have had to pass through God, the angel(s), Mary, the disciples, the Gospel writers, all the copyists, and all the translators. Even if the events were true, they would have been distorted by the grapevine/telephone game/Chinese whispers game needed to bring the message to us. [92]
- **The New Testament's stories are internally contradictory.** In addition to the Bible's many glaring contradictions, it also contains wild improbabilities, such as the verbal exchange between Jesus and Pontius Pilate. Apart from the fact that interrogations were conducted by underlings, it is hardly probable that an exalted official would make a point to talk with a local criminal. Moreover, Pontius Pilate spoke Latin, and Jesus spoke Aramaic; yet according to the Gospel of John, they conversed back and forth, without an interpreter, translator, or intermediary. [82]
- **There are other explanations for the origin of the Jesus myth** (see §8.7.3).
- **The miracle reports make the Bible unhistorical.** The presence of miracle stories in the New Testament makes the legends highly suspect; if miracles are as defined as a violation, suspension, overriding, or punctuation of natural law, then miracles *cannot* be historical. Of all of the legitimate sciences, history is the weakest, as it can only produce approximations of truth. In order for history to have any strength at all, it must adhere to the strict, but common, assumption of invariant natural laws. **Without this assumption, there would be no way to separate fictions from facts, and everything that has ever been recorded would then have to be taken as literal truth.** [92] If miracles are defined as "highly unlikely" or "wonderful" events, then the Bible *could* be historical, **but extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof.** This does not mean we need a miracle to prove a miracle; but miraculous claims require additional proof beyond what a more credible claim would

require. These miracles are not impossible, *per se*, just wildly, comically improbable. [92]

While the Bible contains numerous predictions, these are meaningless, since they are vague enough to have multiple interpretations. **None of the Bible's prophecies are so straightforward that anyone could read them and conclude that they came true, as predicted, and in ways that could only have been due supernatural means.** Most prophecies merely predict things that are fated to eventually happen (e.g., earthquakes, war, moral decay, etc.), without listing any specific instances. (e.g., an earthquake killed over 800,000 Chinese people in 1556, and God made no effort to warn them). [27]

Another problem with biblical prophecies is that *they are in the Bible*. To predict an event which occurred thousands of years ago, and then tell a story about how that event happened shortly thereafter is unconvincing.

Predictions are only incredible when they describe the future, not the past. However, Christianity has little to offer along those lines; the only future-oriented prediction the Bible offers was Jesus' 2000 year-old promise to return "soon". "The day of the LORD is at hand" must ring hollow at some point, be it in the year 2525, 7510, 10000, or increasingly, *today*. [27]

If the Bible is authoritative, then who wrote the Bible? When did they write it? Where did they get the ideas for the Bible? How do Christians know if the Bible is even the word of God? If these questions cannot be answered, then why value the Bible at all?

8.7.1 — Who Wrote the Bible?

Traditionally, Matthew and John were said to be two of the Twelve Apostles, Mark was Peter's secretary while he preached in Rome, and Luke was one of Paul's assistants, who also wrote Acts of the Apostles, as a "sequel" to his Gospel. Paul was not an apostle *per se*, and did not know Jesus during his lifetime. However, **each of the four Gospels was written anonymously.** No author's name appears on *any* of the earliest partial or full copies of these texts, and none of the authors gave *any* personal information about themselves. [164] These author attributions were assigned by Irenaeus in 180 CE, based on traditions established earlier that century. [92] If any of the Twelve Apostles, or their close associates, wrote about Jesus' life, that book would've become an instant classic among Christians, leading it to be widely copied, distributed, cited, and other Christian writers would frequently mention its author by name, even if their name didn't appear in the text. Yet, it appears that until 180 CE, Christian scholars had no idea who wrote the New Testament Gospels, and their present labels were either baseless assumptions, or utilized unreliable sources. Prior to 180 CE, Christian writers thought the four Gospels were "memoirs" of unattributed apostles, and only identified these books through their characteristics (e.g., Matthew and Luke were "the Gospel with the genealogies," etc.). [164] **The gospels themselves contain many indications of their false attributions:**

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- The Gospel of Matthew refers to the Apostle Matthew in the third person, indicating that the author and the apostle were different people.
- In a passage that many scholars consider to be an addition from a later author (JOH 21:24), the “Beloved Disciple” was stated to be the source for the Gospel of John. However, the Bible never says who the Beloved Disciple was, and nothing indicates that it was John; only that it was neither Peter nor Judas Iscariot. [164]
- The Gospel of John freely admits to being propaganda (JOH 20:31). [87]
- The author of Luke specifically said that he began his effort when many others had already wrote orderly accounts of what had been “handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and servants of the word” (LUK 1:2), but he never claimed that any of the Apostles had written a Gospel. If anything, his language suggested that his written sources were *not* eye-witness accounts, but secondary sources based on oral traditions (i.e., rumors).
 - Luke stated that his Gospel as an investigative report for Theophilus, so that he may know the certainty of what he was taught (LUK 1:3-4). Theophilus’ identity is unknown, but based on his name (literally: “God-lover”), he is likely a metaphor for reader, or for the Christian movement itself. [164]
 - Luke did not name his sources, or tell us when he cited a source. [164]
- Tradition holds that Luke was Paul’s companion, but the author of Luke made no such claim, and never stated to have obtained any information from Paul. Most New Testament scholars recognize that the description of Paul’s activities in the Acts of the Apostles conflicts with Paul’s version of the same or similar events, as described in his letters. The author of Luke-Acts appears to have had no knowledge of Paul’s letters, or any intimate knowledge of Paul’s works from personal observation; he apparently even misunderstood Paul’s theology. If the author of Luke-Acts knew Paul, they were casual acquaintances at best. Therefore, the author of Luke was apparently isolated from the Apostolic circles that emerged after Jesus’ death. If he was Paul’s companion, the many errors he made regarding Paul’s career and teaching suggests that his accounts of Jesus’ life should be viewed with skepticism — and if he wasn’t a close companion of Paul, then readers should be even more wary. [164]
- The “silence of Paul” is a huge problem for those advocating for a historical Jesus, because the Christ in Paul’s writings is an entirely different character from the Jesus of the Gospels. Furthermore, Paul adds no verification for *any* aspect of the Jesus story; even Paul’s supposed confirmation of the resurrection (1COR 15:3-8) contradicts the Gospels. [92]

Please keep in mind that forging Gospels, letters, and other writings attributed to the Apostles and other figures from Jesus’ time was a popular cottage industry in Christianity’s first few centuries. Most New Testament scholars who studied these issues reluctantly acknowledge that several of these falsified documents eventually made their way into the New Testament.

As such, **the following holy books and letters are now dismissed as forgeries:** [164]

- James
- 2 Peter
- Jude
- All of Paul's letters, excluding:
 - Romans
 - 1 Corinthians
 - 2 Corinthians
 - Galatians
 - Philippians
 - 1 Thessalonians
 - Philemon

8.7.2 — When the Bible was Written?

Dating the Bible's authorship is a difficult task because:

- **The Bible's explicit historical information is unreliable and contradictory.** For example: [87]
 - Matthew says Jesus was born "in the time of Herod the king;" Herod died in 4 BCE.
 - Luke reports the Jesus was born during a Roman census "when Cyrenius became governor of Syria," both of which happened in 6 CE.
- **Some books mention no external historical events to use as reference points** (e.g., the Gospel of John).
- **There is no corroborating evidence or records for many of the Bible's events.** (e.g., The Book of Matthew is the *only* time Herod's genocide is mentioned *by anyone*, either inside or outside the Bible. This event should have caught *someone's* attention.) [87]

Many of the details surrounding the Bible's origins have been lost to time, but biblical scholars have managed to piece together the following based on the surviving documentation: [87] [92]

- Scholars agree that the four Gospels were *not* the first books written, and were not written in their traditional order (i.e., Matthew, Mark, Luke, John).
- Mark was written first, and was based off some now-lost earlier work ("proto-Mark"). **Thus, even the earliest accounts of Jesus' life are still secondary sources.**
- The last twelve verses of the Gospel of Mark were added on at a later time; the earliest versions end with the empty tomb.
- Matthew and Luke both used Mark's gospel as a reference, as indicated by the fact that Matthew and Luke rarely contradict Mark. [164]
- ~20% of Matthew and Luke's Gospels are additional details which were not found in Mark, and do not conflict with each other. This implies the existence of another Gospel ("Q"), which they also used as a reference.

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There are no existent copies of Q, but based on analysis of ancient manuscripts, Q was written in Greek; went through at least three major developments; and the original version was used to write Luke. No one knows who wrote Q, or if it's information is reliable.

- ~33% of Matthew and ~40% of Luke is content which is not featured in the other Gospel. These passages are attributed to oral traditions or other lost documents ("M" and "L", respectively.)
- It is unclear why Luke, a colleague of Paul, would primarily rely on Mark and Q. [164]
- John appears to have worked in isolation, which explains why his Gospel contains so many contradictory accounts. [87]
- Paul mentions little about Jesus' life, and freely admits to never meeting the pre-resurrected Jesus. Paul's Jesus is a disembodied, spiritual Christ who speaks from the sky, and not a flesh-and-blood historical person. One of the Bible's most glaring contradictions is the two conflicting accounts of how Paul first met the disembodied Christ. [92] As such, Paul neglected to mention any of the following:
 - Jesus' parents.
 - Jesus' virgin birth.
 - Bethlehem.
 - Nazareth.
 - The common Gospel practice of referring to Jesus as the "Son of man."
 - Any of Jesus' miracles and/or deeds, excluding the Last Supper ritual.
 - Any of Jesus' historical activities, in any time or any place.
 - Jesus' trial.
 - The geographical location of the crucifixion.
- Paul rarely quoted Jesus, which is odd considering his use of many other persuasive techniques.
- Paul contradicted Jesus' explicit teachings on divorce (1COR 7:10), allowing for none, while Jesus permitted exceptions.
- Jesus taught a Trinitarian baptism ("in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost") in the Gospels, and Paul and his disciples baptized in Jesus' name only. This is evidence that that Gospels were written *after* the time of Paul, since the Trinity was developed later as a workaround to rationalize Jesus' contradictory claims of being both the Son of God (JOH 3:36) and God himself (LUK 10:22; JOH 10:30, 17:22). [164]

The Upper Bound of Biblical Authorship

Prior to c.400 CE, the only written evidence for any of the Gospels is a few papyri fragments from the Gospel of John. The earliest of them, no larger than an index card, was dated to c.130-150 CE, based on its writing style. This suggests that 150 CE is the latest possible date for writing that Gospel. There is no evidence of other Gospels until c.200 CE, and the earliest complete Gospels date to c.300 CE. However, Patristic literature makes references to these Gospels in a way that suggests that they were in

circulation earlier than 300 CE — but the question of *how much* earlier is an unresolved problem. [164]

The Lower Bound of Biblical Authorship

The Gospels never mention the Bar Kokhba revolt of c.132 CE, and its devastating result where the Romans put down the rebellion and barred the Jews from Jerusalem, their holy city. This suggests that the Gospels were almost certainly written prior to this event. [164]

Scholars have attempted to date the Gospels by the themes and events mentioned in the text, and by the apparent chronological relationship of the Gospels to each other. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, all contain references to the Roman's destruction of the Jewish Temple in 70 CE. Since Jesus alluded to this event (MAR 13:2; MAT24:2; LUK 21:6; see also MAT 22:7; LUK 19:43), and that "prophecy" was likely a *post-hoc* creation of the authors, this sets a lower-limit of 70 CE. The overwhelming majority of biblical scholars date Matthew and Luke to 75-82 CE, based on the MAT 22:7 and LUK 19:43 references. [164] Mark is believed to have been written during or shortly after the outbreak of hostilities in 66 CE.

However, if these books were written after the temple's destruction, then these texts would have featured that event more prominently, which supports a pre-70 CE authorship date. However, this viewpoint is not accepted in most scholarly circles, because the Gospels place an extreme emphasis on the conflict between Christ's followers and the Pharisees. The Pharisees were the dominant religious authority in the post-temple era; otherwise, Jesus would have faced additional resistance from the Sadducees and Essenes, who were wiped out during the revolt. [164]

Dating the Gospel of John is difficult because he mentioned no external historical events to use as reference points. However, the expulsion of Christians from the synagogues, and the absence of any Jewish groups other than Pharisees and priests also indicate an authorship date after 70 CE. It is unknown if the author of John even knew there were other Gospels; if not, the scholarly consensus is that the Gospel of John was written c.90-110 CE to fill this perceived need. [164]

The 7 legitimate Pauline letters appear to be the earliest known Christian writing, dating back to c.50-55 CE [164]

8.7.3 — The Bible is Pagan

Christianity didn't replace the pagan religions; it is just the latest of a series of pagan religions. [68] The early Christians freely admitted that Christianity was cut from the same fabric as pagan mythology to this. When arguing with pagans, c.150 CE, St. Justin Martyr said:

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“When we say that the Word, who is the first born of God, was produced without sexual union, and that he, Jesus Christ, our teacher, was crucified and died, and rose again, and ascended into heaven; we propound nothing different from what you believe regarding those whom you esteem sons of Jupiter (Zeus).” [92]

It is interesting to note that the phrases “Word of God” and “Lamb of God” are probably connected, due to mistranslating typos. The Greek word *logos* (“word”) was originally used by the gnostics, and translates into Hebrew as *imerah*. The Aramaic word for “lamb” is *immera*. This is one example of how the early Christians, who lived at the intersection of many cultures and languages, could become confused and influenced by many competing religious ideas. [92] Case and point, the story of Noah's Ark was adapted from The Epic of Gilgamesh, as a result of Hebrews assimilating Babylonian culture during their captivity. [30]

Scholars have demonstrated that the Jesus story is a patchwork of pieces borrowed from other religions. Most of the New Testament has parallels to pagan myths (e.g., the Last Supper, Peter's denial, Pilate's wife's dream, the crown of thorns, the vinegar and gall at the crucifixion, the mocking inscription over the cross, the Passion, the trial, Pilate's washing of hands, the carrying of the cross, the talk between the two thieves hanging beside Jesus, etc.). In general:

- **Crucifying sun gods was a popular trope in myths throughout the region.** This also extended to Antigonus, the “King of the Jews”, and to some accounts of Cyrus. [92]
 - The cross was derived from the dividing lines on round zodiac charts which define seasonal quadrants, with the sun “hanging” in the center. [68]
 - Leonardo's The Last Supper references this; the 12 disciples represent the 12 signs of the zodiac, and stood arranged into 4 groups of 3, to represent the seasons. [68]
 - Hexagrams were used a symbol to represent the sun in India prior to being appropriated into the Star of David. [68]
 - The Ichthys can be derived from Pices. The sun rose in the House of Pices at the time, and “the new kingdom” referred to the sun's precession from Pices to Aquarius, marking a new era (i.e., the “Age of Aquarius”). [68]
 - Christ's cryptic remark of “in my father's house there are many mansions” (JOH 14:2) makes sense in the context of astrological houses. [68].
 - Christmas occurs on December 25, the feast of Dies Natalis Solis Invicti, a Roman solstice festival. [68]
 - Please note that many common “Christianity as sun worship” arguments should be ignored because they are purely semantic, relying on the “sun”/“son” homophone. While this is true in English, this does not occur in other languages.

- **Ascension myths occur throughout the world's religions** (e.g., Adonis, Attis, Enoch, Elijah, Krishna, Heracles, Dionysus, and later, Mary). [92]
- **Trinities and three-in-one triune gods were a popular mythological trope** (e.g., the Fates, the Gorgon sisters, the Hesperides, the Graeae, the Charites, Hecate) Please note that Christians were not Trinitarians until 325 CE, when the First Council of Nicaea added this trope explain Christ's contradictory nature. [68]
- **Many mythological figures had virgin births** (e.g., Perseus, Huitzilopochtli, Attis, Romulus. [36] The virgin birth of Christ was seen as pandering and résumé-padding at the time, to the point where Peter and Paul both indirectly denied the virgin birth, and no mention was ever made of it besides passing references in Matthew and Luke. [164] While Jesus frequently spoke of his father's divinity, he never mentioned his mom's virginity. [36]

Fermicus attempted to establish Christianity's uniqueness, only to encounter pagan precedents at every step of the way, prompting him to declare "*Habet Diabolus Christos suos!*" ("The Devil has *his* Christs!") This early Christian apologist reluctantly concluded that Jesus' story was "nothing different" from paganism." In particular, the following examples stood out:

- **Attis**, a self-castrated god-man who was born of a virgin, was worshiped between March 22 and March 27 (i.e., the vernal equinox) and was hanged on a cut pine tree. He escaped, fled, descended into a cave, died, rose again, and was later called "Father God." [92]
- **Dionysus** was a Greek man-god said to be the "Son of Zeus." He was killed, buried, descended into hell, and rose from the dead to sit at the right hand of his father. His empty tomb at Delphi was long preserved and venerated by believers. [92]
- **Osiris** was slain by Set, only to rise again to become ruler of the dead, 2000 years before Jesus' birth. [92]
 - This connection is reinforced by the fact that **Jesus received an Egyptian burial**. Joseph of Arimathea used 75 lbs. (34 kg) of aromatic herbs, myrrh, and aloe to purify Jesus' body before wrapping it in swaddling bands, just like mummification [82]
 - **The Good Shepherd** is an idiomatic reference to the Pharaohs, who used a shepherd's crook as a badge of office, since they were seen as shepherding their subjects. [68]
- **Simon**, the Cyrenian sun God carried pillars to his death. He was assimilated into Christianity as Simon the Cyrene, who carried Jesus' cross on his behalf.
- **Mithra** was a virgin-born Persian god. In 307 CE Constantine officially designated Mithra as the "Protector of the Empire," and also institutionalized Christianity shortly thereafter, causing the two myths to become blended and confused. [92]

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- Mithra was born on December 25, as the result of one of the following contradictory origin stories held by various Mithraic traditions: [92]
 - Mithra was the product of incest between the sun god and his own mother.
 - Mithra was a virgin-birth from a human mortal.
 - Mithra had no mother, but was miraculously born from a female rock (the *petra genetrix*) which was fertilized by the Heavenly Father's phallic lightning.
- Mithra's birth was witnessed by shepherds and by Magi who brought gifts to his sacred birth-cave.
- Mithra performed the following miracles:
 - Raising the dead.
 - Healing the sick.
 - Making the blind see.
 - Making the lame walk.
 - Casting out devils.
- As a Peter (i.e., a son of the *petra*), Mithra carried the keys to the kingdom of heaven.
- Mithra's triumph and ascension to heaven were celebrated during the spring equinox (i.e., Easter). [92]
- Mithra's image was buried in a rock tomb, and was later withdrawn from it and said to live again. [92]
- Before returning to heaven, Mithra celebrated a Last Supper with twelve disciples, who represented the zodiac constellations. In memory of this event, Mithra's worshipers instituted meals of cross-marked bread as one of their seven sacraments. This meal was called *mizd*, which was Latinized to *missa*, which was Anglicized into *mass*. [92]
- Mithraism was an ascetic, anti-female religion, with a priesthood consisting only of celibate men. [92]
- Mithraists believed the world was destined to be destroyed in the fires of a great battle between the forces of light and darkness in the Last Days. As a result of this battle, virtuous people would be saved, and the sinful would be cast into hell.
 - Roman military men adopted Mithraism, since its rigid discipline and vivid battle-imagery was appropriate for warriors. Christians also adopted these notions, and began to describe themselves as "Soldiers for Christ." [92]
- Unlike the Jewish sabbath, Mithraists celebrated their feasts on Sunday.
- Mithraists practiced baptism to allow post-mortem ascension through the planetary spheres to the highest heaven, while the wicked (i.e., the unbaptized) would be dragged down to darkness. [92]
- **Mary** is a name similar to the other mothers of gods. (e.g., the Syrian Myrrha, the Greek Maia, and the Hindu Maya all derived from the familiar "Ma" for mother.)
- **Prometheus** and **Heracles** were made to wear mock crowns. [92]

- **Babylonian prisoners** dressed as kings for five days, and then they were stripped, scourged and crucified. [92] This was likely assimilated into Jewish myth following the Babylonian captivity.
- **The New Testament mirrors *The Iliad***, because of the literary conventions of the time (*mimesis*). Specifically: [165]
 - The casting of lots to select Judas' replacement (ACT 1:12-26) parallels the casting of lots which led Ajax to fight Hector (Iliad 7).
 - The corroborating visions of Cornelius and Peter strikingly resemble the two visions in the beginning of Iliad; i.e., the dream Zeus gave to Agamemnon, and the vision of serpents and sparrows (Iliad 2).
 - Peter's escape from Herod's prison mirrors Hermes' rescue of Priam from the Greek camp (Iliad 24).
 - Paul's speech to the elders of Ephesus at Miletus is a rewrite of Hector's farewell to Andromache (Iliad 6).
 - This was blatant plagiarism, because this speech was *incredibly* popular at the time. Many authors appropriated this speech for their own use, including: Herodotus, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Plato, Xenophon of Athens, Xenophon of Ephesus, Chariton, Heliodorus, Virgil, Ovid, and Silius Italicus.
 - Speeches of this type follow a standard format, where the hero:
 - ❖ States that they do not know what dangers they will face.
 - ❖ Boasts about never shirking from their duty.
 - ❖ Warns of disaster.
 - ❖ Expresses fear concerning the captivity of their loved ones.
 - ❖ Invokes his gods.
 - ❖ Prays that his successors will be like him.
 - ❖ Cites a comparative quotation.
 - ❖ States his willingness to face his destiny with courage.
 - ❖ Commands his audience to attend to their tasks.
 - Similarly, MAR 1-14 were based upon The Odyssey, while MAR 15-16 was based upon The Iliad. Jesus plays Odysseus, and the Jewish authorities are Penelope's suitors. Peter plays the role of Eurylochus; Judas and Barabbas are Melanthius and Irus, etc. [165]
- ACTS 17:28 is a quote from Aratus' Phaenomena, and ACTS 26:14 is a quote from The Bacchae.

Jesus' key teaching, the Golden Rule, does not occur in the Bible in its familiar "do unto others" wording; while Jesus stated its core concept in roundabout ways (MAT 7:12; 19:19; MAR 12:31; LUK 6:31; ROM 13:9; GAL 5:14; JAM 2:8), he assigned no particular importance to it. [22] However, **the Golden Rule was not an original concept**, and it appeared in other religions well before the Bible was written, and was appropriated from one or more of the following established traditions: [87]

- **Judaism:** The Golden Rule appears twice in the Old Testament (LEV 19:18; 34).

- **Hinduism (Bhramanism):** “This is the sum of duty: do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you.” (Mahabharata 5, 1517) c.300 BCE
- **Buddhism:** “Hurt not others in ways that yourself would find hurtful.” (Udanda-Varga, 5,18)
- **Confucianism:** “Surely it is the maxim of loving-kindness: Do not unto others that you would not have them do unto you.” (Analects, 15,23)

The Golden Rule also independently appeared in the following religions during or after the time of Christ:

- **Judaism:** “What is hateful to you, do not do to our fellowmen. That is the entire Law; all the rest is commentary.” — Rabbi Hillel, (Talmud, Shabbat, 31a), 10 CE
- **Taoism:** “Regard your neighbor’s gain as your own gain, and your neighbor’s loss as your own loss.” (T’ai Shang Kan Ying P’ien), c.900-1200 CE
- **Zoroastrianism:** “That nature alone is good which refrains from doing unto another whatsoever is not good for itself.” (Dadistan-i-dinik, 94,5)

8.8 — The Problems Caused by Religious Pluralism

“To hold, therefore, that there is no difference in matters of religion between forms that are unlike each other, and even contradictory to each other, most clearly leads in the end to the rejection of all religion in both theory and practice. And this is the same thing as atheism, however it may differ from it in name.”

— Pope Leo XII, *Immortale Dei*, §31 (1885)

There are 41,000 denominations of Christianity. How can you tell which is the right one? Which ones are false, made up, or cults? The same could be said of all religions. Hinduism has so many gods, that they’ve completely lost count; estimates range from 10,000-30,000,000. The animists go even further, and have innumerable *kami*. [27] The “spiritual but not religious” factor in here somewhere, but no one is quite sure what that term entails. **The only common thread between faiths and sects is that their leaders all have no real advantage, inside track, superior abilities, or sublime knowledge. The clergy is only successful if their parishioners want them to be; they only succeed because people are willing to follow them and grant them titles.** [87] This is even more pronounced in our post-Christian era, where Christianity no longer plays a significant role in shaping our culture. [44]

Everyone’s a skeptic about other religions, but discussing their own religion is always an extremely touchy topic. Bertrand Russell speculated that this is because people subconsciously sense that their beliefs are irrational. [166] This is why the majority of religions — and especially the

sects and subdivisions of these religions — have a mutual incorrigible intolerance. The greatest religious divides in the United States are not atheist vs. Christian, or Catholic vs. Protestant — it's liberal Protestant vs. conservative Protestant. [44] Even the most accepting and inclusive churches play this same superiority game, each trying to one-up their inclusive competitors by being striving and bragging about being the least exclusive.

In a vicious Catch-22, advocates of denominational consensus between the myriad of sects and faiths erode dogmatism, and become the unwitting engineers of their faith's destruction. The traits which define each sect and faith are often the root of the mutual incompatibility, and are tossed aside in favor of a generalized religion. This erodes parishioner loyalty, since no religion any different than any another. [44]

Pluralism is problematic for religions, for a number of reasons:

- **Faith is not exclusive to any one religion.** As such, faith cannot validate religious claims, because faith can also validate the claims of *any* other religion. [27]
 - If anything, **faith is a display of agnosticism**, since faith is only cited in the absence of knowledge. When someone says, "I believe the meeting is at 2:30," they are expressing *doubt*. **Tacking "I believe" onto a statement makes it weaker, not stronger.** [92]
 - **Actual existence is independent of faith.** Believing in something, including God, will not make it real. Believing in Zeus will not spontaneously bring him into being. [27]
 - **"We only speak of faith when we wish to substitute emotion for evidence."** — Bertrand Russell [27]
- While atheists have never disproved the existence of the Christian God, they also cannot prove that *any and all* non-Christian gods do not exist. Interestingly, this is a huge problem for Christians, since **Gods don't expire**. While these gods may have lost their followers after losing a war, or a socio-economic decline that allowed other cultures to absorb and dominate them, neither of these misfortunes prove that their gods were false. **What if the other cultures were right?** [27]
- There's no way to disprove the existence of any god because **there is no reasonable or consistent definition as to what a god even is.** Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, and Ramesses II (Ozymandias) all claimed to be gods, and there's no way to prove or disprove their claims of divinity. [27]
 - **The Trinity allows Christians to be polytheistic without having to resort to polytheism.** God was in Heaven while Jesus died on the cross, and Jesus did not take responsibility for the flood. [27]
 - Is Satan a lesser god who rules over Hell? [27]
 - Are angels and demons lesser gods? [27]
 - Are the leaders of political religions and or cults of personality (e.g., Stalin, Mao, the Kim dynasty) the gods of their religion? [25] If so, does this prove the Divine Right of Kings?

- **Every religion that has ever existed has made the similar claims:** “Our gods will protect and heal you. Pray to our gods and they will help.” These other gods can also intervene and perform miracles. [27]
 - Every religion hides their shortcomings by shrouding them in mystery, usually by claiming their errors are convoluted and complex allegories. For example: [167]
 - Why were Fear and Terror are sons of Mars, but why were they the sons of Venus?
 - Why was Harmony is Venus' daughter, but why was she the daughter of Mars?
 - Why was Sleep, the brother of Death, enamored with one of the Graces?
 - The “revealed” religions, of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, only “reveal” that morality is solely contingent completely obeying their particular set of scriptures. [87]
- Every religion posits a creation myth, typically based on invoking God's name and a few simple ingredients (e.g., dirt, mud, bone, blood, spit, semen, etc.) The mechanism by which these acts result in creation is never explained. **The religion with a scientifically-valid creation myth is more likely to be the true religion**, but creationism has been proven false, and all other creation myths have been similarly refuted. [27]
- Religions, especially Christianity, have mixed and merged with pagan influences to such a degree that it is unclear where one ends and the other begins. By their own admission, 95% of modern witches are former Catholics, because they were culturally pre-disposed to the ritual use of drama, candles, and incense. Christianity and historic witchcraft practices both incorporate the following: [168]
 1. Teaching “salvation” through ritual acts and good works.
 2. A pantheon which prominently feature a god and goddess (i.e., Mary).
 3. A slain and risen god as the subject of a seasonal cycle of ritual dramas.
 4. Theologies centered on a basis of magic and thaumaturgy (e.g., transubstantiation).
 5. Extensive use of incense, statues, candles, and ceremonial robes in their devotions.
 6. Belief in post-mortem "second-chances" (i.e., purgatory).
 7. Belief that the dead are affected by rituals performed by the living (i.e., intercession).
 8. Believe in ritual purification via pain and mortification (e.g., self-flagellation, barbed-wire corsets, and hairshirts were all regular parts of pre-Vatican II monastic life).

8.8.1 — Aaron's Rod

In EXO 7, God sent Moses and Aaron to speak with the Pharaoh, with instructions that Aaron is to “cast down his rod” when the Pharaoh demands to see a miracle. When this occurred, God transformed the rod into a serpent, and the Pharaoh's sorcerers countered by performing the same trick. However, these rod-serpents were devoured by Aaron's rod-serpent, thereby demonstrating God's superiority.

However, **the fact the Pharaoh's sorcerers were able to transform *anything* is biblical proof that the Egyptian gods *are real*, and that they can *perform miracles on command*.**

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