

HEALING HEREAFTER



**Finding Rational and Refreshing Answers
for Why We're Here
and Where We're Headed**

Jason Dykstra, MD

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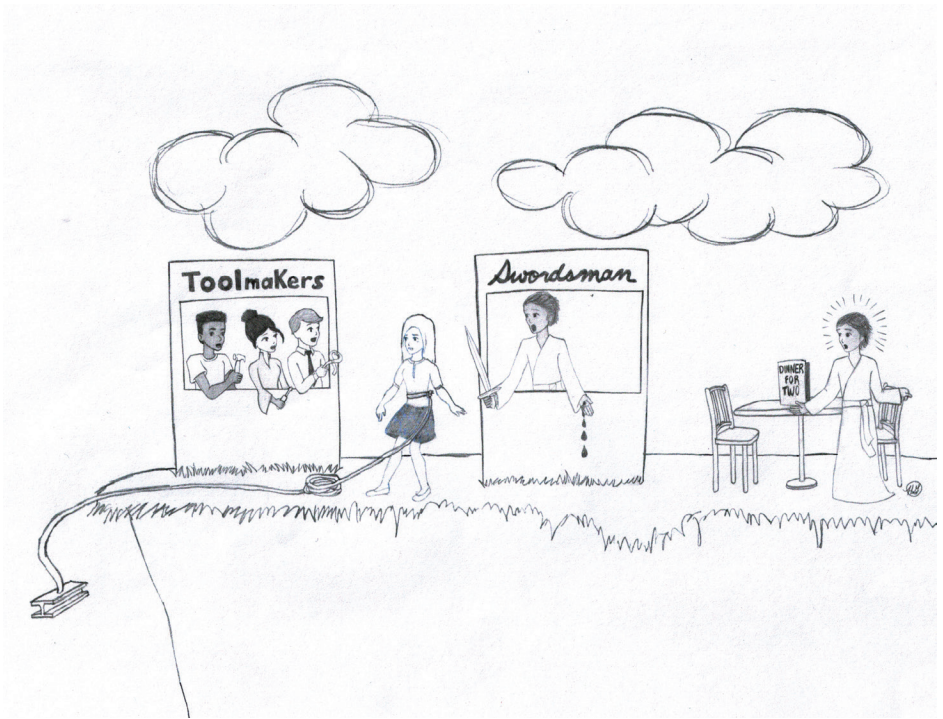
*For everyone who wonders
what the hereafter has in store for us,
and especially for those who want to know why*

*With deep gratitude and love
to my Savior, spouse, and sons,
who all significantly gave of themselves
to make this possible*

Booklet 2

I Love It When a Plan Comes Together!

*Questions about why God created us,
how humans are unique, how evil and suffering came to be,
and why Jesus is the only truly effective solution to sin and death*



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One requirement for being a doctor is using three-letter acronyms describing medical jargon whenever possible, so that your patients have no idea what you're talking about. One such acronym is NPH (neutral protamine Hagedorn for all you aspiring physicians), a type of insulin that is often administered to lower a patient's blood sugar. But those of you who would rather watch TV than go to medical school—and I don't blame you—may have seen these letters and thought of something else entirely, namely Neil Patrick Harris. For those at the hospital too often to broaden your NPH horizon, he is an actor, singer, and magician who first became familiar to most of us playing Doogie Howser, MD, a child prodigy turned teenage doctor. In each episode Doogie would newly encounter a different facet of being a physician, and at the end, he would always type in his DOS-based computer journal—which was pretty impressive technology back in the day—a tidbit of wisdom that he had learned. I only remember one episode, and maybe it lingered in my brain for the last 20 years just so I could write it here!

Once upon a time, our hero Doogie was confronted with a female patient who was not getting better despite compassionate, appropriate, and thorough medical care. Doogie and his colleagues were flummoxed, but upon spending more time with the woman trying to figure out the problem, he finally discovered what it was. The problem was that he didn't understand the problem. This woman had been eating off of homemade dishes that contained some sort of clay leaching toxins into her food. During her treatments, she had continued to eat off of them, making her recovery unsuccessful. Once she and Doogie truly understood the problem, they were able to solve it, but only by literally removing the problem. Not by covering it up or by being

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ignorant of it, not by treating its symptoms, but by removing it completely.

In that episode, this wisdom was realized before any permanent damage had taken place, but that is not always the case in real life. On the pediatric floor several years ago, I was paged to evaluate a five year-old girl. When I stepped into the room, she was lying there unmoving and expressionless in the dark, almost like a corpse. Parents know the gut-wrenching fear that seizes them when they see their child incapacitated like that, and her parents were distraught. The atmosphere was ominously glooming, but we rapidly assessed her, used the objective data we had, correctly diagnosed meningitis, and implemented the appropriate solution. Without treatment, the toxins involved in this type of meningitis are known to be quickly fatal. But a few days later, instead of a corpse, I entered the now-bright room to find a happy, healthy little girl, bouncing off the walls while smiling and laughing with mom and dad. I wish I could show you the before and after picture, from gloom to glee! Such a stunning transformation arose not only from figuring out the problem and finding a solution that effectively removed it, but also from applying that solution quickly before permanent damage was done.

This booklet is devoted to both the greatest problem of all and the even greater solution to it—a solution that only makes sense once we understand the problem, a solution that truly removes the problem, and a solution that requires timely application. After setting the stage, we'll begin to investigate the ominous composite problem of sin, evil, and Hell, followed by the stunning plan God has set in place to solve it! And there's a whole lot to love about this plan coming together ...

1

“Let’s start at the very beginning. A very good place to start. When you read, you begin with A-B-C.”¹⁻² When you explore the biblical hereafter, you begin with . . . well, not Do-re-mi, but rather the Tri-ni-ty. It was my original plan to set this book to song and hire a family troupe of singers to perform it in various scenic venues. I ran out of cash once I learned the hard way how expensive making clothing out of drapes really is! So we’re back to the beginning. The very beginning. When there was only God. I have been and will continue to be talking a lot about God, since he is ultimately the one who can make Hell understandable and Heaven unmistakable through the words he has given us in the Bible. God represents himself to humans in three distinct ways or persons, each of which helps us to make sense of different roles and purposes he has in human affairs. No wonder he refers to himself in the plural (Genesis 1:26, 3:22, 11:6-7)! This is called the Trinity, and it is the way God makes a concept as unfathomable as himself understandable to finite, physical human beings. People like to debate about and get so caught up in this idea, but it really doesn’t need to be that complicated, and I for one am glad to have God explain himself in terms we can comprehend.

In general, God the Father represents the authority that God has over all created things as their master and owner, deserving of their praise, and just in judging, disciplining, and punishing (Job 41:11, Psalm 145:3, Hebrews 2:1-3). Anything he wants to know, he can know. Anything he wants to do he can do. Because of this knowledge and power, he always knows what is best or optimal to do, and he is always able to do it (Isaiah 48:17, 46:10). His attributes and values always reflect what is best and are therefore always consistent; why ever would they not be (Malachi 3:6)? “If there were aught better than God, he would love that and not himself.”³ This is why God and his nature do not change (Numbers 23:19). Such unwavering optimal behavior is goodness or perfection (Psalm 34:8-14, Deuteronomy 32:4), and God the Father is the personification of this holiness of

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holiness, who will not tolerate imperfection (Habakkuk 1:13). As such, and because God the Father represents much of the complexity of God that humans simply cannot comprehend, he is virtually inaccessible to humans on earth (John 6:46). Instead, he physically communicates whatever he wishes through the representation of himself that is completely accessible to humans, God the Son or Jesus (John 1:18, 12:49-50).

Jesus functions as God's word to humans throughout the Bible and as God's example to humans of himself throughout his physical life on earth (John 1:1-14). Therefore, God the Son demonstrates as much of God as we can or need to understand in both word and deed; he teaches us how to be like God in mindset and in morals, how to be perfect (1 Peter 2:21-22). Jesus acts subordinate to God the Father, obeying him and doing his will (John 14:28-31), not because he is inferior to him in any way, but to accomplish the very point of representing God in this way, giving us a tangible, practical example of perfection that we can follow, which includes obeying God and doing his will (John 13:15).

God the Spirit represents God's work within us to enable us to model what we have learned about God the Father through God the Son (Galatians 5:16-23). He represents God's ever-present activity on earth, teaching, comforting, encouraging, reminding, convicting, and empowering individuals, particularly Christians, to know God more (John 14:25-26, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11). Both Jesus and the Holy Spirit represent God's immersed and intimate understanding of humanity and its environment, and their empathetic intercession for us reflects God's mercy which is merged with the justice and holiness that God the Father reflects (Hebrews 4:14-15, 7:23-26, Romans 8:26-27). The collision of mercy and justice, both of which are optimal behaviors, is what compels God to provide his unique solution to humanity's universal problem of sin.

I should emphasize that God does not morph into these various persons like some kind of divine Optimus Prime. The Father did not become the Son at Jesus' birth, and Jesus did not ascend to turn into the Holy Spirit. They are all manifestations of God's nature and therefore have always been coexistent. The Bible is clear that Jesus

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existed before the world was created, and the Holy Spirit's presence is pervasive throughout the Old Testament, starting with the second verse of the Bible (John 1:1-13, 17:5, 24, Hebrews 1:1-3, Genesis 1:2)! We even see the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the same place at the same time (Matthew 3:16-17). The three persons of the Trinity can be present simultaneously or can be doing completely different things, because God is always doing multiple things in multiple different ways. For example, the holiness of the Father can detest the evil that Jesus experiences as his physical body dies on the cross (Mark 15:33-34). Here, God is antagonistic to imperfection while mercifully exercising justice at his own expense; simultaneously revealing to us several of his attributes and purposes during the crucifixion via the different persons of God the Father and God the Son. So when I refer to the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, I'm always referring to God, just in the different ways he represents himself, so that we can understand who he is and what he desires. And one thing he desired is to create us.

2

Because of God's creativity, generosity, and love, he created the physical universe and eventually humans. Humans are unique creations because they were the only physical entities specifically made in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27). What it means to be created in God's image depends on what sets humans and God apart from everything else in this world. What is the *only* thing that both God and humans seem to have that we don't know any non-human physical entity has? No, not opposable thumbs! Consciousness. Self-awareness. Free will. All different terms for the same thing; indeed, if you think about it, a person cannot have one without the others. But what is it exactly that frees each of us from the stimulus-response, action-reaction prison that appears to enslave every other creature, apparently making us capable of truly original thought? The Bible's answer is a "willing" human spirit that transcends and outlasts our body's

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physical existence (Zechariah 12:1, Matthew 26:41, James 2:26, 1 Corinthians 5:5), and since you've already been *willing* to consult this book about the other non-physical entities it explores, implementing the concept of a human spirit into our discussion below doesn't seem too objectionable. After all, its existence would explain why human consciousness is without question the most befuddling conundrum confronting biologists. Neuroscientists themselves concede: "We have no idea how consciousness emerges from the physical activity of the brain."⁴ And yet there they are, aware of themselves and their consciousnesses. Nonetheless, I understand the boldness of the claims that humans have spirits and that our spirits are what give us free will, so let's flesh out the human spirit (get it?) a little more.

First, what do I mean by "spirit"? I mean the essence of a human being. A human's most pure, fundamental form, when everything that is not absolutely necessary has been stripped away. Regardless of what other components make you you, your spirit would be the one that must always be present. It is who you really are and always will be, producing awareness, identity, reason, and abstract thought. You might call it the mind or the soul, and I'd agree. "Soul includes personality, character, individuality, and consciousness" and "is centered in the free choice 'between alternatives which matter.'" "Soul' encompasses 'spirit.'"⁵ "The human spirit is the lamp of the Lord that sheds light on one's inmost being (Proverbs 20:27)." "For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except man's spirit within him (1 Corinthians 2:11)?"

Second, how am I so sure that a spirit and the free will it allows are not present in any other physical organism besides humans? I'm not, of course; however, no one else has demonstrated that they are, and there is biblical and biologic evidence to suggest that they are not. The only time the concept of an animal spirit is brought up in the Bible, its existence and fate are portrayed as uncertainties about which the author can only conclude, "Who knows?" The observation is made that both humans and animals share the same fate of physical death, which is no surprise, but no statement is made regarding the similarity of our fates beyond that (Ecclesiastes 3:19-21). In Numbers 22:21-35 we find the entertaining account of a donkey who

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speaks because “the Lord opened the donkey’s mouth.” There is no mention of a spirit in this donkey, nor is there any suggestion that this animal experienced any sort of afterlife. Since it was clearly God, and only God, suddenly enabling this creature to speak (2 Peter 2:16), this passage offers us no valid reason to believe that this donkey had a spirit, that it was self-conscious prior to or following a supernatural act of God, or that what happened to it provides any reliable information about any other animals. Some use Psalm 104:27-30 to argue that the animals that die are resurrected when God renews the face of the ground.⁶ But this passage is clearly about this earth, not the New Earth, and it obviously refers to animals dying, with *God’s* spirit renewing the ground by “creating” new animals, not resurrecting deceased *animal* spirits back into bodies. “They” clearly refers to “all creatures” participating in the circle of life, not the same creature’s death and resurrection.

In contrast, the Bible does confirm that animals are not made in God’s image, that they have a lesser worth than humans, and that their death is acceptable to God/Jesus when it provides food for humans or when it’s associated with the salvation or restoration of human life, amongst other things (Genesis 1:26-28, Matthew 10:31, Genesis 9:3, Leviticus 4:1-35, Matthew 8:28-33). Animals are described as “unreasoning” and “creatures of instinct” (2 Peter 2:12), whereas “it is the spirit in a person...that gives them understanding (Job 32:8).” God’s words and actions concerning animals throughout the Bible strongly suggest the absence of an animal spirit, and who would know better than their creator? And because the concept of a human spirit is inseparably linked to human morality, sin, and salvation, what function would an animal spirit serve anyway? Few, if any, would argue that animals are truly moral creatures, that they can sin, or that God even remotely refers to a salvation plan for them. After his first life here, did Jesus make a second trip to earth to die as a perfect poodle, sea cucumber, or turkey? Probably not, right? Therefore, animals either do not have a spirit or they have a non-human animal spirit that has no definite biblical basis and plays no observable or logical role in the animal’s life. In fact, the whole reason we are discussing spirits is because of the observable and logical effects

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they seem to have on humans, as opposed to animals!

If you observe not just what animals are capable of, but what they actually do with those capabilities, particularly in their natural environment (rather than an artificial, leading, or forced experimental atmosphere), you'll be reminded that they don't act in ways that would suggest consciousness or free will. They succumb to limits, their motives are few, and they have a high degree of predictability, all evidence that they lack original thought. Do chimpanzees attempt to fly, transcending their usual land-bound limits? No, but humans do. Do dolphins become vegetarians for motives apart from and even opposing the standard animal urges for pleasure and survival? No, but humans do. Do crows depart from a predictable, consistent pattern of mating and raising offspring to pursue their own interests? No, but humans do. So even the very most intelligent creatures of the land, sea, and air, for all their abilities (which are considerable by the way), seem stuck in their niche of nature, without the desires, the reasons, or the creativity to break free.

Scientific study reflects this limitation. Marc Hauser was a professor of psychology, biological anthropology, and organismic and evolutionary biology at Harvard University and has published over 240 papers. In his description of what he calls "humaniqueness," he lists the four things that mentally separate humans from other creatures as "the ability to combine and recombine different types of information and knowledge in order to gain new understanding; to apply the same 'rule' or solution to one problem to a different and new situation; to create and easily understand symbolic representations of computation and sensory input; and to detach modes of thought from raw sensory and perceptual input."^{7*}

Non-human organisms cannot detach their thought from a stimulus-response, action-reaction world of reflexes. Humans can. And what is required for such a detachment? A sense of self. An understanding that you are you, an entity entirely independent of your environment. And it is only once you are self-aware that you have the desire to exceed limitations, adhere to any number of motives

* If you are familiar with Marc Hauser or would like more information regarding his academic authority, look here.⁸

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other than pleasure and survival, and become utterly unpredictable. Because you know you exist, you can desire and accomplish such things. Yes, an animal can learn, remember, experience pain, and demonstrate a whole variety of emotions, but as far as we know, she doesn't know she is doing any of those things because in her brain, there's no she. The nerve impulses from a stimulus don't stop somewhere to consider, "What do I think about this?" because there is no I, no sense of self. This is why animals don't plot against humans, like in *Chicken Run*, even though they have all kinds of reasons to do so. This is why creatures don't go on a journey to discover their roots, like in *Madagascar 2*; they only migrate to survive and reproduce. And this is why your dog will always roll over twenty times for one lousy treat and why your cat will always chase after the laser pointer as you laugh at its expense. They don't demonstrate an impulse to pursue something new, a self to generate original ideas, or the free will to put those plans into action.

Because we can only understand things from our self-aware point of view and because we crave their companionship, we convince ourselves that animals possess such abilities, and there are oodles of books, movies, and songs to reinforce this assumption. Of course, there's nothing wrong with this, and this kind of fantasy is fabulously fun! But at the same time, "reading into the beast a self for which there is no real evidence"⁷¹² often leads people to consider animals as—or even more—precious than humans, even though our creator himself says otherwise (Genesis 1:28, 9:1-3, Matthew 10:29-31). This is a problem because it creates inaccurate conceptions of the biblical Heaven, as we'll encounter in Booklet 8, as well as unnecessary antagonism toward God's interactions with animals in the Bible. He considers them good, provides for them, and cares about them, but he is also their rightful master and creator, and his intervention in human affairs always takes priority over them (Genesis 1:26-31, Psalm 147:8-9, Leviticus 1:1-7:38, Mark 5:1-20). And not so deep down we agree with him about the non-free-willed animal's place in creation. Not only do we take the liberty of setting *ourselves* up as their masters, it is precisely *because* we know they won't up and pursue a new interest, won't have secret dubious motives for spending

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time with us, and won't depart from predictable behaviors that many of us desire them as companions, in some cases more than our free-willed human ones, right? This of course *does not* mean we can treat animals however we want and harm them without adequate necessity. Discomfort and pain are still discomfort and pain, whether an animal understands that it's suffering as a self or simply experiences pain as a non-self, and this chapter is not meant in any way to comment on how we should treat other organisms, just how to understand them.¹³

The actions of animals overwhelmingly argue that there is no concept of self to them, no individual distinct from its environment. They are merged with it, subject to stimulus from it and response to it, unable to "detach modes of thought from raw sensory and perceptual input."¹⁴ Especially when they are observed in their natural habitat—when they would be most free to do as they please—rather than in experiments with limited choices and forced circumstances, they still don't depart from the status quo. And why would they? Even if they had the brain complexity to "to combine and recombine different types of information and knowledge in order to gain new understanding, to apply the same 'rule' or solution to one problem to a different and new situation, and to create and easily understand symbolic representations of computation and sensory input,"¹⁵ without original thought or a self or free will, they would never have the desire or motive to do so. Like humans, their brains and bodies may actually be perfectly capable of eloquent speech, complex problem solving, and developing hobbies and interests that are evolutionarily neutral or disadvantageous, but there's no "I" or "me" to initiate such skills. "All creatures may exist on a developmental continuum, Hauser argues, but the gap between humans and the second-place finishers is so big that it shows we truly are something special."¹⁶

Perhaps in seeking the reason why, we should be more open-minded than only entertaining differences in brain structure or chemistry, especially as those parameters have provided neuroscientists with "no idea" of how to explain consciousness.¹⁷ Humans are distinct from animals not so much in ability but in ambition, not so much in complexity but in creativity. It's not at all surprising that scientists are stumped in trying to explain such tenacious originality

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by examining the circular, reflexive stimulus-response pathways of the brain, however intricate they are, as if we were no more than a really smart computer. A human spirit independent of the physical body, able to “detach modes of thought from raw sensory and perceptual input”¹⁸ offers a much more rational way to introduce something truly new to the brain and body and remain persistent in doing so when the feedback received is negative. Unlike an animal, a human spirit does not accept the status quo, does not cower from trying new things for new reasons, and does not give up such goals merely because things get unpleasant or even detrimental. A spirit that can know that it exists and demonstrates free will can be tenaciously original, and since we’ll learn that God clearly intended to give humans free will, he gives them his “breath of life,” a consciousness, a self, a spirit to make that possible (Genesis 2:7). “It is the spirit in a person, the breath of the Almighty, that gives them understanding” (Job 32:8). Something liberated from the bonds of nature, something that explains our distinct qualities from every other creature, something truly humanique. Except within the movie industry, tenacious originality permeates human behavior. Maybe I’m preaching to the choir here, as anyone who is willing to read a book about the afterlife is likely to accept the notion of a human spirit, but we may as well appreciate the very good reasons for doing so nonetheless.*

So we know what I mean by “spirit” and we’ve seen why humans that bear the image of God, alone of earthly creatures, would have one, but what is this spirit like? Well, it is not present until a human is at least conceived, as God “forms the human spirit within a person” (Zechariah 12:1), necessitating a body to form the spirit within. But it likely does not age either. Nowhere in the Bible do we find evidence of spiritual beings like God or angels aging. This is no surprise, as our concept of aging has a purely physical origin and physical causes. Aging is what makes our bodies’ longevity finite; therefore, an eternal human spirit would be unlikely to share the same property and would be more likely to be ageless, as it seems other spiritual beings are.

* To explore another good reason, one that helps resolve apparent conflict between the biblical and scientific understandings of human origins, enjoy this.¹⁹

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This means that our spirits aren't stuck in the same age or status as our bodies are. An infant body would not have an infant spirit. A mentally handicapped body would not have a mentally handicapped spirit. The respective immaturity or infirmity of such a person's brain may limit their spirit's ability to express itself physically, but the spirit itself would be fully intact and mature—"adult" if you will—as it was when it was created. This is important because when we talk below about whether babies or mentally disabled people go to Hell or Heaven, we're not really talking about babies and mentally disabled people; we're talking about ageless, mature spirits. There would be no babies or mentally handicapped spirits in Hell or Heaven, but rather their non-baby, non-handicapped spirits, and it is absolutely crucial to separate our physical understanding of them and their true spiritual selves if we are to have an emotionally neutral and objective discussion on the eternal fate of these spirits. An ageless spirit exerts its free will from the get go; it just has a very limited number of ways of doing this physically until the body starts to catch up, if it can.

We see this all the time in young children. As soon as they gain a new ability or accomplish a new goal, they are not just satisfied; they are elated! Almost all of us have experienced the look of utter bliss that children exhibit when they can finally crawl, walk, jump, throw, or speak. It even makes *you* smile just to think about it, doesn't it? Could it be that this occurs because the ageless spirit within each of them has been waiting and trying so long to get the body to be able to express itself accurately that nothing less than a celebration ensues when it finally succeeds? If accomplishing such tasks was merely the result of higher-order brain complexity (the ambiguous concept that naturalists must place their faith in instead of a spirit), then why such joy in a child newly able to stack blocks? Or better yet, in knocking said stack down! What evolutionary benefit is there in happiness upon learning to somersault? Simply having a more complex brain than other creatures doesn't give us any reason to want to accomplish these goals or to experience elation upon doing so. Knocking blocks down and somersaulting provide a child with no survival benefit or reproductive advantage; they're just something new that a child really, really wants to do for some reason. That reason is tenacious

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originality. A spirit that can generate a fresh idea and has the free will to carry it out, whatever its current physical capability is, explains a child's persistence in babbling until he can talk quite well, doesn't it? It's no mystery that the kid knows what he wants to say, and we all know he is quite intent on communicating that; however, the ability of the body does not yet match the will of the spirit. But when it does, watch out! For some, the celebration of speech never ends! "I too will have my say; I too will tell what I know. For I am full of words, and the spirit within me compels me" (Job 32:18).

Do we see the body similarly limiting the spirit in the Bible? We sure do. On the night Jesus is taken captive to be put to death, he asks his disciples to pray, and they fall asleep instead. Jesus replies, "The spirit is willing, but the body is weak" (Matthew 26:41). He knows that their true selves want to support him, but their bodies prove to be significant obstacles, as they similarly do for some of us during particularly long early morning classes or church services! So this discordance between the spirit and the body is not limited to childhood. For example, at any age, there is a "locked-in syndrome" that can occur when a person gets a stroke in just the wrong spot (the basilar artery territory, if you're interested). Most of the brain remains intact, but almost no communication can occur between it and the rest of the body. The poor patient is fully able to think and reason, but little sensory stimulus can get in and little motor response can get out, with the usual respective exceptions of sight and eye movements. Horrible, I know, but rare, and we have no reason to assume this applies to the vast majority of folks in comas. However, you can imagine how a human spirit in such a situation would be able to propose original ideas and thoughts to its brain, even though little to no bodily expression of those thoughts would be possible or discernable. Similarly, in all but the most severe strokes, patients typically express desire to regain lost function in a part of their body, and occasionally new neuronal pathways can be formed to achieve that. It's as if the spirit so fervently wants to reestablish physical expression that it finds a bypass in the brain to do so if possible. Again, such ambitious goals seem to reflect a human spirit exercising its free will, whether the body allows onlookers to physically notice it or not.

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We do not see this persistent achievement, or the joy that follows, in non-human organisms. “Animals have a myopic intelligence,” Marc Hauser says. “They never experience the aha moment that a 2-year-old child gets.”²⁰ From all appearances, animals do not have a spirit. Mitzie, my childhood dog, was one heck of a companion, and maybe she is somewhere right now enjoying those bone-marrow filled treats that she loved (Mmm!). But I’m not expecting her to be in Heaven. The Bible does confirm that animals will be there, but never the resurrected versions of those that lived and died here. When what we know about animals and what we know about the Bible is combined, it makes sense that of all physical creatures, God created only humans in his image, with a spirit that can be tenaciously original and will freely.

3

So our observations tell us *that* God made humans different than the rest of his earthly creations. But *why* create humans in the first place, and why with free will? These are two of the most important questions ever asked, and we are given an answer to both in Acts 17:26-28. “From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’” God’s purpose in creating humans was for them to “seek him and *perhaps* reach out for him and find him,” and this desire for community is maintained by God throughout the Bible (Leviticus 26:11-12, Jeremiah 31:33-34, Revelation 21:3). One of Jesus’ names, Immanuel, even means “God with us” (Matthew 1:21-23)! But this purpose *cannot* be accomplished without free will and therefore is only *perhaps* accomplished because of free will. Read the last sentence again. Read it again. Read it ag...OK, that’s good. But understanding it is absolutely crucial to make Hell understandable

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and Heaven unmistakable. We cannot seek God, reach out for God, and find God without free will. We would be mere humanoid extensions of God's will, as if we were puppets and God was moving the strings. He would be seeking, reaching out for, and finding himself. God understands that the only way to know that his purpose has been realized, to know that we are truly seeking, reaching out for, and finding him, is if we can freely choose to do so. To be redundantly clear, God *had* to create us in his image, he *had* to give us free will, in order to accomplish his purpose for creating us in the first place.²¹

But this necessity also makes it possible for us *not* to seek him, reach out for him, or find him, doesn't it? And for every one of us, this possibility has become a reality, starting with Adam and Eve, who the Bible portrays as the first two individuals on earth God made in his image. The first two *fully* human beings, possessing a spirit with consciousness and free will. They had it made. Surrounded by a perfect garden and enjoying God's perfect provision, they had everything they could ever need. Including a choice. They were commanded not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:8-17). They already knew good; indeed, they understood good far more fully than any of us do. Their choice then was whether to only know good or to know evil as well, wasn't it? To be satisfied with God and his perfect perspective and provision or to seek, reach out for, and find what is not God, what is not good. They chose the latter; they sinned. Some claim that "we will never solve this mystery of sin," that "evil should never make sense," and that "part of what makes evil so bad is its inexplicable mystery." "If we could comprehend the presence of evil—its origin, purpose, and how and why God allowed it to enter his perfect world—then it wouldn't be quite so evil."²² Aside from *that* not making sense to me, we have seen that free will solves the "mystery" of all these things quite sensibly and explicably. Free will made it possible for God to accomplish his purpose in creating Adam and Eve, but it also made it possible for them to sin, and the most devastating consequence of choosing to do so was that they had to die.

But why? How does their choice separate them from God,

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necessarily leading to death? Many of us have heard that “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), but is this just some arbitrary punishment that we’ve memorized? No, God didn’t spin some big ole heavenly wrath wheel that happened to stop on death; his consequence for sin makes much more sense than that. Sin results in death for two reasons. First, Adam and Eve used their free will to tell God that they wanted to know evil, what is apart from God and good. Every time we use our free will to do the same—every time we sin—we tell God that we want to know what is apart from him and good as well. We want to know evil, and we haven’t stopped expressing that desire to God, have we (Hosea 8:2-3)? Being ashamed of one’s body, fearing to encounter God, blaming others, experiencing pain in what should be wonderful things like childbirth, unhealthy marriage dynamics, and failure at work were all specific consequences immediately resulting from Adam and Eve wanting to know and experience evil (Genesis 3:6-19). And they are still very tangible ways humans know and experience evil today as well. What might have seemed to you before to be random consequences or punishments for Adam and Eve’s sin—and our sin—make a lot of sense now, don’t they? Knowing evil immerses us in everything that is not good and that is not God; sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59:2). And of all the many things that teach us about evil, that allow us to know it and understand it, which is the most informative, the most representative, the most ultimate? Our own death, the very thing that separates us from God the most. Even after injustice, even after torture, even after the death of others, we can still find hope, we can still find good, and we can still endure. But not after our own death, so long as there is no escape from it. To comprehensively know evil, we must experience death. This is why “sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death” without God even needing to do any punishing (James 1:14-15)! Adam and Eve were told that upon eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil “you will surely die” because death is the ultimate result of knowing evil, not simply because God had randomly settled on death as a punishment for sin (Genesis 2:16-17).

Second, if it is God’s purpose for humans to seek him in a perfect relationship and existence, this can never happen if imperfection,

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whether human or circumstantial, is present. Sinful humans cannot fulfill their purpose, God cannot forever tolerate being in the presence of their disobedience and evil, and he will not allow them to immortally mar creation, others, and themselves, so he punishes sin with death (Habakkuk 1:13, Genesis 6:3). Adam and Eve are banished from eternal life in the garden into an imperfect existence where they will continue to learn to know evil and eventually die (Genesis 3:22-24). So “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), both because it is the ultimate consequence of choosing to know evil and because it is God’s necessary punishment to prevent people, who can’t fulfill their purpose anyway, from perpetually increasing evil and ruination. We sin to get a life apart from him and his purpose; we are punished with a life apart from him and his purpose. A just punishment that fits the crime perfectly, doesn’t it? God makes sense.

Many people wonder why God has to be just, and they view this as a negative thing. But not so deep down they know that injustice is wrong, and many of them strive to alleviate the inequalities around them, even as they raise their eyebrows at God’s justice. Justice is a part of God’s nature, a virtue he will always value (Deuteronomy 32:4, Nahum 1:3, Revelation 19:1-2, Micah 6:8). This is a good and rational optimal behavior, and it’s not hard to see why we should be more than glad that we have a just God. If God wasn’t just, there would be no specific punishment for sin, so we wouldn’t *have* to die. Sounds OK so far, but let’s keep going. We all would just keep living here on earth being sinful and knowing more and more evil and suffering as a result. If God wasn’t just, there would be no reason for him to create us to value justice either. We would never fairly punish wrong, and almost immediately our world would be in anarchy. Keep in mind that we’re immortal through all this. We would live forever in complete chaos. Here’s the worst part: God wouldn’t care. An unjust God would see no need to stop or punish wrongdoing; in fact, he might choose to punish doing right, just because! You would be at the disposal of an unjust God and unjust humans forever. No good!*

Justice is good (Psalm 37:28, Luke 18:7, 8). And when we see how

* Incidentally, similar chaos would also result from a society embracing moral relativism, as described here.²³

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wisely and mercifully God employs it, making the penalty for our offense simply the consequence of knowing evil anyway, “Why should the living complain when punished for their sins” (Lamentations 3:39)? It’s a punishment we continuously choose, fully deserve, and have no reason to gripe about. Moreover, God does not go beyond justice, throwing an angry temper tantrum at us, uncontrollably hurling thunderbolts in Zeusian fashion. God assures us, “I will discipline you but only with justice; I will not let you go entirely unpunished” (Jeremiah 30:11). Sounds fair, literally, right?

God gives us justice, which means that sin gives us death. But if we each have a spirit that remains when our body goes six feet under, and if it cannot enter the perfect good that God resides in and desires for us, which we call Heaven, then where is the only place it can end up? Where imperfection is everywhere, where good is gone, where God does not reside, where God does not desire us to go, but where free will opens the door to. Hell. God voluntarily keeps himself absent from Hell, so that humans can freely choose what they want (1 Chronicles 28:9, Jeremiah 23:39-40, Matthew 25:41, 2 Thessalonians 1:8-10). God and the angels can observe Hell, but it is outside of God’s kingdom of Heaven, and he is clearly not present within it (Matthew 8:11-12, Revelation 14:9-11, 21:6-8, 22-27). Instead, there is fire, weeping, gnashing of teeth, and darkness—not surprisingly the same consequences we’ve repeatedly witnessed on earth when godless humans freely choose what is not God, whether by hypocritically misrepresenting God or simply out of selfishness (Matthew 25:41-46, 24:45-51, Jude 1:12-13). We’ll focus on how long Hell lasts in Booklets 6-8, and when we do, the explanation will be thorough. But there are a lot of things we need to discuss before that question can be appropriately answered, and all you need to understand now is why Hell must exist in the first place and why it is not merely a punishment, but primarily a choice (Acts 13:45-46). Because God will always accomplish his purposes (Isaiah 46:10), because his purpose in creating humans was to seek him and perhaps find him, and because a perfect God will not perpetually exist amongst evil and wrongdoing (Habakkuk 1:13), he had to give us free will to make Heaven what it was meant to be—for him and for humans—and Hell is an

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unavoidable byproduct. If you take away Hell, you take away free will. If you take away free will, you take away any meaningful existence for humans in Heaven and negate God's purpose in creating humans at all. God sure makes a lot of sense, doesn't he? Heaven is no arbitrary reward, sin is no arbitrary offense, death is no arbitrary punishment, and Hell is no arbitrary destination. Everything is there for good reasons. But sin is humanity's offense, death is humanity's punishment, and without escape from death, Hell is humanity's destination. A big problem. One that needs a big solution. Read on.

4

Humans like solutions. We like identifying the steps to take that get us out of a jam. And we like to be able to take those steps ourselves. Just think about how many self-help books, videos, conferences, and web columns we have exposed ourselves to that outline the seven steps to do this or the three things you need to know about that or the eight ways you can finally achieve whatever. Follow these rules, and you will fix your problem! Nothing wrong with that, and for some issues, adhering to such guidelines works smashingly. It is very, very human to want to bring ourselves out of our own messes, which is why so many of us have applied this desire to the biggest mess of all, our massive problem of imperfection that leaves us separated from God and his perfection. Simply follow a list of rules, and you will achieve success in reuniting yourself with God in some sort of bliss. Then feel free to pat yourself on the back as you stroll down the streets of gold alongside God on a perfect, Heavenly day. You deserve it. Such self-achieved salvation is a very human idea indeed, exactly what we would expect from a manmade solution to our biggest problem.

But *is it* a solution, and if so, which list of rules should we pick and why? Remember the problem: we are imperfect and have chosen to know what is not God; this is what necessarily lands us in Hell. The only solution to this problem is for us to become perfect and

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choose to only know what is God. Only when he is convinced of these two things will he be satisfied to admit us into Heaven, knowing that we qualify for entrance into a perfect place and that we are willing to no longer mar his perfection as we did before. We'll explore the second condition of only choosing to know what is God and good in Booklet 8. Here we address the first condition: becoming perfect. Which list of rules out there offers the solution we need? Which can make us perfect? Adhering to the five pillars of Islam? Believing in the current laws of science? Obeying the 613 rules in the Jewish Torah? Taking the twelve Buddhist steps to enlightenment? Submitting ourselves to the three or four (depending on who you ask) ways to the Hindu Moksha? Keeping the ten commandments? Following the _____ guidelines to _____? None of these remove our imperfection! They might make us better people, they might help us solve important but more transient problems, and they are certainly ways of demonstrating our devotion to a higher authority, whether it be a being or an idea. But none of them can actually nullify our imperfect state, which is the only solution that ultimately matters.

We'd like to think we could convince God that we're perfect by burying our sin under a mountain of good ideas or good deeds, but we'll never be successful in fooling him, will we? And if he knows that our problem is imperfection, why would he ever propose a worldview where we need to follow a bunch of rules as an effective solution? He wouldn't, and he doesn't. That would be so very like a human, but not at all like God. Despite our best attempts, we can't fix this problem. We can't undo our imperfection. And that's OK. God understands our predicament quite clearly. He doesn't offer a human solution that doesn't solve the problem; he offers a divine solution that does solve the problem, a gospel that "is not of human origin" (Galatians 1:11). Just like we would expect a God who is truly God to do. Something that makes sense, something that works, something that humans never would have thought of: Jesus.

So there's God, and he's created all of us humans to freely choose to live forever in his perfection (2 Corinthians 5:4-5). Except we're all imperfect and have all sinned, because we've all repeatedly told him we want to know something other than him and his perfection.

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He knows that we're helpless, because doing x types of things or y amount of things will never make us perfect. So if he's going to fulfill his purpose in creating us, *he* has to provide a solution, one that actually fixes the problem in a way that remains consistent with his nature. In other words, he must be merciful (Daniel 9:9), he must be just (Deuteronomy 32:4), and he must be loving (John 4:8), amongst his many other attributes. He could let us all go to Hell, which would be just, but not all that loving or merciful. Being God, he's got a much better idea anyway.

Here's his plan. He becomes a human himself in the person of Jesus, God the Son (Philippians 2:5-8). He is tempted in every way but lives a perfect, sinless life (Hebrews 4:15). Never once does he use his free will to do anything other than the perfect good that he desires for everyone to be immersed in (John 14:31). Therefore, he does not *have to* know and experience evil as a result of his choices or actions, which means he is also exempt from death (Hebrews 7:27). But because our willful, sinful immersion in evil is what makes us deservedly imperfect, God willfully but sinlessly immerses himself in evil undeservedly to remove that imperfection (Colossians 1:22, 2 Corinthians 5:21). And because we must endure physical death as our punishment, leaving our spirit with no other place to go than Hell, Jesus willingly dies on the cross as our substitute to enable us to be released from that punishment (Hebrews 9:14-15). Remember, the punishment for sin is physical death, not death's byproduct of an eternity in Hell prior to Jesus providing an escape. Jesus did not need to go to Hell forever to undergo our punishment for sin; he needed to immerse himself in evil and physically die in our place. So he did. With our sentence served by Jesus, we are able to be justly considered innocent of sin and imperfection by God, giving us an alternative to the byproduct of Hell when we die: Heaven. And to prove that he can one day free us from physical death and raise us in a perfect, imperishable body that can live forever in Heaven, as well as to exemplify the hope and victory that he offers, he returns from the grave in the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:17-19, 50-55). Not like he would stay dead anyway; he is God after all (Acts 2:24)! God is merciful by providing a solution for us when he doesn't have to and when we

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don't deserve it. God is just by carrying out a punishment that fits the crime. God is loving by removing our sentence of death from us, enduring it himself to make us perfect in his sight (Romans 3:22-26). God is brilliant. Jesus *is* the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). It all makes sense. Our problem thwarts his purpose. Our punishment fits our problem. His solution solves both our problem and our punishment. Perfect so far. Just one item remains. His purpose must be reinstated by his solution. That's where we come in.

Recall that God's purpose in creating humans is "so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us" (Acts 17:26-28). God gives you free will so that you are truly able to willingly choose to find perfect community with him. To this end, he offers you a merciful, just, loving, and brilliant solution to the obstacles that stand in your way, sin and death (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10). The only thing left for God's purpose in creating you to be accomplished is for you to choose to seek him, reach out for him, and find him. He is not far from you. God has done all he can to achieve his purpose; indeed, it cannot be achieved if he interferes with this final decision. So how do you make this choice? As we complete our investigation of a person's salvation process in Booklets 4 and 5, we'll eventually discover that it starts with a free-willed act of faith. We'll learn that this faith will *always* result in a decision to embrace God's purpose for you (desiring perfect community with him), to admit your problem (sin and imperfection), to accept your punishment (knowing evil and dying), to believe in the one solution that works (Jesus' death and resurrection), and to embrace God's eternal purpose for you (experiencing perfect community with him in Heaven), bringing the process full circle. You're closing the loop, coming back to where you were intended to be, using God's solution to reinstate his purpose for you. You're choosing to be with him and everything he is forever. You're choosing Heaven. God freely chose to want a relationship with you, and you freely choose to want a relationship with him. How could it work any other way?

Jesus confirms, "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God" (John 17:3). It is argued that salvation is not

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linked to intimately knowing God, simply because the phrase “personal relationship” is not found in the Bible.²⁴ But Jesus says otherwise, Paul says otherwise (Philippians 3:8-11), and the Bible confirms with blunt certainty that a person must know God to be saved (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9). Of course salvation is linked to a relationship with God! It was the whole reason he bothered to save us in the first place! The kind of Heaven where salvation does not involve community with God is the manmade one, where doing x, y, and z somehow makes you good enough to get in. Notice that God is uninvolved and unnecessary in these kinds of manmade salvation, which is why he is largely absent from the manmade Heavens that result. A lot of food, a lot of harps, a lot of virgins, a lot of loved ones, a lot of clouds, and a lot of other ethereal things, but not a lot of God.

Not so with the Godmade Heaven. “The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.” “God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (Revelation 22:3-5, 21:3-4). God is present, active, and intimate in the Godmade Heaven, isn’t he? Not off to the side, at the top of that big mountain over there, or only available by phone, text, or e-mail if our harp strings break or our virgins get a little too high-maintenance (please pardon my sarcasm!). “God isn’t an absentee landlord who looks down from a great height to see what his tenants are doing.”²⁵ No way! He’s right alongside us enjoying the bliss of perfection, just as we would expect from a God who wants us to seek, reach out for, find, and know him.

Why else would he consistently use more and more intimate imagery describing his relationship to us throughout history, from God to father to walking among us to brother to dwelling inside us to the most personal relationship of all, a perfect spouse (Leviticus 26:12, Jeremiah 3:19, John 1:10-14, 1 Corinthians 6:19, Hebrews

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2:11-12, Ephesians 5:31-32 with Revelation 2:9-10)! God's purpose in Heaven is not our entertainment; it's to fulfill his purpose in creating us. He made us to know him perfectly, and in Heaven we can finally do exactly that. Heaven is an invention to match the intention. A place to fit the purpose. Unlike self-help silent-God Heavens, the Godmade one is there for a good reason; it makes perfect sense. Your problem thwarts his purpose. Your punishment fits your problem. His solution solves both your problem and your punishment. Your decision to depend on his solution closes the loop, so that God's purpose for you is realized together with him in Heaven. Party on Wayne, party on Garth, or whatever your name happens to be!

I hope this excites you! Perhaps for the first time, whether you consider yourself religious or not, this whole gospel thing is clicking, things are fitting together, and something that never quite made sense to you before is now much clearer. Don't get me wrong, there's a whole lot left to explore. But especially for those who have been either bored or bewildered by Christianity, I truly hope the message of Jesus, the solution to humanity's problem, is recapturing your interest, especially when you compare it to your other options. But maybe it is those other options that are keeping you from getting excited about Jesus. Maybe your cultural ties to, longtime familiarity with, or prior commitment toward another worldview makes it difficult to entertain Jesus as God's solution, no matter how much sense he makes. If so, let me thank you for reading this far. The time you've been willing to devote to this book is evidence that you're looking for something you haven't yet found. And when it is found, accepting it inevitably involves an adjustment period, a change in how you think and act. But the excitement in its discovery, the satisfaction in its rationality, the wonder in its divinity, and the peace in its security are well worth the investment!

For years I've spent huge quantities of my free time looking for other better solutions. I enjoy reading authors who are most likely to disagree with me, because I want to know my options, and I want to be challenged. I've read through and studied many sacred texts and many secular tomes. I've pondered the persistent and popular while entertaining the fresh and the fringe. After all, both you and I only

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know with certainty of one shot we have to get this right! Certainly, I still have things to learn and still have ideas to explore, and I will, but one thing is consistent. It doesn't get any better than Jesus, and whatever is best deserves my devotion now, even as I keep learning. Sometimes I might feel uncomfortable about what it means, but if the solution of Jesus is better than what I've got, then he's my best shot at truth, at Heaven, and at God. The scope of this book is not to meticulously examine every option out there, so we won't. But I actually encourage you to learn about them and consider them for two reasons. First, you need to know the choices you have. Second, the more you see how they stack up to Jesus, the more assured and excited about him I think you'll get! I know that societal norms, peer pressure, and personal preference often sway you away from him; trust me, I feel it too. However, your eternal purpose and destiny are way too important to be determined by such transient and unreliable factors.

But maybe you don't have trouble getting excited about Jesus; maybe you find it difficult to *only* get excited about Jesus. Sure, he's a great solution, but can't there be other solutions at the same time? Why can't all paths lead to Heaven or God? Why can't Jesus be found in other worldviews besides Christianity? *Love Wins*, a book that asks several similar questions, recalls the story of the ancient Israelites after they escaped slavery in Egypt. They were in the desert on their way to the land God promised them, and they ran out of water. God does this funky miracle where Moses, their apparently very buff leader, whacks a rock with his staff, and out flows water (Exodus 17:1-6). Speak softly and carry a big stick indeed! Centuries later, Paul refers back to this rock, equating it with Jesus (1 Corinthians 10:1-4). Because Paul identifies Jesus as Jesus in the New Testament and the rock as Jesus in Exodus, it is argued that Paul must think the message of Jesus can be found everywhere, in all worldviews. I'm not sure how two places means everywhere, and if you currently adhere to a belief system other than Christianity, you're probably equally confused at how the biblical message of Jesus is being advertised in your worldview. I always thought Paul equated the rock to Christ because both saved God's people from the hopelessness of certain

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death; straightforwardly reading God's words as they are stated makes it unnecessary for us to repaint the Christian faith in other ways we might like it to be.

Nevertheless, we are told, "as obvious as it is, then, Jesus is bigger than any one religion." "He will always transcend whatever cages and labels are created to contain and name him, especially the one called 'Christianity.'"⁶ However, this term ironically means "the religion derived from Jesus Christ," so any religion coming from him can't be bigger than Christianity, can it?²⁷ Even so, some resist accepting this. "People come to Christ in all sorts of ways." "Sometimes people use his name; other times they don't."²⁸ We're told of Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists finding Jesus without finding Christianity, a process called the "exclusivity on the other side of inclusivity."²⁹ I call it confusing. How can people somehow find the solution of Jesus without Christianity, which is believing in the solution of Jesus? And how can we still make sense of the existence of Hell in this scenario, a place considered to be real by the author of this argument? Is it there to convince people who have already found Christ without Christianity to really, truly find Christ within Christianity? Or to punish them for finding Christ without Christianity because they didn't really, truly find Christ within Christianity? God wants to reach and has great ways of reaching those from any belief system who are open to Jesus' message, but it has to be Jesus' message, not a Jesus' message that's not Jesus' message, whatever that might mean. Jesus doesn't transcend Christianity; he teaches, embodies, and inseparably intertwines himself with Christianity. Being able to find God by finding Christ without Christianity is no different than being able to find God on any path without Christ at all.

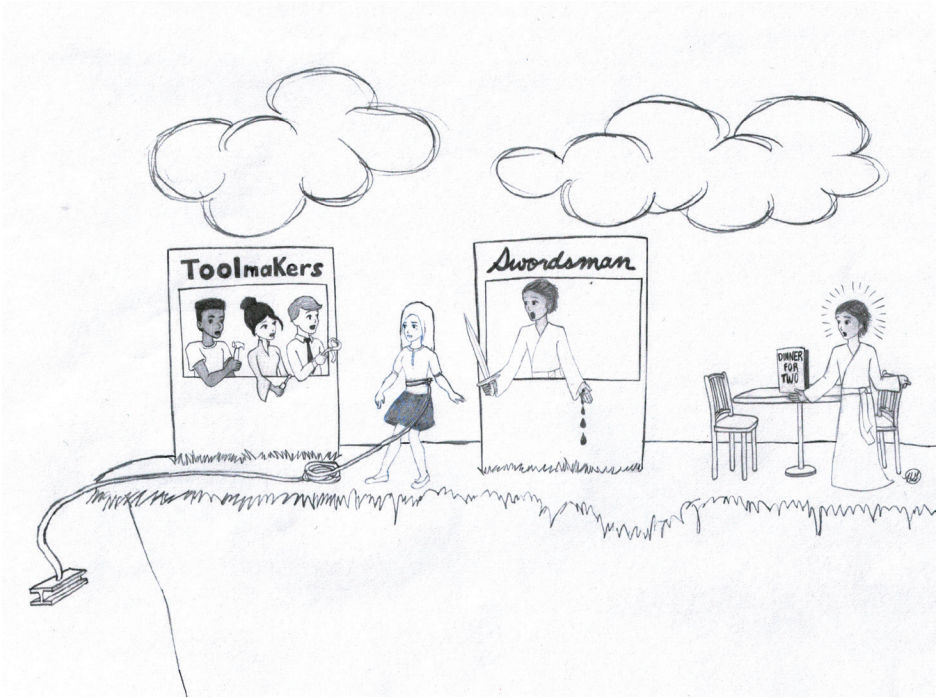
This realization, of course, leads us to our next question: Why can't all paths, or at least some paths without Christ, lead to Heaven or God? Three answers. First, it wouldn't really make sense. Why would God go through the trouble of creating (or allowing humans to create) a seemingly endless number of solutions when Jesus takes care of the problem just fine, especially when several of them involve multiple other gods or no God at all? Why would God ever endure and sacrifice so much for one solution if most of the others would

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be equally as effective and cost him nothing? Why would God accept any solution that doesn't fulfill his purpose for humanity and doesn't fix the problem of humanity, when he's got one that does both? He wouldn't (Acts 4:11-12)! God makes sense. Multiple paths leading to Heaven doesn't. Second, even if this concept did make sense or even if God was willing to accept it, it's actually impossible. These solutions or paths are mutually incompatible. Either there is a God, multiple gods or no God. Either Jesus didn't die, died and stayed dead, or died and was resurrected. Either humans are purely physical beings or physical and something else. Either there's an eternal Hell/Heaven, a non-eternal Hell/Heaven, or no Hell/Heaven. Either one of the sacred texts is true or none of them are. Either one worldview's moral code is authoritatively correct or none of them are. Only one item in each of these sentences can be true, because each irreconcilably disagrees with the others. 2+2 can't equal both 4 and 5. A few theoretical physicists or comic book fans out there might invoke alternate universes or realities to argue otherwise, but the only universe and reality they and I know we all exist in is this one, and here only one of many mutually incompatible solutions can lead to God. We'd best find the best one! Third, the concept of all paths leading to Heaven is unnecessary. We've already seen that God's solution of Jesus can heal our hereafters quite well on its own, and we're about to see that he eagerly intends to advertise it to everyone, so that they can get excited about it too. And if God gives everyone adequate access to the best solution to their problem, why would they need anything else?

Humanity has a gargantuan problem—much worse than toxic dishware—one we must understand that only God can fix. His singular solution of Jesus to stunningly transform sin, evil, and Hell into perfect community with him in Heaven effectively removes the problem, but only if applied before permanent damage is done. Let yourself love it when his plan comes together!

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God the Father beckons a person to community with him while simultaneously recognizing her predicament. She is about to be permanently separated from God by the problem of “I,” the rejection of knowing God and what he’s all about in favor of what “I” considers to be better—knowing not God and therefore evil. The just and logical consequence and punishment is experiencing the evil of falling into separation from an existence communing with God. Multiple worldviews—all made by humans with good intentions—are offered as tools to fix the problem. However, aside from them depending on the woman herself to actually perform the work of salvation, all three are ineffective in solving the problem anyway. The only other solution is Jesus, who via the cross can sever her from the problem of “I” and its consequence, and he is ready to do so. However, she must freely demonstrate the faith to move toward the wounded Jesus in order for him to perform the actual work of salvation with the effectiveness of urgency. There neither is nor needs to be any other way that will work.

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8. I list his credentials because he has also been implicated in scientific misconduct involving three of his papers, which have all been corrected. Just trying to be honest and transparent, but regardless, the fact remains that he is one of the foremost researchers on the difference between humans and animals. Since problems with his corrected papers actually involved *overestimating* the cognitive ability of animals, since any other questionable data have been verified with further experimentation, since he is otherwise an extremely accomplished scientist, and since none of the errors appear to call into question his humaniqueness theory, we'll run with it.⁹⁻¹¹
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19. The presence of a human spirit also allows us to answer some peripheral yet nagging questions about the origin of humanity in the Bible and in anthropology. Because Adam and Eve were the first people to be created with a human spirit in the image of God, they were the first to be *fully* human, the first to be humanly distinct from every other creature on earth. But that doesn't mean that there weren't other individuals around already who *didn't* possess a spirit or free will. There is no biblical reason to believe that scientifically classifiable *Homo sapiens* didn't exist in significant numbers long before Adam and Eve, anatomically

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and perhaps physiologically identical to them, yet still without self-awareness or a consciousness. I know this idea might seem shocking, and I'm not using it to open a discussion on how and when the earth came into being. Instead, staying relevant to the hereafter, my focus is what free-willed human beings made in God's image are and why they were created that way. The concept of a non-spirited *Homo sapiens* does not contradict God's revelation in the Bible; in fact, it may even help explain it (e.g. Genesis 4:1-17 and 6:1-4, just to get you thinking). Moreover, it is perfectly consistent with scientific observation, which is God's revelation in the world, and it makes sense as an intriguing explanation for the relatively recent rise of civilization.

Science claims, perhaps correctly, that individuals anatomically and possibly physiologically comparable to today's humans emerged 200,000 years ago, which is why we are all called *Homo sapiens* together. However, if this is true, isn't it at least a little disturbing that the most ancient civilizations that science has confirmed didn't exist until around 12,000 BC at the earliest? How could it have possibly taken self-aware, conscious, human-like people, who could basically think, plan, and act like we can today, 188,000 years to organize into the first settled, established communities of the ancient Natufians, Sumerians, Egyptians, Indians, Chinese, and Native Americans? That's a *long* time! We didn't even have the *wheel* until 6,000 years ago, and given the staggering amount of technological advancement achieved by the predominant human civilizations since then, do you really think that it would have taken more than 32 *times* that long, just for humans to finally achieve such simple innovations? Of course not! At least one of these groups should have been able to progress that far way before they did.

So what happened several thousand years ago that allowed the remarkable relatively coincident emergence of civilizations unlike any endeavor of *Homo sapiens* seen previously? The very logical and biblical answer is Adam and Eve, the first *fully* human beings created by God in his image several thousand years ago, complete with a free-willed spirit (Genesis 1:27, 2:7, Zechariah 12:1). With

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- the advent of a spirit that enables self-aware, conscious thought, it is no surprise that their spirited offspring were able to quickly catapult technology and culture to unprecedented heights, leaving the relatively stagnant advancement of their non-spirited predecessors behind in the dust. In fact, Adam's firstborn child Cain, only the third fully human being to ever exist, confirms this new innovation and advancement shortly after leaving the nest: he goes and builds a city (Genesis 4:17)! While non-spirited *Homo sapiens* would have no impetus to hurry, free-willed human spirits would have no reason to wait.
20. Kluger, J. (5 Aug 2010). "Inside the Minds of Animals." Retrieved on 30 Jan 2013 from: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2008867-5,00.html>
 21. Wittmer, M. (2004). *Heaven Is a Place on Earth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, p. 81.
 22. *Ibid.*, p. 160.
 23. This is virtually the same scenario we would find ourselves in if we honestly pursued moral relativism, whether without a God or with an amoral—not good or bad—God. No one would have any more authority than another to determine right or wrong, no one would be able to truly justify punishing anyone else, and any attempt to do so through a governmental justice system or personal revenge would be no more than an act of oppression by whomever was more powerful at the time. And God wouldn't care because he either wouldn't exist or wouldn't have any moral standards to prompt him to deliver justice. Would you pick this, or would you prefer a just and good God to give you the option of a perfect eternity?
 24. Bell, R. (2011). *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, p. 10.
 25. Wright, N.T. (1994). *Following Jesus: Biblical Reflections on Discipleship*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co, p. 101.
 26. Bell, R. (2011). *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, p. 150.

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27. "Christianity". Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Retrieved on 30 Jan 2013 from: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/christianity>
28. Bell, R. (2011). *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, pp. 158-159.
29. Ibid., p. 155.