

## SCIENCE, MORALITY, AND THE DEATH OF GOD

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#### Memorial Service

Back in 1922, American essayist H. L. Mencken wrote a little essay titled "Memorial Service". Here's how he began:

Where is the graveyard of dead gods? What lingering mourner waters their mounds? There was a day when Jupiter was the king of the gods, and any man who doubted his puissance [power] was ipso facto a barbarian and an ignoramus. But where in all the world is there a man who worships Jupiter today? And what of Huitzilopochtli [wee-tsee-loh-poch'-tlee]? In one year-- and it is no more than five hundred years ago--50,000 youths and maidens were slain in sacrifice to him.

Mencken went on to name a total of 189 pagan gods.<sup>1</sup> He told how millions worshipped them; how men laboured for generations to build them vast temples; how priests, evangelists, bishops, and archbishops served them; how to doubt them was to die, usually at the stake; how armies took to the fields to defend them against infidels; and how villages were burned, women and children slaughtered, and cattle driven off. All these, he pointed out in conclusion:

were gods of the highest standing and dignity--gods of civilized peoples--worshipped and believed in by millions. All were theoretically omnipotent, omniscient, and immortal. And all are dead.

#### The death of the gods.

What does Mencken mean by the "death" of these gods?

Not that they once existed in reality and now do not. Rather that a god dies when no one believes in him, her, or it. Dies when that god disappears from the pantheon of the corresponding religion or when the religion itself disappears. Dies when that god is recognized as existing only in fable, not in fact.

Mencken's figure of speech is common enough not to invite misunderstanding. Nietzsche, famously, used it to apply to the idea of the Christian God. Mathematician John C. Lennox used it in his recent book *God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?*<sup>2</sup> And Terry Pratchett used it in his deliciously satirical novel *Small Gods*.<sup>3</sup>

All these pagan gods were once thought of as supernatural agents, akin in their attributes to us. Beings whose actions were posited as direct

causes of natural phenomena: earthquakes, tsunamis, lightning, thunder, floods, famines, diseases, eclipses, and the like.

Yet today, as Mencken claimed, all are dead. The track record of belief in supernatural causes of natural phenomena is abysmal. Outside the realm of religious belief, it persists only among those credulous enough to believe in ghosts, poltergeists, and the like. Supernaturalism has given way to naturalism, superstition to science. What philosophers call methodological naturalism now plays the role in science that methodological supernaturalism, so to speak, played in pagan religions.

The gods mentioned by Mencken have lost whatever epistemic credentials, whatever evidential base and explanatory power, they were once thought to have.

The same holds for their moral credentials. We now view the demands these gods imposed on their followers with repugnance. Human sacrifice, temple prostitution, and slavery, for example. So, too, the barbarities their followers inflicted on the devotees of rival gods: indiscriminate slaughter, torture, and persecution.

The cruel commands of these gods no longer impose obligations upon us. The Huitzilopochtli of religion are dead and buried and the world is better off for it.

We have no reason today to believe in the existence, let alone the causal efficacy or moral imperatives, of any of the gods that made on to Mencken's list.

### **God, according to monotheists**

But how about the revealed gods of monotheism, more commonly referred to as the gods of Theism? The God of Judaism? The God of Christianity? And the God of Islam? Currently over half the world's population believes wholeheartedly in one or other of these gods. And how about the God of Deism, the vaguely conceived "Supreme Intelligence" that so many non-churchgoers believe in? Are their claims to credibility or esteem any better than those of their pagan rivals?

Atheists, of whom I am one, think not. Indeed I shall argue that the intellectual credentials of these gods are no better than those of the pagan gods and that the moral credentials of the *theistic* gods are worse by far.

### **The concept of God**

First, I want to clear up a confusion about the term "God".

Pick up any newspaper, journal, or book of theology, philosophy of religion, or comparative religion, and you'll find the term "God" used as a proper name as if there is one and only one object that it designates.

But that's clearly wrong. If someone tells you that he or she believes in God, it makes perfect sense to ask, "Which god?" Is it the Hebraic god "Yaweh" as revealed in the Tanakh (roughly, the *Old Testament*)? Is it God-the-father, God incarnate in Jesus, as revealed in the *New Testament*? Is it Allah as revealed in the *Q'ran*? Or is it the god of a deist--of someone who doesn't believe in any of the gods of revealed religions, but does feel the need to postulate the existence of some supernatural being, a supreme intelligence who created the universe and thereafter remained hidden from us? Each believer will use the noun "God" as a proper name for his or her own object of worship and is likely to insist that their object of worship is different from that referred to by followers of other religions, denominations, or sects. And they'd be right to do so. Each god differs from all the others in the properties he or she is supposed to possess. Hence they can't be identical.

The fact is that the upper case term "God" functions much like the proper name "Mary" in so far as it admits many different persons as bearers of the name.

And another point that many people forget. Just because "God" functions as a proper name it doesn't follow that there really is an entity of which it is the name. "Santa" is a proper name. But it doesn't follow that Santa exists. And the question I asked when, as a young child I was confronted by all the Santas in the shops of downtown Auckland, "Which is the real Santa, Mother?" is best answered by saying "There isn't a real Santa, darling. Only pretend ones."

So how am I going to use the term "God" when, as an atheist, I say that I don't believe God exists? I propose to use it as a sort of variable proper name for whichever object or class of objects people *think* exists when they use the term.<sup>4</sup>

One caveat, though. I am going to take it, as most philosophers and theologians do, that when people talk about God they are talking about, or taking themselves to be talking about, some sort of supernatural entity or spiritual being. In my own use of the term I'll follow suit. I certainly won't be talking about any pantheistically conceived entity such as Spinoza's God-as-identical-with-Nature itself, or Paul Tillich's and Bishop Spong's gobbledygook God-as-the-ground-and-depth-of-all-being. In short I'll restrict my use of the term to supernatural gods.

### **The concept of Atheism**

Second, the term "atheist". As commonly used, it applies to anyone who doesn't believe in the existence of God.

Note that atheists aren't alone in their disbelief. In a broad sense of the term all religious believers are atheistic too: atheistic about all gods other than their own. Theists, for example, no more believe in the existence of any of the pagan gods such as Mars, Venus, or Pluto, than they do in Santa Claus or the tooth fairy. Atheists just add the gods of theism and deism to their list of fictitious gods.

People sometimes say that atheism can't be proved. Theists say it triumphantly. Agnostics say it to justify their noncommittal. Both trot out the old claim, "You can't prove a negative" as if to prove the point. But this is fatuous. "No negatives can be proved" is itself a negative!

And it's false. Some negatives are easy to prove. The statement "There is no greatest prime number", is one of them. It can be proved, as Euclid showed, by means of a reductio ad absurdum. When the concept of something--a certain sort of prime number, for instance, or of a God who is omniscient yet unable to foresee the consequences of his own actions--involves contradiction, it's often easy to prove the negative.

Or consider the more humdrum negative, "There's no butter in the fridge". This negative can be proved empirically by removing the fridge contents and inspecting them carefully. In this case, the idea of there being butter in the fridge--unlike the idea of a greatest prime number--is consistent with itself but inconsistent with the evidence. In like manner, I would argue that certain concepts of God, though not self-contradictory, are inconsistent with indubitable evidence about the nature of the world. The fact that it contains evil, for example.

And another point that's often neglected. In many instances the demand for so-called proof of the negative is asking too much. I wouldn't dream of asking you to prove, in either of the foregoing senses, that Santa doesn't exist. Nevertheless, I bet you don't believe in Santa. And I bet you think your non-belief justified. The existence of Santa, you might say, isn't impossible, but it's wildly improbable. Why?

You might point to the track record, as it were, of similar childhood beliefs. Maybe you once believed in the tooth fairy, for example, or fairies at the bottom of your garden, or evil witches and wizards, but no longer do. And since belief in Santa smacks of the same sort of superstitious nonsense, the point came in your childhood when you dismissed it too as no longer credible.

You might have discovered that modern belief in Santa is grounded not in evidence of his existence but in acknowledged myths such as that of the pre-Christian pagan god Odin or that it is merely an embellishment of historical stories about the 4th century Christian Bishop Saint Nicholas of Myra.

And there are even more powerful reasons might lead to your current disbelief in Santa's existence. It's not just that you've not yet come across good evidence of his existence, for after all you'd have to concede an element truth of the slogan: "Absence of evidence isn't the same as evidence of absence." Rather it's that there's a cumulative case to be made for Santa's non-existence. You reason that if he did exist then it would be rational for you to expect a lot of evidence to turn up that in fact never has turned up.

The hypothesis that Santa exists generates a whole lot of reasonable expectations all of which are unfulfilled. If Santa existed, it would be reasonable to expect, for instance, that he'd leave sooty footprints as he made his way from the chimney to your bedside. It would be reasonable to expect that someone would have actually seen him careering across the sky behind his reindeer fast enough to visit, and spend a little time with, every good child in the Christian world in the space of a single evening. You'd expect someone to be able to give you a plausible account of how he could break the laws of physics in this way. And so on.

These kinds of evidential considerations, I want to insist, are much more powerful than any to do with simple lack of evidence. The existence of Santa is implausible, improbable even, in so far as there are cumulative rational expectations about his existence none of which is fulfilled. I've coined a name for this sort of implausibility argument. I've christened it the argument from Cumulative Unfulfilled Rational Expectations or CURE, for short.

In what follows I'll sometimes appeal to the power of CURE arguments as a cure for those who, in my view, suffer from implausible beliefs in the existence of God--delusions, as Richard Dawkins calls them.

Taken together with natural explanations of the causes of such beliefs, and the track record of similar beliefs, CURE arguments provide about as strong a case as can possibly be made for atheistic non-belief in any god whose concept is self-consistent and consistent with indubitable facts. So you may expect me, in what follows, to press the parallels between belief in Santa and belief in God--parallels, too, between Santa and many of the principal personages that feature in the *Bible*, Moses and Jesus in particular.

### **The concepts of Naturalism and Supernaturalism**

The third terms requiring some comment are "naturalism" and "supernaturalism".

Naturalism (sometimes known as Metaphysical Materialism) is a philosophical--more specifically an ontological--theory about the nature of reality. It asserts that the ultimate constituents of reality are the sorts of things with which physics deals (subatomic particles and their basic properties), together with complexes of these and their emergent properties (properties possessed by complexes that are not possessed by their simpler

constituents). Naturalism has no room, therefore, for the idea that we are ghosts inhabiting physical machines, or the idea that our minds could survive the death of our bodies. To suppose the contrary--in my view--would be to commit what I call the "Cheshire Cat Fallacy", as illustrated by Lewis Carroll's story of the cat that faded away until only its grin remained. As if a grin could have substantial existence independent of the physical face of which it was the property!

Supernaturalism stands in opposition to naturalism. Supernaturalism has a dualistic ontology. It recognizes the existence of the natural world, and is likely to recognize the authority of the natural sciences--physics, chemistry, biology, and the rest--when it comes to describing it. But it insists that there's more to reality than is conceived of in the naturalist's philosophy, and more than is accessible to scientific investigation. In addition to the natural world there's a supernatural one: a world inhabited by beings such as disembodied souls, God and his angels, or Satan and his hordes.

Some people say metaphysical theories like naturalism and supernaturalism can't in principle be empirically falsified. But this is a shibboleth, a product of shallow thinking.

It's true that supernaturalism can't be empirically falsified. There's no way, for example, of falsifying the claim that the natural causes of a phenomenon are the means by which God brings about the fulfilment of his plan.

But by way of contrast, it's easy to conceive of a possible situation in which naturalism would be shown false.

Just imagine the apocalyptic vision of evangelical Christians coming to pass in a way that defeated every attempt at a natural explanation, an explanation in terms of mass deception, for instance. Imagine it in concrete detail. Everyone in the world, skeptics as well as believers, hears the deafening sound of trumpets. Everyone sees Jesus descend from the heavens in a cloud of glory. And, in the great Rapture of whose imminence true believers still have no doubt, the faithful around the whole globe are visibly swept up to join Jesus in the sky leaving cars driverless, husbands without wives, parents without children, and the earth's population permanently depleted. If this confirmation of the Second Coming were to occur, I myself would be gob-smacked, even God-smacked, so to speak, and might hastily mend my atheistic ways. I might even think it prudent to pray there'd be a Third Coming for belated believers like me.

The problem for supernaturalism is that nothing remotely like this has ever occurred. Its track record is so abysmal that on a frequency interpretation of probability theory you'd want to assign it a probability approaching zero.

Think of the situation like this. Of the trillions of events, large and small, that are going on around us every second of every day, how many do you think still demand a supernaturalistic explanation? When some new event comes up for examination--the occurrence of a new phenomenon in the cosmos, perhaps, or the sudden appearance of a new virus--where would you put your money? Which would you think more probable? That a natural explanation can in principle be given? Or that some supernatural agent caused it? What would you think of someone who reasoned abstractly that for any given event there are just two possible kinds of explanation, a natural one and a supernatural one, and so concluded that there's a 50:50 chance of supernaturalism being true? Or that it's a 50:50 toss up as to whether God exists?

Supernaturalists frequently object to the fact that science restricts itself to the search for natural causes only. Why, they ask, do scientists close their minds to the possibility of supernatural ones?

Well, scientists have the capacity to learn from experience and, in light of the abysmal track record of supernaturalism, they find it best to begin with the presumption that some sort of naturalistic explanation will win again.

In any case, there are too many supernatural beings whose agency can in principle be invoked--not just those so far conjured up in human imagination, but countless more besides. Just think of the range of possible deities embraced within the class of religions known as theism alone. Judaism, Christianity and Islam are just the start of it. Each has its own sects and offshoots, each with its own unique god-concept. Christianity alone has more than 38,000 denominational variants.<sup>5</sup> And more are in the making every day. Supernaturalists, if conducting their thinking in the abstract, would have to allow the possibility that any one of these rival deities could be invoked as the explanatory cause, *a priori* they're equi-probable. But which one, if any, is the "true" god?

Mind you, there are uncountably many possible natural explanations that can also be imagined. So the difference doesn't lie in mere numbers. It lies, rather, in the fact that natural explanations are answerable to the tribunal of experience and that this tribunal eliminates any that don't pass its tests.

Supernaturalistic hypotheses, by way of contrast, simply don't admit any evidence to count against them. Hence there's no way of separating out those that are false. And a hypothesis that's compatible with anything and everything that might occur can't explain why in fact *this* occurs rather than *that*. This is the logical point that lies behind the methodological point that in order to be a candidate for scientific status, a hypothesis must be falsifiable, i.e., able to be shown false. Only then can the screening practices of science get rid of those hypotheses that evidence shows to be false, and thus bring us closer to the truth. There aren't any such practices for the evaluation of supernaturalistic beliefs.

Supernaturalistic explanations have fallen by the way. The graveyard of the gods isn't yet full. But gone are the deities of the ancient Egyptians, the Vikings, the Aztecs, and the like, all of whom once played a role in filling the gaps in human understanding of how nature works. Relatively few of those gaps are left.

And, I'm going to argue, filling them with any surviving gods won't help.

In order to make my case I'm going to consider, first, arguments from revelation (arguments for the sort of god purportedly revealed in the *Bible*), and second, arguments from reason and experience (arguments that appeal to non-revelatory reasons for believing in God).

### **Arguments from revelation.**

For nearly two millennia, western civilisation has been held in thrall by God's word, the *Bible*. And even today God, as portrayed in the *Bible*, is worshipped by well over half the world's population.<sup>6</sup>

God, the biblical god, is supposed to be all-knowing, all-powerful and morally perfect; and the *Bible* is supposed to be his autobiography.<sup>7</sup>

Now if that's the case, then it should follow that anything the *Bible* proposes for our belief is what we should believe. Such a god must always say only what is true, never false or even misleading. If the *Bible* is the word of a divine being, not of human beings, it must be the ultimate touchstone of true belief. Such is the reasoning behind the doctrine of inerrancy, that the *Bible* contains no errors either as to matters of fact or as to matters of morals.

A persuasive case can be made for this position. As Prof. Gleason Archer puts it:

If the written revelation contains mistakes, then it can hardly fulfill its intended purpose, that is, to convey to man in a reliable way the will of God for his salvation. Why is this so? Because a demonstrated mistake in one part gives way to the possibility that there may be mistakes in other parts of the Bible. If the Bible turns out to be a mixture of truth and error then it becomes a book like any other book.<sup>8</sup>

He is appealing to the dangers of the slippery slope. If you admit that certain parts are false, how can you judge which parts are true? The peril is that if the Bible held not to be inerrant, then it is we, not God, who become the arbiters of scriptural truth. And we, of course, are fallible.

You may think the doctrine of inerrancy the product of simplistic black-and-white fundamentalist thinking. You may think that those who propound it know little about, or ignore, the way the Bible was composed<sup>9</sup> or the vagaries

of history that eventually led to its canonization in 382 AD. You may think that I am setting up a straw a man the easier to demolish the God of the *Bible*.

But I am not. Many of the finest Christian philosophers of our day endorse the doctrine explicitly. Among them we find such notables as William Alston, Peter van Inwagen, and Alvin Plantinga. All are, as Plantinga puts it, "people of the Word [who] take Scripture to be a special revelation from God himself".<sup>10</sup> In his view "Scripture is inerrant: the Lord makes no mistakes; what he proposes for our belief is what we ought to believe."<sup>11</sup> Van Inwagen says, "I fully accept the teachings of my denomination that 'the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the revealed Word of God.'"<sup>12</sup> Alston takes the view that "a large proportion of the scriptures consists of records of divine-human communications".<sup>13</sup> He also says that God continues to reveal himself to "sincere Christians" of today in ways ranging from answered prayer to thoughts that just pop into one's mind.

Are these guys serious? What would be their line when confronted by *2 Chronicles* 4:2, which gives a false value for the mathematical constant  $\pi$  (the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter)<sup>14</sup>? What would they say about countless inconsistencies the Bible contains? For example, between *2 Samuel*, which says the Lord commanded King David to "number the people of Israel",<sup>15</sup> and *1 Chronicles*, which says, it was Satan, not the Lord, who issued the command.<sup>16</sup> What account would they give of scientific absurdities such as that of a six day creation, the fixity of species, and the world wide flood (an event that some biblical genealogists calculate as occurring on the 27 February 2267 BC, an event that, as Australian geologist Ian Plimer points out, was "spitefully ignored" by the Egyptians of the time<sup>17</sup>)? I simply don't know what their answers would be. They proclaim inerrancy as a general doctrine without considering its specific applications.

Yet there are several ploys to which they could resort.

They could admit that the *Bible--as we now have it--*does indeed contain some errors of mathematics, logic, cosmology, geology and history but insist that they arise from corruptions of some lost *original manuscripts* that God first communicated inerrantly to the scribes. They could avail themselves, as Alston seems to, of a distinction between those parts of scripture that are inerrant and those that aren't--without saying where the line should be drawn, of course! But the questions would still remain: Which parts of the *Bible*, if any, are true and which are not? And who, if not some error prone human, is supposed to decide?

They could take recourse to figurativism. That was Saint Augustine's ploy when dealing with Christian ignoramuses who spurned the science of his day. He wrote:

Often a non-Christian knows something about the earth, the heavens, and other parts of the world, about the motions of the stars and even

their sizes and distances, . . . and this knowledge he holds with certainty from reason and experience. It is thus offensive and disgraceful for an unbeliever to hear a Christian talk nonsense about such things, claiming that what he is saying is based in Scripture.<sup>18</sup>

Augustine might well have been speaking about the defenders of today's so-called "Scientific Creationism." In his view they would deserve to be laughed to scorn for what he calls their "utterly foolish and obviously untrue statements." Augustine would turn in his grave were he to have heard nineteenth century Philip Gosse claim that God put the fossils in place so as to "test our faith."<sup>19</sup> He'd turn again if he heard the recent Creationist claim that God created the universe just a few thousand years ago with light already on its way from the distant stars. And were Augustine still around, he might even join me in pointing out that this sort of ploy makes God a great deceiver, not just a great designer.

But figurativism poses grave problems. If passages that are literally false were supposed to be interpreted allegorically, why didn't God put them in innocuous allegorical form in the first place?

This poses a difficulty for Peter van Inwagen, for example.

Peter's excuse for God's saying falsely that he'd created the universe in the time and manner recounted in *Genesis Ch. 1* is that God only had two choices. Either he could give this sort of simplified account, one that would be intelligible to the prescientific people with whom he was communicating, or he could give a detailed scientific account, one that would have left everyone baffled until late in the twentieth century. Now Peter is a very bright guy. So I don't quite know who to credit with a paucity of imagination: him or God.

For myself, I have no difficulty coming up with a version of the creation story that would be both intelligible to prescientific minds and amenable to interpretation in the light of current scientific understanding. Here it is:

In the beginning, God created a great ball of fire. From the fire, in time, came the heavens and a multitude of stars. Among the stars was our sun, circled about by many planets including our own earth. And from the waters and the clay in the earth there grew the seeds of all life. In time these seeds sprouted into many different forms. Some grew into plants. Some grew into animals. And others remained so small that the eye of man could not see them. As the acorn becomes the oak, so many of the earliest plants and animals begat new forms of plants and animals. And as the oak tree reaches out its branches, so these new forms of life reached out their branches in many directions. In time, many of these branches died leaving their skeletons in the rocks. Yet many continued to branch out unto this day. From the earliest seeds of life there arose, at the tips of the branches, the fruit of today: the grasses and crops of the fields, the beasts that feed thereon, and man

who feeds on both. And as the blink of an eye is to the life-span of many generations of men, so is the life-span of many generations of men to the time that hath passed since the seeds of life arose on the face of the earth. And God was content with all that had grown from the great ball of fire he had created. For all had gone as he had planned and it needed not his further help or guidance.

My story, unlike God's, wouldn't have led to the condemnation of Giordano Bruno, burned at the stake for suggesting our solar system isn't the only one. It wouldn't have led to the condemnation of Galileo, held under house arrest for supporting Copernican cosmology. It wouldn't have led to the condemnation of Darwin, whose name is still anathema to inerrantist know-nothings. It wouldn't have led to the anti-intellectual, anti-scientific dogmas of fundamentalist Jews, Christians, and Muslims. It wouldn't have led to the benighted attitudes that today threaten to dismantle the Enlightenment and take us back to the Dark Ages.

If God had all eternity within which to compose his story and still got it so wrong, why did I need less than hour to come up with a trouble-free version?

Didn't God know that most of his readers would construe his words literally? If so, he's not omniscient. Or didn't he care about their misunderstandings? If so, he's not perfectly good. Or didn't he have the linguistic competence to say what he meant? If so, he's not all-powerful.

These days most liberal Jews, Christians, and Muslims don't believe anything like God's story of creation.

Their reasoning isn't just that there's no evidence for the truth of his story. It's that if God's story were true, then there should be heaps of evidence for its truth, that such evidence hasn't turned up, and that there's overwhelming scientific evidence for its falsity. Additionally, many now realise that the *Bible's* creation stories were modelled on earlier creation myths, man-made myths not divine revelations.

But how about the biblical stories of Moses and the exodus? And of the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus? Are these any more deserving of our credence?

For reasons far more elaborate than those I can sketch here, I think not.

Consider, first, the case of Moses and the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt. The biblical book of *Exodus* tells us that the children of Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt for 430 years before escaping through the sea and wandering around in the Sinai desert for 40 years. Yet the sort of evidence that a rational person might reasonably expect to find were this story

true is entirely absent. The story is told in an ahistorical way: no dates, for instance, and no identification of which pharaoh was supposed to let them go. Egyptian historians, remarkable for the details they recorded of important personages and events, have nothing to say about any of these events or about the disasters the *Bible* says then befell them. Archaeologists can find no trace of more than a million people living in Egypt or the Sinai way back then, whenever "then" was. What's more, contemporary Israeli archaeologists like Israel Finkelstein have concluded that the whole scenario is a mischievous fable. The Hebrews didn't come into the land of Canaan from the land of Egypt. Rather, they were high-country Canaanite tribes who gradually took over the rest of Canaan, tribes whose main contacts with Egyptians were limited to the period when Egypt occupied their land rather than they theirs. As for the person of Moses, grand hero of the *Torah*: research shows his story to be modelled on much older myths about figures such as Bacchus, Prometheus, and Sargon.

"Was there ever such a person as Moses?" asked Voltaire, a deist of prodigious scholarship and critical intellect. His conclusion? That the biblical god's story of Moses and the exodus is both "absurd and barbarous."<sup>20</sup>

I concur. It is pure myth. But it isn't a harmless one. Fundamentalist Jews cite it as warrant for their cruel and barbarous occupation of Palestine, the Greater Israel the *Bible* says God gave them. And Palestinians suffer for it unspeakably as I speak.

How about the so-called historical Jesus? Once more the stories--for there are four different and inconsistent ones--are curiously bereft of a solid historical setting. We don't know the dates for Jesus' birth or death or any of the events that supposedly took place during his life. Was he born when Herod was king, in 7 BC perhaps? Or was he born 14 years later at the time when Augustus Caesar commanded Cyrenius to carry out a census for tax purposes? *Matthew's* gospel says the former; *Luke's*, the latter. Why didn't Josephus or any other contemporary record the massacre of the infants that Herod purportedly carried out after learning of Jesus' birth? Why didn't Seneca or the elder Pliny record the worldwide darkness that attended Jesus' death? Why did none of the more than sixty secular historians and chroniclers who lived between 10 and 100 AD record any of the deeds of this God-man? Why wasn't it until some sixty to ninety years after his birth that sketchy tales of his career were told by the pseudonymous authors of the four gospels? Why didn't Jesus write his own autobiography telling his story straight from the horse's mouth as it were? If he was God incarnate and had a care for the future of mankind in this world, not just in some kingdom yet to come, why didn't he make permanent contributions to science and medicine, for example, rather than putting obscurantist barriers in the way of understanding phenomena like mental illness? If he really existed in flesh and blood, why did so many early Christians--the Docetists--believe he was nothing more than a ghost or apparition? If he really was God incarnate, why did it take a majority vote of the Council of Nicea in 325 AD to settle his status? Why is the Jesus

myth modelled on countless other myths of dying-and-rising-again deities such as Osiris, Adonis, Tammuz, Odin, and Mithras?

Ask your self enough of these questions about what it would be reasonable to expect to be the case, yet isn't, and you'll see for yourself the force of my CURE arguments for his non-existence: my cumulative case from unfulfilled rational expectations.

"Was there an historical Jesus?" Albert Schweitzer asked the question in his *Quest for the Historical Jesus* (1922).<sup>21</sup> But an answer will elude us unless and until we're given clear criteria as to what would even *count* as a positive answer. If you ask me whether there once was some ordinary man--a travelling magician, perhaps, or the character depicted in C. K. Stead's delightful novel *My Name was Judas*--who lived around that time and about whom the myths gradually grew, I'm agnostic. But if you ask me whether a miracle-worker existed who fills the bill of the *Bible* story, I'm confident the answer is no. About the historical existence of *that* Jesus, I'm confidently atheistic. Apparently, the *Talmud* records the life and death of a man whose description resembles that of the biblical Jesus. But that Jesus--Jesus Ben Pandira--was hung from a tree on the eve of Passover during the reign of Alexander Jannaeus about 100 BC. I leave it to those who still think they might establish the historicity of Jesus to say whether Ben Pandira might count as the historical person they're looking for.<sup>22</sup>

I'm not saying anything very new, of course. Deist such as Voltaire, Thomas Jefferson, and Thomas Paine said it before. The human mind, Paine wrote, has been "degraded" by believing in such a god.<sup>23</sup>

The intellectual credentials of the pagan gods, I said earlier, turned out to be abysmal. The same holds of the intellectual credentials of the biblical god. We have the best of grounds, drawn from reason and experience, to dismiss that god's main claims as scientifically and historically fraudulent. Were God to submit the Holy Scriptures as part of his C.V., to any appointments committee who did their homework, they'd dismiss him as a charlatan. Sad, then, that over half the world's population<sup>24</sup> has appointed him CEO in the citadel of their belief.

How about the moral credentials of the biblical god? They are worse by far than those of the Huitzilopochtli of paganism. Worse even than those of Satan, biblical personification of evil.

Why this harsh judgement? Answer: God provided the grounds for it in his C.V.

For those who've never read it or who, having read it, have forgotten or turned a blind eye to its contents, I offer a few reminders.

First, this god not only appropriates to himself the pagan gods' discredited role as direct cause of natural phenomena such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, lightning, plagues, and famines. This god also boasts of repeatedly of using them to injure, maim, starve, drown, and in other ways kill off millions upon millions of people ("every living thing on the face of the earth", according to *Genesis*). Disease and disaster are God's weapons of mass destruction. Or so, in effect, he tells us.<sup>25</sup>

Second, this god, in his role as Commander-in-Chief of his chosen people, and role model for his followers, orders the slaughter, without compassion, of hundreds of thousands of women, children, and suckling babes; condones slavery and human sacrifice by fire; threatens to make people cannibalise their parents, husbands or wives, and their children; threatens, too, to have unborn children ripped out of their mothers' wombs; and seems to relish the prospect.

Third, this god, in the person of his son, Jesus, envisions the vilest of all possible fates for the majority of the human race: torture of infinite duration in the fires of hell.

For the record, there are at least thirteen passages in *Matthew* alone in which Jesus talks about the fate of those who'll go to hell--a fate that he describes as "eternal", as "fiery", as a place of "unquenchable fire", as a place where there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth." St. Paul, in *Second Thessalonians*, looks forward to the time when, in his words, "the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God".<sup>26</sup> And John of Patmos, author of *Revelation*, paints a picture of hell in all its voyeuristic obscenity when he tells us that all whose names weren't written in the book of life--all, that is, whom Jesus knew "from the beginning"<sup>27</sup>would not believe in him--would be "cast into the lake of fire"<sup>28</sup>a place where all non-believers will, in his words, "be tormented with burning sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb [i.e., Jesus himself, please note], and the smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever and ever."<sup>29</sup>

Is it any wonder that Christians who take God at his word have tortured themselves with fear about their own eternal prospects, have burned heretics at the stake so as to save their (the heretics, that is) souls from eternal perdition, or have dashed infants' brains out on the stones so that they wouldn't have a chance of becoming non-believers? Is it any wonder that televangelists are able to use the fear of hellfire to bring money into their coffers?

How do God's depictions of his own character square with the belief that he's perfectly good? Or that he's the source of what some call "The Moral Law"? They don't.

Think of the impact this God could have on you and me if we were to comply with biblical morality. Think, especially, of the long list of offences--at least 34--for which the *Old Testament* prescribes the death penalty. These include being a stubborn and rebellious son,<sup>30</sup> hitting or cursing one's father and mother,<sup>31</sup> desecrating the Sabbath,<sup>32</sup> being a woman who can't prove she was a virgin prior to marriage,<sup>33</sup> being a woman who didn't protest loudly enough when she was being raped,<sup>34</sup> being a blasphemer,<sup>35</sup> being an adulterer,<sup>36</sup> worshipping some other gods,<sup>37</sup> and being a homosexual.<sup>38</sup> God's recommended penalty? Stoning, usually.

Who today, you may ask, takes this sort of moral primitivism seriously? Well, many Muslim fundamentalists certainly do--the Taliban, for instance. And so do many Christian fundamentalists--the Reconstructionists, for instance. Comprising a sizable and increasingly influential proportion of the Southern Baptist Convention--itself the most potent force for evangelical Christianity--the Reconstructionists, like their Muslim brethren, demand their country become a theocracy and unflinchingly acknowledge that implementing God's commands would inevitably result in the death of tens of millions of their fellow citizens. And--God help us!--they have links with the Bush White House. And the right wing of the Republican Party.

It's not just the ultra-fundamentalists of theistic religions that take God's precepts seriously. Even the liberal branch of the Christian church--as represented by the Church of England and its Episcopalian offshoot--are troubled enough by God's word to agonise over some of them, what he has to say about homosexuals in particular: that they are an "abomination" who should be killed in this world and spend the next in hell. Hence the prospect of another great schism in Christianity, and the pathetic excuse by gay bishop, Bishop Gene Robinson that the church is "still trying to figure out God's will" on the subject. Robinson and Archbishop Rowan Williams (who's on the other side of the debate), should read the Bible. It reported God's will long ago.

Has God changed his mind about any of this? If so, he's kept it to himself. Yet Alston claims God still communicates with "sincere Christians". Could it be that all those sincere Jews, Christians, and Muslims who--for about two thousand years--have gone on crusades with God's word on their lips, are listening to themselves, not God. Why don't any ever report having heard God say clearly "Stop! You've got me wrong."

The biblical god isn't what Saint Anselm thought he was: that than which no greater, no more morally perfect, can be conceived. Out of his own mouth God condemns himself as that than which no viler, no more evil, can be conceived.

"God is love" is a sick joke. The pleasantry, "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you", is little more than propaganda to cover up God's true nature. The Golden Rule we can applaud. But it's a bit rich, don't

you think, coming from the mouth of someone who would send most of us to hell? No moral reciprocity there!

The god of the Bible is a dangerous deity and deserves to die. That is to say, belief in the biblical god is dangerous to one's mental and moral health and deserves to fade from memory. Dangerous, also, to the future of mankind.

Turning in revulsion from the biblical god, let's now take a look at some of the other supernatural entities on whom the title "God" is bestowed.

### **Other supernatural gods.**

Theologians and philosophers of religion often distance themselves from the biblical god by talking more abstractly about what they call "the god of theism" or "the god of deism". Putting aside arguments from revelation, they offer arguments from reason and experience for the existence of a designer-creator God.

When presented in their usual philosophical garb, their arguments seldom have much appeal. But get the pundits of science to promote them, and give them media publicity, and the chattering classes are all agog to hear the latest news about God. "Did you hear that Francis S. Collins (head of the Human Genome Project) recently called science "the language of God"?"<sup>39</sup> "Did you know that Oxford mathematician John C. Lennox, just last year (2007) argued that it's theism not atheism that sits most comfortably with the findings of science?"<sup>40</sup>

I'm going to take a quick look at a trio of design and creation arguments in their fresh new garb, and show how shoddy they are. All of them, I believe, rely on naive and flawed conceptions of chance and probability.

First up is so-called Intelligent Design theory and microbiologist Michael Behe's argument from irreducible complexity. It's not worth much attention. Others much more able than am I--including the likes of Francis Collins, a theistic evolutionist--have already despatched it and published its autopsy.

"Not empirical science, but religious argument," other scientists have said. "Not good argument but bad--a spruced up version of the argument from ignorance, the god of the gaps argument. An argument whose frailty has been demonstrated repeatedly by filling in gaps of the sort Behe predicted would forever remain open. An argument that relies on a misbegotten notion of chance. An argument which, if sound, would lead to the conclusion that God is a tinkerer lacking the ability to set things up efficiently at the outset."

ID brings God in to explain how complex life forms can arise from simpler ones. But how did those simple life forms arise in the first place?

This is where a second argument for God is wheeled out: an argument from the improbability of biogenesis.

Proponents begin from the assumption that, on a naturalistic view, life can only have begun as a result of "purely chance" or "random" chemical reactions. They then claim that the probability of all necessary elements coming together at random in the right sequence to form something like a simple protein--let alone the first self-replicating organism--is mind-bogglingly small. They say that this probability is smaller by far than the probability of a monkey randomly hitting the 26 keys on an old typewriter and coming up with a page of Shakespeare; smaller than the probability (as calculated by astronomer Sir Fred Hoyle) of a blind man solving Rubik's cube while making one random move every second; and smaller than the probability of a tornado passing through a junkyard containing the bits and pieces of an airplane and leaving a Boeing 747 in its wake, fully assembled and ready to fly. Finally, they flourish the conclusion that the occurrence of such a chance event since life first arose would be nothing short of miraculous, and that biogenesis could be brought about only by the intervention of God.

But let's not be dazzled by all these mathematical fireworks.

By way of logical analogy, consider the beginnings of life for any given human individual. Start with the assumption that each of us begins life as a result of random chemical interactions between the 3 billion or so base pairs that make up our 20,000 or so genes. Add in the components of our junk DNA (about 97% of the total). Factor in also the components of mitochondrial DNA. Keep in mind, further, that a typical adult individual's body is made up of about 100 trillion cells, and that one's brain alone contains approximately 100 billion neurons each of which has about 7,000 synaptic connections with other neurons and that the brain even of a three-year-old child has about 1,000 trillion synapses. Now let's ask a good mathematician to calculate the a priori probability of all the foregoing ingredients being randomly arranged as to produce a healthy newborn child. My guess is that any mathematician crazy enough to go along with the assumption that all these factors are independent, would find the probability to be so "mind-boggling small" that a nine month gestation period would fall astronomically short of the time allegedly required to get all the arrangements right. The probability of any given individual's make up being what it is would be nothing short of a miracle. Another procreative act of the Holy Ghost, perhaps?

I doubt whether even the most credulous creationist would accept the reasoning of this parallel argument. The fact is that no one who knows the slightest bit of embryological theory would ever accept the original supposition that human life results from merely random chemical reactions.

Likewise, no one who knows the slightest bit of evolutionary theory would ever accept the supposition that biogenesis is to be attributed solely to

mere chance. Darwin and his successors have never said, nor are they committed to, anything remotely like this. Chance may well have played a role. But so did the laws of physics and chemistry.

The probabilistic argument against naturalistic explanations of biogenesis is a fraud. We have good scientific reasons to suppose that the origins and make up of a human embryo do not result merely from random throws of our prenatal DNA dice. Equally, we have good scientific reasons to suppose that the origins and make up of the first living organism did not result merely from random throws of the prebiotic molecular dice.

Arguably, if "chance" is involved in either case, it is only in that sense of the word in which the "chance" outcome of a particular game of roulette is a function, not of a breakdown of the laws of Newtonian physics, but of our usual ignorance of the precise circumstances--the initial conditions--to which they apply. I say "usual ignorance" because, as Thomas A. Bass's book [\*The Eudaemonic Pie\*](#) (known in the U.K. as *The Newtonian Casino*) demonstrates, players who make inroads on their ignorance by feeding the appropriate data into a roulette simulation on a computer can substantially increase the probability of their winning.<sup>41</sup> Probability estimates are, or should be, sensitive to information about the initial conditions of the relevant system at any given time. Yet this sort of informational input is lacking in a priori estimates of the probability of biogenesis.

But how did the initial conditions and laws of the physical universe happen to be such as to produce a planet like ours that is life-friendly?

One answer goes like this. A priori, we'd have to judge that the probability of them being what they happen to be is infinitesimally low--so low that the best explanation for them being that way is to suppose that God set them up that way to as to execute his plan for the universe. This is the essence of the third probabilistic argument for the existence of a supernatural being, an argument that's sometimes referred to as the argument from fine-tuning.

This argument can be dressed up in terms of an awesome array of evidence from contemporary physics and cosmology. The details needn't concern us. It suffices to summarise thus:

Had there been complete symmetry between matter and antimatter in the early moments after the Big Bang they would have annihilated each other and the universe would have consisted of nothing but pure radiation, so that galaxies, stars, planets, and people would never have existed.

Had the total mass and energy in the universe, or the strength of the gravitational constant varied by the minutest fraction, its rate of expansion wouldn't have allowed galaxies, stars and planets to exist today: if any faster

they wouldn't have been able to form; if any slower the whole universe would already have collapsed.

We can envisage a whole array of universes each differing from the all others in the precise values of their physical constants. So the probability that any particular one of them would turn out to be our universe is extremely low. That our universe happens to exist is a fact that balances on what Collins calls "a knife edge of improbability."<sup>42</sup> The best explanation for our specific universe being actualised is that it was selected from that vast ensemble by some being not in the universe but somehow "outside" it, a supernatural being such as God. It was God, that is, who selected a universe whose parameters were so finely tuned that it would eventually produce life and the likes of us. And--as the Anthropic Principle trivially reminds us--if our universe hadn't been selected, we wouldn't be here to talk about it.

The flaws in this argument should be evident.

By way of logical analogy, imagine a worldwide lottery in which every member of the world's current population of just over 6.6 billion is a player who puts in a dollar apiece. Every person is assigned a ball with their own individual number inscribed on it; the balls are placed in a giant lotto machine; and after numerous revolutions, just one ball drops out. Clearly the number of different physical parameters for each of the balls--its precise position and momentum, for instance--at the start of the process is enormously large and the probability of my ball being the winning one is incredibly low. Yet someone is going to win. Suppose it's me. I win 6.6 billion dollars. Does the improbability of my winning make it correspondingly probable that the whole thing was fixed? In particular, does it make it correspondingly probable that the whole thing was fixed or fine-tuned by God? I don't think so.

An even graver problem confronts the fine-tuning argument. It rests on a naive account of probability. Let's distinguish between two disjoint ways of estimating the probability of some event or state of affairs occurring: estimates made purely a priori (in the absence of any empirical evidence whatever), and estimates made a posteriori (in the light of all the pertinent empirical evidence available).

It is a priori estimates that yield a probability rating of "astronomically low" for my winning the worldwide lottery. Indeed, as estimated in this sort of way, the occurrence of any event whatsoever--including you being precisely where you are at the moment of reading this sentence--is equally near-zero.

But suppose we were to make the estimate a posteriori--in full knowledge of all the initial conditions obtaining at the lottery drawing--then (as Thomas Bass's book demonstrates) our probability estimate could in principle approach zero for a given person or one (certainty) for another.

The problem with the fine-tuning argument is that its proponents infer the high probability of God as a Divine Fine-tuner from the purely a priori improbability of the initial conditions of the universe, not from a posteriori evidence pertaining to such states of affairs. So what might our estimates be were we to have such evidence? Given that, as Hume pointed out, we don't have evidence of gods in general creating universes, we can only conclude that the probability any god whatever creating our universe is astronomically low. Worse still, as we've already noted, the success rate of supernatural explanations for any natural events whatever is exactly zero. Scientists are supposed to know that. Isn't it irrational then for so many of them to invoke the existence of something supernatural as the probable cause of the natural state of affairs that obtained at the Big Bang? The existence of anything supernatural is just as astronomically improbable on a posteriori grounds as it is a priori improbable.

Anyone who still takes the fine-tuning argument seriously must face three further problems.

First, if you think that God fine-tuned the universe so as to bring us into existence, why did he not create us right at the outset in something like the way that the *Bible* envisages? Why did he let time grind on for something like 14 billion years to achieve his end? If you believe in a god of unlimited ability who intends to create us and bring us to a belief in his existence so that he can communicate with us, which scenario would you think more probable: that of the *Bible*, or that of scientific cosmology? On the face of it, the *Bible* story is more plausible by far. Yet that scenario is demonstrably false. Once more our rational expectations of what such a god would do are not fulfilled.

Second, if you accept the fine-tuning argument for God's existence, then you're logically obliged to reject both the other probabilistic arguments: the ID argument from irreducible complexity, and the argument from the improbability of biogenesis. Both these other arguments say that God didn't fine-tune the universe well enough at the outset to ensure the desired outcome. The fine-tuning argument says that he did.

Now that means that if you accept the fine-tuning argument, then you've got to allow that the track record of naturalism is unblemished. God wasn't needed in order to create complex organisms from simple ones. Or the first living things from non-living. So why, at this point in the explanatory quest, would you want to invoke a kind of explanation that you've never thought necessary before? Do you really think your understanding is enhanced by thus hazarding a giant leap beyond the known into the unknown, beyond the natural into the supernatural, beyond the scrutable into the inscrutable, beyond the comprehensible into the incomprehensible?

This brings me to a third point. Would attributing the fine-tuning of the physical constants to the will of God really constitute any kind of explanation at all? If I, by way of answering the question why I won the lottery, were to

reply "Because it was God's will", would you count that reply as providing a genuine explanation? I doubt it. This is a pseudo-explanation: it could be provided no matter who won. Similarly, if someone, by way of answering the question as to why our universe alone out of all the vast array of possible ones with different physical constants is the one that exists, were to reply "Because God wanted it that way", we'd realize that it, too, is a pseudo-explanation since it could be provided no matter which universe he'd chosen. And if we were to press the search for explanations still further by asking "Why did God want it that way?" we'd get no response other than something about God's inscrutable will. In short, the regress of explanations would come to a dead end. So why embark on such a search beyond the natural in the first place? Try venturing any further, and you've got no explanation at all, just the incantation of an empty form of words.

The intellectual case for believing in God as the designer of the universe is bankrupt.

And the same holds when we turn to moral considerations.

Any fine-tuning argument must take into account not only the bare fact that our universe is life-conducive. The Principle of Total Evidence demands that it also take into account the fact that, as Hobbes pointed out, the life of God's creatures is "poor, nasty, brutish, and short"; must take into account, that is, what philosophers of religion call the problem of natural evil. Why would God fine-tune the universe so as to subject us to all the viruses, bacteria, and parasites, that threaten us, causing illness, suffering, and in many cases, death? Why would he beset us with diseases like cancer and Alzheimers? Why did his fine-tuning of our planet, yield all those natural disasters--all those "acts of God", as they're aptly called--that take their toll on our lives: earthquakes, tsunamis, cyclones, floods, and the rest?

Mark Twain, in his posthumously published *Letters from the Earth*, put all these designer-creator gods into moral perspective. Referring to disaster and disease--what I called God's weapons of mass destruction--as the main battalions of "the Creator's Grand Army" marching against us with God, their Commander-in-Chief, leading them, he wrote:

The Christian begins with this straight proposition, this definite proposition, this inflexible and uncompromising proposition: *God is all-knowing and all-powerful.*

This being the case, nothing can happen without his knowing beforehand that it is going to happen; nothing happens without his permission; nothing can happen that he chooses to prevent.

That is definite enough, isn't it? It makes the Creator distinctly responsible for everything that happens, doesn't it?

Twain levelled his charge against the Christian god, the self-incriminating god of the *Bible*. But he could well have levelled it against any

designer-creator god that humans have imagined. If any such god were to exist he'd deserve to be tried and condemned for crimes against humanity.

So I have a couple of final questions for you. Do you look forward, as I do, to a day when *all* the gods have gone to their graves--a day when a second Memorial Service can be held and all belief in them expunged forever? If not, why not. God's grave diggers, morality and science, have already dug the grave.

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<sup>1</sup> H. L. Mencken, "Memorial Service", 1922. His list totals 190 gods in all, but one of them is Allah who doesn't count as pagan.

<sup>2</sup> John C. Lennox, *God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* Oxford, Lion Hudson, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Terry Pratchett, *Small Gods*, Victor Gollanz, 1992. In his words, "what gods need is belief, and what humans want is gods."

<sup>4</sup> Alternatively, one could perhaps think of it as a simple title.

<sup>5</sup> Estimated by the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> The biblical god is believed in by Jews to the extent that their holy scripture, the *Tanakh*, makes up over three quarters of the Bible. He is believed in by Christians in its entirety since the last quarter of the Bible comprises the *New Testament* revelation of God through his son Jesus. And he is believed in by Muslims despite the fact that they think the Bible in need of supplementation by their own holy scripture, the *Q'ran*.

<sup>7</sup> That is the essence of what we call Theism. It is distinct from Deism, the mere belief in a supreme being who created the universe but, without revealing himself to us, thereafter left it to its own devices.

<sup>8</sup> *A Survey of the Old Testament*, p. 22.

<sup>9</sup> That the Hebrew Bible, for instance, was written by four or five authors between 1000 and 400 BCE and that it was based on much older traditions. Or that the New Testament was composed by a variety of authors, many unknown, between about 50 and 110 CE.

<sup>10</sup> Alvin Plantinga, "When Faith and Reason Clash: Evolution and the Bible," *Christian Scholar's Review*, Vol. XXI, No. 1, (September, 1991), p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Alvin Plantinga, *ibid* p.12.

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- <sup>12</sup> Peter van Inwagen, "Genesis and Evolution," in *Reasoned Faith*, ed. Eleonore Stump, Cornell University Press, 1993, p.97.
- <sup>13</sup> William Alston, "Divine-Human Dialogue and the Nature of God," *Faith and Philosophy*, (January 1985, p.6).
- <sup>14</sup> *2 Chronicles* 4:2
- <sup>15</sup> *2 Samuel* 24:1
- <sup>16</sup> *1 Chronicles* 21:1
- <sup>17</sup> Ian Plimer, *Telling Lies for God and Mammon*,
- <sup>18</sup> Saint Augustine, "The Literal Meaning of Genesis" (*de Genesi ad Litteram*).
- <sup>19</sup> Phillip Gosse, *Omphalos*.
- <sup>20</sup> Voltaire, *The Important Examination of the Holy Scriptures*, Ch. 2.
- <sup>21</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *Quest for the Historical Jesus*, 1922.
- <sup>22</sup> Maybe Jesus Ben Pandira is the Jesus of the "other gospel" that was repudiated by St. Paul.
- <sup>23</sup> Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason*, Part 3.
- <sup>24</sup> For purposes of this estimate, I include the followers of all three Abrahamic religions.
- <sup>25</sup> See *Isaiah* and *Lamentations*.
- <sup>26</sup> *2 Thessalonians* 1:8-9
- <sup>27</sup> *John* 3:18.
- <sup>28</sup> *Revelation* 20:15
- <sup>29</sup> *Revelation* 14:10-11.
- <sup>30</sup> Deuteronomy 21:18-21
- <sup>31</sup> Exodus 21:17, and Leviticus 20:8.
- <sup>32</sup> Exodus 31:14
- <sup>33</sup> Deuteronomy 22:20-21
- <sup>34</sup> Deuteronomy 22:23-24
- <sup>35</sup> Leviticus 24:16
- <sup>36</sup> Leviticus 20:10-12
- <sup>37</sup> Deuteronomy 13:6-9
- <sup>38</sup> Leviticus 20:13
- <sup>39</sup> Francis S. Collins, *The Language of God*, New Your, Free Press 2006.
- <sup>40</sup> John C. Lennox, *God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* Oxford, Lion Hudson, 2007.
- <sup>41</sup> A reviewer for *The New York Times* (as quoted on the above website) described Bass's book thus: "The story of how a group of young 1970's computer enthusiasts, physicists and sunny California intellectual riffraff together developed a complete microcomputer cum communications system for predicting, using Newtonian mechanics, where on a roulette wheel the bouncing ball would halt. Written in the style of electronic gonzo journalism, the book shuttles back and forth between the group's Santa Cruz commune and the Las Vegas scene."