

The background of the entire image is a close-up of two hands clasped together, with the fingers interlaced. The hands are positioned in the center, with one hand slightly above the other. The background is a soft, out-of-focus sunset or sunrise over a body of water, with warm golden and orange tones. The text is overlaid on this image.

the ^{real} God
your parents totally missed

by Dr. D. Michael Hentrich

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D. Michael Hentrich

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All referenced passages of Scripture from the New International Version of the Holy Bible (licensed by Biblica, aka The International Bible Society).

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Introduction

*How presumptuous! Whose parents are you talking about?
You don't even know my parents!*

I get it. However, when you finish reading this short book, you'll see that I'm talking to you no matter who or what kind of parents you had. If they didn't believe in God, I'm talking to you. If they believed in a non-Christian faith tradition, I'm still talking to you. If they were strong, Bible-believing Baptists, Pentecostals or Catholics, I'm definitely talking to you. It doesn't matter. The conclusions we will draw are what is important and they are universal.

You may have noticed that our second, and even bigger, presumption is that some kind of intelligent origin of the universe does exist. However modern science is on our side. Contrary to most of what you may have heard or been taught based on antiquated understanding, twenty-first-century science continues to move toward that very conclusion. The implications of quantum physics, over-the-top complexity of genetic encoding, and the now calculated mind-boggling mathematical improbabilities of random accidental mutations as a viable mechanism for the appearance of

new species of life have made self-driven evolution no more than a fading hope for atheists and humanists everywhere. We are far from having all the answers but more and more scientific studies are documenting this. Therefore, we will not spend time debating the question of God's existence.

Rather we will stay up-close and personal and explore major, established, traditional views of God, the backbone of what your parents and grandparents have believed, and discover and debunk 13 major fallacies. At the conclusion of our brief journey, we will arrive at a refreshingly more plausible and realistic understanding of God than you ever thought possible.

Most historical efforts to understand God have resulted in descriptions which closely resembled ourselves, with all of our human strengths and weaknesses. Greek gods, Hindu gods and others tended to shadow man's own greed and lusts for power and control, and also his addictions to self-centered jealousy, resentment, and anger. These gods reflected both the light and the darkness of human experience.

Did they describe the real, living God? That's the question before us. How can we know? Direct, empirical data about God does not, and may never, exist. However, we *can* come to some profound new conclusions by fairly and effectively dissecting and critiquing the deductive reasoning that has gone before us and reevaluating and reformulating the data. That sounds like

something that should take 500 pages of dry, in-depth scholarly research. However, the good news is, it does not. Even though the arguments have huge implications and can radically enhance your life, we will keep it simple. We desperately need to undertake this task. It's long overdue. That's what this book is all about.

The Judeo-Christian tradition will be our focus and the Bible will be the book used to argue the points here because other books of Scripture such as the Holy Quran or the Hindu Vedas simply do not try to illuminate the personal and heartistic side of God in the same way the Bible does. Other inspired scriptures offer precious timeless wisdom and truth. However, human life is more than a quest for intellectual truths. It's imbued with emotional content. Our search will not be for esoteric platitudes but for a perspective that resonates with our entire human nature and being. We will be seeking not only the intellectual mind of God but also God's soul and heart.

While we will see that the Bible tried to reveal that side of God, the message has been obscured beyond recognition. We will find that past generations have manipulated and distorted the meaning of the Bible so much that it has become in some ways a hindrance to our efforts to understand the real living God. The fault lies not as much in the Bible as in what well-meaning people have done with it. Mired in centuries-old doctrines and some inspired preachers' spontaneous 'epiphanies-on-the-fly,' recent and past

generations have turned the Bible into a mysterious book. Some doctrinal perspectives have blinded believers from seeing what was really there. The forest disappeared in the trees. The most unfortunate consequence of all this was that God became unholy, irrational and conflicted, the Bible became inconsistent, and Jesus became surreal.

The God Your Parents Totally Missed hits the most prominent of these areas and issues head-on. No punches are pulled. Doctrine will not be permitted to interpret the Biblical text. We will not shy away from the ‘untouchable’ topics. We will forge a path through the Bible like a machete-wielding pioneer. No question is off-limits. No area is too sacred to leave unquestioned. However, consistent and undeniable truth will be valued and respected throughout. This sets the stage for a boat-rocking experience.

If you cherish your grandma’s child-like perspectives of simple faith, then this book may upset you. However, if you are a critically-minded truth-seeker, willing to put all past concepts to the test, then you will feast on this short book. As you will see, an entirely different, new and refreshing image of the real living God will emerge; one your parents and grandparents *totally missed*. Let’s dig in...

1. A God of magic or science?

A Christian professor once said to me, “*God doesn’t have to make sense or be logical. He’s God.*” I smiled and thought to myself, “*WOW! What kind of universe does this guy see when he looks around?*” I mean, what’s the basis of chemistry, physics, astronomy, mathematics, biology, etc. in explaining this gorgeous masterpiece of which we are all but a small part? If there is a God, it would seem that he’s the greatest and most rational and logical scientist of all.

A contemporary and popular Christian song says God is a “*miracle worker and way-maker.*” Jesus is said to have performed over thirty ‘miracles’. As a result, people tend to look to Jesus and God for ‘miracles,’ even on a daily basis. People have been groomed to think that this is what God wants to do; it’s what he’s all about. Miracles! Magic! After all, didn’t he split the Red Sea for Moses and his fellow Hebrews? Didn’t Jonah get swallowed by a whale? The list goes on and on. Some church marquees even advertise: ‘*Come inside and get your awaiting miracle.*’

The Bible begins and ends with miracles. There are dual stories

of the creation of the world. Many Christian people today still grip tenaciously with white knuckles to the belief that the world (universe) was actually created in six days. Why? Because that's what the Bible says. Never mind that there's a lot of metaphorical language in the Bible. Why didn't God cover his tracks and hide the fact that he actually took 13.7 billion years to evolve the universe and 4.5 billion years to evolve the earth? And never mind that the Bible's account of the six-day process puts the sun in the sky on the "*third day*," making the first two "*days*" an existential impossibility. Never mind any of it. *'The Bible says it and I believe it.'*

In reality, if you squint your eyes and relax your scientific expectations a bit, the description of the six "*days*" of creation can be imagined to bear some very vague resemblance to stages in the actual cosmic evolutionary processes that have led to where we are today. That's enough to give a few believers the goosebumps. But why have most insisted on being so black-and-white about it all? It seems we have decided that miracles and magic are more becoming of a God than elegant science, reason and law.

We are getting a pretty good handle on the physical laws of nature and how we can use them or abuse them. But, we have only begun to explore and understand spiritual laws that also seem to govern nature. By 'spiritual laws' I am referring to laws of nature which apply to the non-material, spiritual side of reality.

Of course, spiritual laws **do not exist** in the mind of skeptics. They try to claim that all scientifically inexplicable events recorded, not only in the Bible but in any other writings or experienced in contemporary life, are nothing more than misunderstood or misinterpreted electro-chemical-material phenomena, or simply mental delusions. But such efforts to materialize or dismiss these things can sometimes spiral down into foolishness and comical apologetics. Problems come when we try to understand and explain spiritual phenomena within the framework of physical laws.

Cynics wisely refuse to call such events a ‘miracle,’ but they also refuse to let go of their insistence that all of reality is merely material. There is far too much evidence to refute that claim. Raymond Moody studied people who ‘flat-lined’ on the operating table for an extended period of time and were later revived. He interviewed hundreds of these people at length and found that it was common for them to recount exactly what each person was doing in the operating room, exactly what was being said by whom and to whom, even in other parts of the hospital, etc. and all of this during the time when there was absolutely no brain activity whatsoever. Skeptics flat out refuse to entertain the possibility of spiritual phenomena here. It’s just categorical denial; a form of prejudice if you will. But when you try to explain this kind of phenomenon within physical laws, you simply cannot.

It is common for a person to sense that someone is looking at them from behind, even if that person is far away or almost out of sight. Is there a beam of energy emitting from the looker's eyes or mind, tickling the hair of the person being watched? We have not been able to find it. There is something spiritual going on. Mothers commonly sense the good or bad circumstances of their children, even when they are on the opposite side of the world. Can that be explained with physical laws? It is all wishful thinking on the part of die-hard absolute materialists.

Hindu mystics really can move physical objects with their minds. They really can do things that seem supernatural. Diseases really do get removed or healed by spiritual manipulations. They use spiritual laws that we do not recognize or know about. The spiritual really can affect the physical. In fact, the two cannot be separated. Everything physical has also a spiritual aspect; even your clothing and car. Loving an inanimate object will make it last longer and ignoring or despising it will hasten its decay.

The Secret Life of Plants by Peter Tompkins and Christopher Bird, as well as numerous other books, document that when we sincerely love plants they respond favorably and grow healthy and tall. Emoto Masaru in his best-selling book, *The Hidden Messages in Water*, documents with microscopic imagery how human thinking and emotions can alter the structure of water molecules. When we try to explain such phenomena by applying physical

laws, we fall short. We have to understand the spiritual laws that are being applied. It's just a realm of science that we are very unfamiliar with but which exists and waits to be explored.

Traditionally, when your parents and grandparents read in the Bible that the crucified Jesus reappeared and told his disciple Thomas to touch the wounds in his hands and side, and when he asked for food to eat, they again tried to understand these events by applying physical laws. Of course, that didn't work. Therefore it was considered a 'miracle.' The inconsistency is that many of the same people who have called this a 'miracle' also believe in angels, not because they have seen one, but because the same Bible talks of them 193 times. And, in one instance such a purely spiritual being is recorded as having fought with a physical person, dislocating his thigh bone.¹ On another occasion, two purely spiritual angels were said to have eaten a physical meal.²

I'm not asking you to believe that these events literally happened, but since they are recorded in the same Bible, then why all the mystery surrounding Jesus and Thomas? That's the inconsistency. Cross-referencing these obviously similar events and concluding that Thomas and the deceased Jesus simply shared a tangible but spiritual encounter has been off the table; not even considered. Why? If it actually happened, it may have been a very natural event; not a 'miracle' at all. Spiritual laws seem to be an unexplored realm of nature that we seriously need to investigate.

Quantum physics may be opening the door and giving us a glimpse into the spiritual side of reality. This relatively new science has already discovered 10 or more dimensions instead of the traditional three or four. It may one day make clear the dynamics of what we have long considered ‘miracles.’ It is this author’s opinion that maybe even God smiles sympathetically when we refer to very natural phenomena as ‘miracles.’

The very fact that God spent what humans perceive as 13.7 billion years evolving the universe tells us that he refuses to bypass the elegant laws of nature that he established and just do some hocus pocus to make it all happen quickly. Even though the Bible says “*to God a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day,*”³ it is still an incredibly long time in human terms. Where’s the so-called miracle? Science and its beautiful laws are the miracle, both spiritual laws as well as physical laws; not magic.

For many people, absolute materialism has become a non-spiritual religion. Unfortunately, some believers have followed a parallel path by defining the investigation of spiritual laws and phenomena as forbidden or evil.

Having said all that, there may be one ‘miracle’ that even God wants to see happen. The late Dr. Sun Myung Moon is quoted as saying that the greatest and only miracle that God wants to see is the transformation of each person from being selfish to being totally unselfish. It is not something that can be done with a pill or

a magic wand or even spiritual power. A person needs to grow their heart to become so altruistic and compassionate that selfishness becomes alien to him or her.

If that is true, maybe there still is such a thing as a ‘miracle,’ but not in the sense that your parents and grandparents thought.

2. The Divine Feminine

You have no doubt noticed that approximately half the human race is feminine. Fewer of us have also noticed that all references to Divine persons or beings in the Bible are masculine; that is if you read an English Bible. You would think this would have raised some questions in the minds of our parents and grandparents. It is the suspicion of this author that indeed it did raise questions for some people but perhaps they were too afraid to ask anyone about it and risk rocking the boat. Is God just masculine? If God contains no feminine attribute, where did all the femininity come from? Is there another feminine creator God? Can the man Jesus be a complete and sufficient role model for women, wives and mothers? There are many such issues which come to mind.

Volumes have been written about the Divine Feminine. They occupy entire shelves in bookstores and subcategories on Amazon®. The search for and belief in the Divine Feminine has been ongoing from the earliest of recorded history. For modern Roman Catholics, this hunger and quest is focused on Mother Mary. After all, she is considered by most Catholics to be the

‘Mother of God.’ For Japanese, it is worship of the female goddess Amaterasu-omikami. For Hindus, the Shakti tradition with its many feminine goddesses defines the godhead. Evidences of such feminine Hindu traditions date as far back as 8-9000 B.C. For Buddhists, a related branch of their faith is Tantric Buddhism, which reflects a strong influence from the Shakti traditions of Hinduism. For Greeks, it was Gaia who gave birth to the Titans and Cyclopes and many others, in addition to numerous other Greek goddesses.

Your Christian parents and grandparents probably believed in something called ‘rebirth.’ Fervent Christians commonly see themselves as ‘born anew’ or ‘born again.’ Jesus spoke of the need to be born of both water and ‘the spirit.’⁴ It is almost universally understood that this reference to ‘spirit’ means the Holy Spirit. So how can we understand this? What is this really saying to us?

For many people, rebirth was more of a feeling and a unique personal internal experience than a rational, explainable phenomena. In any case, it ranged from a simple commitment of faith to a watershed, life-changing experience. In spite of the broad range of definitions and experiences, we can conclude that it always had something to do with belief in Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

We can make some logical sense of this if we view Jesus and the Holy Spirit in the role of spiritual parents for the spiritual ‘rebirth’ of their spiritual children, i.e., Christian believers. This

would logically imply that Jesus serves in the role of their spiritual ‘father’, being a man and expressing the masculine nature of God, and that the Holy Spirit serves in the role of their spiritual ‘mother’, being a feminine expression of God. However, the catch is that the Bible always refers to the Holy Spirit as ‘he.’ Here is the snag. Virtually every human being that ever walked on the face of the earth was born of a ‘he’ and a ‘she,’ no matter what existential gender you might claim for yourself. This parental premise cannot apply if both Jesus and the Holy Spirit are ‘he.’ But further investigation reveals some reassuring good news about God that your parents and grandparents may have totally missed.

The Hebrew words which were translated into English as ‘Holy Spirit’ are Ruach HaKodesh, which literally means Holy Wind or soul. ‘Ha’ means ‘the’ and ‘Kodesh’ means ‘Holy.’ All Hebrew words are either masculine or feminine in gender and Ruach HaKodesh is feminine. This Holy Spirit was and is considered by Jewish people to be a feminine attribute of the one and only creator God, rather than one of three persons of a Christian trinitarian godhead. This means that no matter how many times you call the Holy Spirit ‘he’ in English, it is and was considered to be ‘she’ by those who knew Hebrew, and even now.

This can be easily argued by those of us who are culturally disadvantaged since expressions and actions of the Holy Spirit in the Bible are typically ‘feminine’ in nature. The Holy Spirit is

universally seen as the comforter, teacher, protector, healer, etc. Such attributes are commonly considered feminine. Thus, the good news is our earlier proposition that Jesus and the Holy Spirit serve in the roles of the masculine and feminine ‘spiritual parents’ to ‘born anew’ or ‘born again’ Christian believers would thereby make consistent and logical sense.

Paul even spoke five times about believers’ ‘adoption to sonship.’⁵ This tends to support the adoptive role of Jesus and the Holy Spirit as spiritual parents for ‘rebirth.’ In addition, Jesus also spoke of fallen people being of a different lineage than himself, thus again suggesting the need for adoption into God’s own family.⁶

Did our parents and grandparents recognize that God has both masculine nature and also feminine nature? Perhaps instead of calling God our ‘Heavenly Father’ it might be more appropriate to call him/her our ‘Heavenly Parent.’

The most significant and profound ramification of all of this lies in the expression of God in this human world. If God’s attributes include both masculinity and femininity, as seen almost everywhere in nature in one form or another, then it would be illogical to claim that God could somehow be fully manifested in either a man or a woman, no matter how holy and Divine that individual may be. A more complete manifestation of God could potentially be expressed in the union of a spiritually and

heartistically mature man and a spiritually and heartistically mature woman, together. Such a union could embody and express God's attributes and character to society and the world much more completely and effectively, especially if they relate together as a harmonious and loving complementary pair.

Not only that, but we recall that it is the union of this complementary pair which creates new human life. There is no biological workaround for this. Humans are designed that way. And this reminds us of the Biblical mandate that "*the two shall become one flesh.*"⁷ If we are associating this statement with the earthly expression of God, it must mean more than just two people having sex. If we are talking about an earthly reunion of the masculine and feminine attributes of God in human form, then this spiritual and heartistic union would ultimately mean that a profound and timeless bond of love between a man and a woman is a real possibility. Why would such a union be a casual or semi-committed relationship? We are talking about the human reunion of the essential masculinity and the femininity of God. Perhaps a love-soaked marriage; even eternal marriage, is actually achievable since God and genuine love appear to be timeless.

It may seem hard to even consider this possibility with the current state of human society. Marriage is viewed by many today as an old-fashioned social construct having nothing to do with happiness, love or God. But, we commonly see evidence of the

timelessness of love, at least in the relationship between many parents and their children. I know my elderly parents still love me dearly, just as much as they did when I was a toddler, even though I am now in my late 60's and they in their late 80's. This love shows no sign of weakening or evaporating with time. If that kind of enduring love can exist within the parent-child relationship, then it can also exist between spouses, as we see that it sometimes does. Perhaps if a mature man and woman can capture this timeless and profound love, a lasting and happy, fulfilling marital relationship can be a reality. Conceivably it was the original plan, in spite of our brokenness and many shortcomings.

That's where we end up. The Divine Feminine seems to have been not only intrinsic to the Greek and Hindu beliefs but also to the Abrahamic faith traditions as well, especially Judaism, Christianity and Islam. After all, where did all that beautiful, delicate, enchanting, gentle, motherly, comforting and nurturing feminine nature in the world come from? Welcome to the Divine Feminine of the one true God. If your parents and grandparents did recognize it, we can now help them to better understand it and even talk about it more comprehensively and perhaps more authentically, beyond Mother Mary.

3. A God of tears

Religious people of every persuasion have defined the creator God as a being too powerful to be subjected to pain, too smart to be disappointed, and too otherworldly to be bothered by human suffering. *'He certainly must be beyond all of our puny aches and pains and misfortunes. After all, he's God!'*

Billions of Christians, Jews and others stake their faith on this premise. It's almost universal. They imagine God to be so 'beyond' that he might be sitting on a beach somewhere in heaven, sipping martinis and enjoying himself while we all suffer down here. I mean, why would God exhibit what many people consider a weakness by 'crying?' Isn't he able to dictate and manhandle any situation down here on earth? Why would he cry? It would imply that things are not going the way he wants them to. It would imply disappointment. It would imply weakness. It would imply that he's *NOT* in control of things down here. Such a being just couldn't be God!

The irony is, the concept of such an aloof and stoic God has no basis whatsoever in the Bible. It's a notion that people have chosen to read into it, in spite of what is really there.

Even though people have scoured the Bible countless times and for centuries, the majority have become desensitized to the fact that in Genesis 6:6 God is said to be “*grieving*” because of the mistakes and rebellion of his children. The word ‘*grieve*’ is a most *extreme* word, normally reserved for the intense despair surrounding the death of a spouse, child, parent or other loved one.

This same God later *pleads* with his children to exercise their freedom to “*choose life*.”⁸ Jesus goes on to teach about a God who cares about and goes out of his way to rescue a solitary lost sheep out of a whole flock of obedient ones;⁹ a God who watches for, waits for and longs for one of his sons who has lost his way.¹⁰ The Bible speaks of a God who wills that *no one* will be lost, not even one.¹¹ It depicts a tender-hearted God who is also aware of every hair on our heads and who knows when a sparrow falls from its nest.¹² He is clearly NOT a disconnected, disinterested God who is too good and too high and almighty to care about us desperately; even for each one of us, without exception.

One must wonder if the harsh expressions of God's disappointment throughout the Bible might have blinded believers to his tender and loving heart. But, it would depend on how one takes it. The hundreds of instances of God's frustration with man's

failures to respond and listen to his helpful instructions and directions tell us that God doesn't want humanity to be the way it is. It tells us he is *NOT* complacent with the status quo. He hates how we live and treat one another. He desperately wants to see things changed and fixed down here. This again becomes further evidence of a passionate and caring God. If he didn't care about our suffering state of affairs, he wouldn't be so upset and frustrated with us. He wouldn't even bother scolding us and trying to help us, or he would have given up a long time ago.

Ironically again, believers say God loved them so much that he gave his son Jesus as a sacrificial offering for us, but many of these same people think God is too great and almighty to be broken-hearted over our situation. According to the glimpses and expressions of God's heart in the Bible, and the implicit descriptions of the Heavenly Father which Jesus repeatedly gave, God is a tender-hearted, broken-hearted, passionate and tearful God in the face of our human situation. He desperately wants to help us and remedy our suffering state. Didn't Jesus weep over the unresponsive people of Jerusalem?¹³

A major reason we keep God on such a stoic pedestal, emotionally aloof from man's pain and brokenness, is that God doesn't intervene, reach down and fix us. He just keeps on being God and we just keep on suffering. Our conclusion then becomes, *'He just doesn't really care.'* We have defined him as all-powerful

and all-knowing, so therefore if he doesn't fix us, it can only mean he just doesn't care.

This marks a tragic and enormous mistake in our parents' and grandparents' relationship with the Bible and with God. This is a case of missing the forest for the trees. From beginning to end, from cover to cover, the Bible indicates that man is responsible in a partnership with God. The Bible testifies over and over again that God needs man's cooperation in order to get things done in the human world. The impossible inference that God must not really care because if he did he would fix us, is totally and completely contrary to the entire Biblical record.

Jewish people have always understood God from this perspective. They knew that they would be subject to blessings or curses depending upon their own faith and obedience to God's commands and directions to them.¹⁴ Somehow, with the birth of Jesus, Christianity lost this partnership perspective on the larger scale. It still applies on a personal level for Christians; if you choose to accept Jesus you will receive God's grace. However, for some reason, the partnership perspective has been largely abandoned on the macro level. Somehow events beyond myself all became 'predestined' by an all-powerful God who is 'in control.' What happened? There is no reason to think that God changed. We simply misunderstood.

It's time for people to wake up and re-recognize the partnership, even on the macro level. Starvation doesn't exist in the world because God wants it that way or allows it; it's only because we don't really care enough about our fellow man to resolve it. The same could be said about all the other ills that society and the world suffer from. What is man's part in it? That needs to be our first question instead of throwing the responsibility on the shoulders of a God that we obviously do not understand and that we have imagined to be inconsistent and contradictory. Blaming God, we thereby conveniently avoid our responsibilities to one another and to him and justify ourselves with our more-than-questionable religious perspective.

We say Jesus was the embodiment of God's heart and spirit, or even beyond that, many believe he is God himself. Jesus was a man of tears. Thus, it should be readily apparent that God is also a compassionate, loving God of tears over broken mankind.

What can be done about that tragic situation? It would be easy to conclude that insignificant humans can't possibly dry God's tears. However, that again would be far from the truth. The reason God is a God of tears is because of us. We are the cause of his tears.

That is good news for those who care. That means even in my own singular life, I can do something kind and loving and comfort the broken heart of God. I can help dry a tear. I can help cheer him up, even a tiny bit. Of course, if a family devoted itself to that

calling, how powerful and wonderful that would be. If a nation devoted itself to that calling, how powerful and wonderful that would be. How about the whole world? That's the very reason Jesus came and why he cried until blood came from his forehead in his famous prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was not because he was afraid to die, which is the theory advocated by most Biblical scholars. He was happy to offer his life to enable believers to receive the grace of forgiveness. He was crying his guts out because he wanted to bring God's kingdom on the earth and thereby put an end to God's tearful agony over the suffering of mankind. He wanted desperately to comfort the broken heart of his Father in heaven. He alone held the keys to empowering us all to do that.

The point is, realizing that God is a broken-hearted God of tears over the plight of mankind should be both very sobering and also very inspiring for you and I. It means that you are so significant and important that you can dry a tear and comfort the heart of God. That is but another aspect of God that your parents and grandparents totally missed.

4. A God who is *NOT* in control

How many times have you heard it said, *'Don't worry about anything. God's all-powerful. He's in control!'* Looking around this deeply troubled human landscape, it makes one wonder what kind of God people believe in. They engage in an extraordinary amount of apologetics and mental gymnastics to justify how a 'good God' can be 'in control' of such a suffering and miserable human world.

And this perspective lights a fire of rage in the hearts of many atheists among us. They respond to such a statement by ranting about how only a heartless and cruel God could be *'in control'* of such a corrupt and pain-ridden world. They say, *'Who needs a God like that, who is permitting or even orchestrating all the filth and sorrow that people of the world are wallowing in?'*

The irony of it is, the Good Book that our parents and grandparents claim to get this notion from is *FILLED* from beginning to end with depictions of a God who is just the opposite; absolutely *NOT* in control. The Bible could very realistically be

retitled: *The Book of God's Unending Frustrations with Man.*

Surprised? We need look no further than the first few pages of the Bible where we read that God was FURIOUS with his first son and daughter for betraying him and messing up all of his plans for a beautiful human world. Often people read these scriptures in a monotone voice, or quietly with a peaceful mind, bleaching out all of the emotion from the text. Can we expect to get real understanding while doing that?

God is portrayed as beside himself with disappointment and anger in this story. He interrogates them as to their actions, curses them and then kicks them out of the paradise he had prepared for them. It's no wonder since he just finished investing 13.7 billion years setting the stage for the birth of these, his first children and the root of the human family tree. He later says he was "*sorry he made man on the earth and it grieved him in his heart.*"¹⁵ How can anyone read that statement and conclude that God is somehow '*in control?*'

Later God said he was "*sorry*" that he made Saul a king.¹⁶ He was sorely disappointed in him. Later he expressed frustration that even angels were not aligned with his intentions, saying they "*went too far with their punishment*" (of Israel and Judah).¹⁷ Jesus in John chapter 8 furiously blasts those who want to kill him, saying they do not understand what he is saying and teaching and they are instead following the devil or Satan.

There are literally hundreds of instances in the Bible, from beginning to end, where the text expresses the frustrations of God in his relations with man. On the basis of all that, you may wonder why people would allege that God is ‘in control?’ There is veritably no such expression in the Bible, anywhere. It is simply made-up doctrine. You would have to deny the entire storyline of the Bible to maintain that God is ‘*in control*’ of human affairs.

But, it *sounds* good. It feels so warm and fuzzy, especially if we want to brush off our human responsibility onto someone else, in this case, God. How convenient! This or that good or bad thing happened because God’s in control. Never mind that your dog was run over by a car because you let him get out of the yard or he was not on a leash. *‘It was God’s doing, or he at least must have allowed it to happen.’* How tragic that people have twisted and misrepresented God and the Bible so badly that they both have begun to appear inconsistent and heartless and therefore unattractive to rational people. Such distortions of what the text really says have only resulted in cognitive dissonance.

Nature is not soaked with cognitive dissonance, but neither is the Bible if we let it say what it really says to us. A believable God awaits us if we just let the Bible talk to us and resist the temptation to twist the message into what we want it to say.

5. A methodical God

The various books of the Bible have seemed like just that... various meaningful stories related by known and unknown people over many centuries, passed down by oral tradition. Few see any systematic and progressive relationship between these stories except that they seem to follow a general historical timeline. This happened, then that happened. Each story has a moral or lesson to be learned. Eventually, Jesus comes.

Some modern Bibles have even left out the pre-Jesus Old Testament stories altogether because many think they are not important in relation to the coming of Jesus. God sends Jesus when he is good and ready and it didn't have much to do with whatever happened before him. A close Christian minister friend told me he sees it exactly this way.

It's so tragic that after almost two millennia of study and research by Christian scholars, the methodology of God in his preparations for Jesus went unnoticed. Revealed in a Bible commentary called *The Divine Principle*, our attention is led to a

clear and intentional pattern of God's hand working behind the scenes in human history. No, it's not God controlling anyone or events. It's not God being 'in control' in any way. It's a God who has a will for human beings and he patiently prods people until someone actually does what he needs them to do in preparation for Jesus to come. It's a God who has a game plan. It's a God who is moving human history toward a specific goal. We will now take a brief look at this methodical game plan of God.

Jesus came and said that the two greatest of all the 613 Mosaic laws were:

*“Love the lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind ... and the second is like the first, love your neighbor as yourself.”*¹⁸ Indeed, he said, *“Love your enemy.”*¹⁹

These can be seen as God's 'traditions'. These are the traditions that Jesus stood upon and modeled for us in his life, ministry and teachings, and these are what he exemplified.

What has somehow escaped scholars is that these two 'traditions,' if you will, were methodically developed through centuries of painstaking efforts by God to inspire and motivate people. God orchestrated this from the beginning of human history until Jesus came to bring it to fruition. The practical reason God was doing this was to raise up a prepped and primed group of

people who would be ready to resonate with, appreciate and dedicate themselves to Jesus' teachings during his short lifetime and ministry on earth. God was preparing a group of people to recognize Jesus, appreciate Jesus, learn from Jesus, follow Jesus, adore Jesus, have faith in Jesus and become transformed by Jesus. God was hoping the chosen people and their priests and leaders would hear Jesus teach of the two greatest commandments (the tradition) and respond by saying something like, *'Wow Jesus. I like that. You just summed up 613 Mosaic laws into two. I want to learn from you. Teach me more.'* Tragically, many common people responded this way but not the Jewish leaders. But from Jesus' parable of the tenants, we can easily see that this was God's plan.²⁰

God was very methodical in his efforts to help us develop the needed traditions. The first tradition, to put God absolutely first in our life before anything or anyone else, was initially lost by mistakes in the first family, as the Bible records it. For this reason, the eldest two sons of that original family made offerings to God of the best of their livelihood to show that he was most important in their lives. This was the only thing that was written about their lives because it was the only significant thing from God's providential perspective.

Similarly, but on a far more ambitious scale, Noah was asked to put God absolutely first in his life and demonstrate his faith and obedience by building a huge boat on top of a mountain; a most

illogical request. The task took many years of his life while he sacrificed his duties to his wife and children. Through this, Noah clearly showed that God alone was first in his life.

Subsequently, Abraham also demonstrated uncompromising faith, putting God absolutely first in his life by being willing to offer his own son as a sacrifice to God on an altar. The story made clear that God did not actually want the sacrifice of his son, but rather he wanted Abraham to demonstrate that God was absolutely first in his life before anything or anyone else, including his son.

This sequence of events in Jewish history was critically important in building the first of the two important traditions upon which Jesus came and which he himself later modeled and taught. God was hereby preparing a group of people to be ready to recognize, accept and follow Jesus when he would come later, and further prepared to transform themselves into people who likewise put God absolutely first in their lives, before anyone or anything else. Jesus modeled this tradition by the example of his own life and sacrificial death. The Jewish history leading up to Jesus, therefore, is critical to understanding God and how he worked methodically in human lives and human history, even in our own lives and history today.

The second tradition, loving one's neighbor or even enemy, was similarly crafted through a painstaking methodical process. God's rejection of the offering of the eldest son in the first human

family caused him to feel exceedingly jealous of his younger brother, whose offering was accepted by God. There was a reason God did this; a reason that was intrinsically connected to the mistake of their parents in the Garden. There is no indication whatsoever that there was any qualitative inferiority between their offerings or motivations. God simply was setting up the two brothers to hopefully resolve selfish jealousy and reconcile by ‘loving your neighbor as yourself’ or indeed ‘loving your enemy.’ It was a process that would be repeated in the lives of other Biblical characters until it was successfully accomplished and jealousy and anger resolved. Jesus was going to someday come and teach the same thing. Unfortunately, in the case of these first two brothers, jealousy prevailed and violence and murder ensued. It was a tragic failure.

Later on, this was followed by a similar situation of sibling rivalry, again instigated by God. It was a situation of intense jealousy between Jacob and his elder brother Esau. At its peak, the elder Esau wanted to kill his younger brother Jacob. This time, through a lot of difficult trials and challenges, Jacob was trained and prepared by God to know how to melt the extreme jealousy of his elder brother. Jacob’s sacrificial love enabled reconciliation to occur between them. Thus, the second tradition which God needed was finally established, but not without blemish. The resolution was only superficial as Jacob took his family and left the homestead

after all, running away from his elder brother after embracing him.

To more perfectly establish and model this tradition in anticipation of Jesus' future coming, and on a higher social level, Jacob's favored son Joseph found himself ensnared in a similar web of intense jealousy on the part of his eleven brothers. Joseph was again targeted to be killed. But, compassion prevailed and Joseph resisted being revengeful toward his jealous brothers and instead loved them and reconciled with them. This time they all settled together in Egypt as one big family.

Through this methodical process (many details were left out) God constructed the second tradition in the minds and hearts of the Hebrew people, the descendants of whom Jesus later came to. As we saw in the beginning of this chapter, Jesus taught the very same traditions from the start of his ministry and crystalized them by personally modeling them for all time.

The above was a simplified explanation of the methodical process that God used to prepare the people to receive his son Jesus. It may appear to raise more questions than it answers. A more in-depth explanation of this process can be found in another of my books entitled, *Introducing the Divine Principle*. But, even this brief explanation shows that God has been engaged and involved and methodically pursuing a strategic goal in and behind human history.

The Bible stories have typically been seen as a purposeless

series of events, but nothing could be further from the truth. In reality, God did not waste a single day in preparing for Jesus 2000 years ago, and he has been pursuing the same focused and serious methodical strategy in the shadows of our own lives in the 21st century, preparing the way for his son to walk among us again.

If our parents and grandparents had realized that the living God was actually not far away but very close and indirectly involved in history and in all of our personal lives, with a long-term goal and purpose, then our contemporary experience and impression of Christianity and God might be very different. Time to take the blinders off.

6. A God who relinquished some of his ‘almighty’ power

Nothing could be more blasphemous and irreverent than to insinuate that somehow God is not ‘almighty’ and ‘all-powerful.’ Of course, God *must be* almighty and all-powerful. He made the entire universe, after all. He gives us life and takes it away. Who can be his equal? Certainly, there can be no other god before him. I get it.

However, inconsistency and cognitive dissonance begin to rear their ugly heads once again, driving young critical thinkers away. No one dare ask such questions as *‘Why does this almighty and all-powerful God allow me to do virtually any bad thing I want to do? They say he doesn’t approve of my wayward ways. Then why doesn’t he stop me? And the same for society and the world?’*

Believers talk about peace, harmony, love. There are so many ugly things in life that God is supposed to be against. God is supposed to frown on killing, divorce, dishonesty, racism, hatred, abuse. Yet these are what permeate society. Is the obvious

inconsistency just one of those ‘mysteries?’ This troubling apparent contradiction has driven a whole generation and more away from God and the Bible. What is the answer?

Tragically, our parents and grandparents were handed such thick bifocals of doctrine that the Bible appeared to become conflicted when it was not. From the very first pages until the end, the Bible tells us that God gave humans choice and responsibility. Because he seems to be a God of law and principle, he has flat out refused to butt into our lives and manipulate them in any way, unless he is invited in. He clearly has decided to NOT be ‘in control’ of human affairs. That’s why he refuses to stop you, no matter what bad thing you decide to do. He may not even help you when you decide to do good things. He refuses to pull your chain.

As the story goes, a sick man was lying by the side of the road. A religious man came by and saw him. He said, *‘My son, I will pray for you.’* God will probably let that man die unless the man of faith realizes that God expects him to be his arms and legs in this human world and bring that sick man to the hospital. Jesus said, *“Feed my sheep.”* He didn’t say pray that the Father in heaven will feed them. Even if we ask him to, he wants us to be responsible and be a living expression and representation of him in this world. In a sense, he wants us to be like his mouth, arms and legs. Jesus’ brother James taught a similar lesson.²¹ He is a good Father.

We often see things in our life or in the world go in bad directions, with resultant pain and suffering everywhere. We then wonder where the ‘almighty God’ might be. We often forget that we need to sincerely invite him into our lives to deal with it because without that invitation, it seems that he just won’t get involved. Not only that, but he is so insistent about our partnership in human affairs that the invitation must be commensurate with the problem at hand.

In other words, a softly whispered prayer of, ‘Dear God, please feed all the hungry people in the world and help the poor’ may not be commensurate with the request. In one well-known section of the Bible, it quotes God as saying:

“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and heal their land.”²²

Notice it doesn’t say ‘*If somebody will pray,*’ or ‘*If a few people will pray.*’ It says “*If my people...*” That means all of his people. He is expecting a BIG *invitation to intervention*.

Even still, the most important point here is this: Even when God intervenes upon invitation, he still will not do everything for us. We STILL have a partnership and we still need to do our part of the bargain. God may answer a groundswell of prayer and help

us to feed the world's poor, but still someone has to buy the seed, plant it, water it, cultivate it and make the food available to those who need it by trucks, ships or trains. Alternately, someone needs to teach and empower and help the impoverished nations to grow their own abundant supply of food. We can do all of that. Prayer is not necessary in this example. We already have the know-how. All we need is the heart and will to do it. God can help. But, he will not just do it all for us. The partnership remains.

God has decided to give us some of his 'almightiness' and some of his 'all-powerful' nature. He made us co-creators with responsibility. There is no question about that and it is evidenced throughout the Bible on every page. Somehow, many people have missed it. Perhaps our oversight is the result of wishful thinking.

If we do not treat our own children the same way God is treating us in this respect, they will grow up to become irresponsible; perhaps criminals. This is not another mystery of the faith. It makes logical sense and was explicit and obvious if we had just let the Book talk to us.

7. A God who *doesn't* know the future

If you want to get a strange look from a serious believer, tell them you don't think God knows the future. Your parents and grandparents will tell you that certainly God knows everything, past, present and future, in detail. *'After all, he's God! He made the whole universe. He must be so smart and omniscient that he can even know the future.'* Everyone does not embrace this belief, but it is certainly commonly held. Where does it come from? Is it from the Bible?

When asked, many will remind you that the Bible says God knows when a sparrow falls from the nest and that the hairs on our head are all numbered.²³ This is often cited as evidence that God knows everything, including the future. However, a careful reading of these verses reveals nothing about futuristic knowledge. God is simply being described as fully aware in the present moment.

In the book of Mark and elsewhere in the Gospels, Jesus says

he must go “*just as it is written about him.*”²⁴ This is a reference to prophesy, and prophesy is also seen as evidence that God knows everything, including the future. After all, how can God talk of the future if he doesn’t *know* the future?

But again, checking out what Jesus was referring to as “*what is written about him*” we find a very important aspect of this story that is often ignored. The book of prophesy to which Jesus was referring is not single-minded in “*what is written about him.*” It contains two sharply contrasting prophetic messages. We will see this is not inconsistency or a mistake.

One chapter of this prophesy foretells that Jesus will suffer and be tortured and put to death at the hands of faithless people.²⁵ The obvious similarity between that prophetic message and the reality of what happened to Jesus when he later came is the basis of the notion that God certainly knows the future in detail.

But three other chapters of this same prophetic book foretold that Jesus would be embraced by the prepared Jews and become their literal king, ushering in a never-ending era of peace in Israel and the world.²⁶ This obviously did NOT happen to Jesus when he came. But, this was also “*what is written about him.*”

For Biblical scholars, this understandably became a dilemma and a problem. It should not have presented them a problem at all, but it appeared to be problematic because they tried to operate on the premise that prophesy is something that God said and which

must therefore come to pass. Herein lies the huge mistake. Prophecy is not a hardwired link to what the future holds, contrary to what many people think. They somehow forgot that God said from the very beginning of the Bible to the very end that many things would happen, but many times those things didn't happen at all. Why? Because of man's partnership and human responsibility and his repeatedly dropping the ball. We read too much into 'prophecy.' God was telling us what was on course to happen, what he wanted to see happen, what he needed to see happen, and what we were inevitably going to make happen taken our present state of affairs and course of action. He was not saying what must happen, no matter what.

Assuredly, many things that God said would happen certainly did. God told Abraham that his descendants would sojourn in a land that was not theirs for 400 years and be slaves there. That did happen. He told through angels that certain fates would befall individuals and nations because of their disobedience and faithlessness, and those fates came to pass. And the writers of the Biblical narratives liked to focus on those events of which God foretold as evidence of God's foreknowledge and divine powers. But, God's prophetic statements did not always come to pass.

In fact, God's prophetic statements were far overshadowed by the big two-letter word "*IF*," which appears hundreds of times in the Bible. God tells us at length what will happen "*IF*" we obey

him and what will happen “*IF*” we do not. Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 are but a couple of great examples. Even though this big two-letter word “*IF*” is found throughout the Bible, amazingly we have still been taught to think that God already knows everything about the future; including what we will do, choose or decide in detail. Skeptics will insist that there must be a way to *‘have your cake and eat it too.’*

You may argue that sometimes God gives us a choice, and sometimes things are sealed in fate. However, I would say that they are sealed in fate by the choices that we have already made clear. As we already discussed in the previous chapter, God set up a partnership with man and he refuses to violate our side of it. Thus, rather than wracking our brains trying to figure out how Jesus could somehow fulfill the three glorious prophecies of Isaiah which didn’t come true 2000 years ago, we should have simply realized that, as always before, the choice was ours. If the Jewish leaders had recognized and embraced Jesus as their long-awaited Messiah, they would have made him their king as foretold by Isaiah and he would have ushered in a peaceful world without end, with salvation and forgiveness included. However, if they denied him, rejected him, and opposed him, they would end up killing him as a false prophet.

Traditional believers will undertake endless apologetics and mental gymnastics to try to make the case that Jesus’ life had to go

the way it did or we would not have the grace and forgiveness that came with Jesus' blood on the cross.

On the surface, the traditional arguments can sound reasonable, but it requires that we reject the possibility of even more complete 'salvation beyond forgiveness' through the creation of God's kingdom on the earth; the very thing Jesus told people to pray for and seek.

Those who cling to the traditional perspective tell us that the three glorious prophecies of God's kingdom on earth must be referring to a far distant return of Jesus after his necessary rejection and not to his life 2000 years ago because, after all, they were not fulfilled in Jesus' lifetime. But, it would be far more consistent with the entire Bible to see these dual prophecies as a simple recognition and reminder that God has given man free will to choose. The Jewish leaders indeed made their choice. This is exactly what Jesus described in his parable of the tenants.²⁷

This topic should and could be thoroughly argued and explained but it is far beyond the scope and intention of this book. A more thorough discussion of this can be found in *Church on Sand*, another book by this same author.

There are more indications that God does not know the future. Jesus, who is considered one with God or literally God himself, expressed an impassioned and remorseful statement in Lk 13:34: "*Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those*

sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.” This revealed a disappointed and frustrated Jesus. He did not know nor expect that the people would not respond to him. Either that or his remorse was not sincere.

God also expressed through the prophet Samuel, *“I regret that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions.”*²⁸ Here God expresses deep disappointment in Saul, saying that he did not live up to his expectations.

And what about the elephant in the middle of the tent? The big one? The failure of the first couple in the proverbial Garden? According to the story, God clearly did not expect the events to go as they did. He was furious about it. Either he didn’t know beforehand or his anger and disappointment cannot be sincere.

More fundamentally speaking, if God really does have foreknowledge of the future in detail, it would make our free will an illusion since everything is already somehow knowable ahead of time. As a rebuttal, numerous traditional believers have explained to me that we really *do* have free will and free choice. These are not an illusion. But, God is so omniscient that he knows ahead of time every choice that every person will ever make.

Of course, all logic and human experience breaks down with this assertion. God becomes heartless and cruel and the Bible

becomes an insincere and useless book. Our lives would become a boring game for a God who already knows every move and outcome.

Hello! It's simply not what the Bible is conveying and saying to us. Our parents and grandparents trusted too much in the wisdom of experts and did not let the Good Book simply speak to them. The real living God became cloaked in mystery and theological exegesis, far from the consistency, rationality and loving elegance that actually defines him.

8. God and the blood

You have heard about Jesus and how he suffered a gruesome death and shed his precious blood so that we could be forgiven of our sins. The question that our parents and grandparents didn't think of asking or were afraid to ask was: Why does God need blood so he can forgive our sins? It provokes all kinds of imagery in our minds from horror movies and scary books.

Scholars have been trying to deduce the answer to that question by searching through the Bible. The most prominent single piece of relevant information is found in Hebrews 9:22, where St. Paul wrote...

“In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”

This passage is believed to be reinforced by a few other passages which speak to this topic more indirectly plus the overarching doctrinal belief that *it just had to be that way*. But let's

get some background on this statement by St. Paul and try to understand where he is coming from and what the context of it is.

A simple review of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) reveals that in the Mosaic law, upon which Jesus came and upon which he stood, atonement for sin was most often satisfied by a blood sacrifice of an animal or a burnt offering. This was a method by which an animal was prayerfully killed, the blood was drained and the animal was then cut into two pieces from head to toe. Finally, the right half was laid upon the left half on the altar and the carcass was burned. This was the most common method used by the Hebrew people to atone for sin. Christian people have naturally tended to focus their attention on that.

However, there were numerous other ways to atone for sin acceptable to God according to the Mosaic law. These included the scapegoat, faith and obedience, money, oil, flour, live bird, incense, meat, drink, jewelry and shewbread. One should now ask the question: Which method of atonement did God *prefer*, if any?

From a Christian perspective, you would think it would be the blood sacrifice/burnt offering. But NO! That is clearly NOT the case, according to the Bible. Numerous passages indicate clearly that God did not prefer the blood sacrifice or burnt offering method of atonement for sin. If you are curious, here are the most prominent passages which speak to this:

“For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.”²⁹

“Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for...”³⁰

“Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.”³¹

“With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”³²

“Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will declare your praise. You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.”³³

If all this is true, then you may ask why didn't Jesus atone for our sins in some other way instead of giving his blood on the cross, especially if God actually prefers other methods of atonement. It is an important question that people should have the courage to ask. And, there is a surprising answer. He did. Jesus actually did atone for our sins by another method but things didn't work out. Let me explain.

One of the other methods of atoning for sin mentioned above was that of the scapegoat. Leviticus 16:10 explains what atonement by a scapegoat means:

“But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the LORD to be used for making atonement by sending it into the wilderness as a scapegoat.”

Christians do commonly believe that Jesus was a scapegoat for our sins, but how so? They somehow see him in the role of a scapegoat when he died on the cross. But, this would not fit the description of a scapegoat offering. Reread the explanation above of what a scapegoat offering entailed. Jesus was actually atoning for sin as a scapegoat when he went out into the desert for 40 days of fasting and was confronted and tempted by Lucifer. As a scapegoat, he was a *living* sacrifice. After atoning for sin as a scapegoat, he proceeded to forgive the sins of any individuals who showed faith in him.

But this raises another important question. If that is true, if Jesus already atoned for sin as a scapegoat in the desert, then why would he have to *again* atone for sin as a blood sacrifice on the cross? Your parents and grandparents didn't ask these important questions. It's a tragedy. There are important answers.

Jesus came to atone for the sins of all of Israel and even for all

of mankind, not just for a handful of faithful and obedient individuals who came to him repentfully and with faith.³⁴ Had the representatives of all the people of Israel, the priests and leaders, come to Jesus in faith, then Jesus could have declared the entire nation of Israel forgiven of their sins. Jesus had the authority to do that. But the leaders and representatives of the people came to him instead with jealousy, scorn and disbelief. Therefore, the nation of Israel could not be forgiven. So, to atone for the sins of not only Israel but even for you and me, beyond the handful of individuals who came to him in faith, Jesus had no choice but to make the ultimate offering of atonement with his own blood. This leads us back to our original question: *Does God need blood to atone for sin?* The answer is obviously no. God is not a bloodthirsty God. But circumstantially yes, he did need to atone with his own blood in the face of his rejection by the leaders of Israel, as the prophet Isaiah predicted.

This sounds like absolute heresy to our parents and grandparents because they did not ask these important questions. But, it is perfectly orthodox when understood by what is available for anyone to see in the Bible. A Jewish scholar will understand this issue easily because they are familiar with the different forms of atonement. A Christian person is usually not. The blood sacrifice is the only one most Christians are familiar with.

As was explained before, our parents and grandparents will

strongly object to this explanation by reminding us that Jesus said more than once: “*I must go as it is written*”³⁵ meaning that he must suffer and die as a blood sacrifice because it was prophesied that he would in Isaiah 53. That is absolutely correct, but it was also written of Jesus that he would be accepted by the people of Israel, become their literal king and usher in the glorious kingdom of God on earth.³⁶ It was because the leadership of Israel rejected and opposed Jesus that the prophecies of Isaiah 9, 11 and 60 became impossible to fulfill, compelling Jesus to “*go as it is written*” in Isaiah 53 and become the blood sacrifice on the cross.

It is all refreshingly logical and consistent. God and the Bible are not as mysterious and irrational as our parents and grandparents may have thought. The universe around us seems to be very much rational and knowable. Therefore, the real living God must also be very much rational and knowable. And we are beginning to find out that he indeed is.

9. A God held hostage

Can God have a weakness? It's unthinkable for the average Judeo-Christian believer. It is commonly believed that if a being had a weakness, that being could not possibly be God. God, by definition, must be beyond all that. It would be considered a contradiction in terms. We might expect to see weakness in a Greek god or a Hindu god, but certainly not in the Judeo-Christian God; absolutely not.

Well, let us look again. We again admit that we do not have direct empirical knowledge of God. It may be impossible to have such. But we can infer and arrive at deductive knowledge of God by observation of the essential qualities of what we do have, which are 'effects' of the ultimate 'cause.' Effects always bear some resemblance to their cause. All scientific research and understanding is based on that same premise.

We can use this deductive method to get many insights into God's essential nature when we observe the natural universe around us. Our survey will have to exclude humanity, however,

which seems to be broken or distorted and out of sync with the rest of the natural world. Our treatment of and abuse of the natural environment and of each other testify to that conclusion.

We can look at the rest of the natural world and deduce that God is a being of rational law and order, has a masculine essence and also a feminine essence, both yang and yin aspects, harmony and balance, etc. However, to address the specific topic at hand, we will need to reflect on God's character and personality. Therefore, we will look at the character and personality of the most authentic, unbroken and natural human being we know of, namely Jesus, to gain some insight into that.

If we accept that Jesus was an authentic expression of God's character and personality, then we are immediately struck by his deep heart of love for people. He wept over people when he saw their suffering and pain. He helped them when they demonstrated some faith and submitted themselves to his love. He taught, guided and chastised them because he wanted to raise them up to a higher level of understanding and spiritual maturity. He gave people everything he had to give, every last ounce of his energy and love. And, he did all of this even for those who didn't seem to deserve it. Observing all of this virtue and more gives us confidence that we are seeing in Jesus a more mature or complete expression of the character and personality of God than we see in ourselves. That's why so many people love him and even deify him.

This, therefore, sets the stage for the realization that God indeed has a weakness to which he is held hostage. We will borrow the term ‘Cain’, which is the name of the eldest son of the first human family in the Bible. To understand more fully the reason for this, refer to my book *Introducing the Divine Principle*. Suffice to say, Cain was loved by God but he demonstrated a lack of virtue and eventually killed his younger brother in a raging fit of jealousy. Borrowing the theme and namesake, everyone knows a ‘Cain’ person in their life; someone with a little less relative virtue. Not only that, but everyone *is* a ‘Cain’ person to someone else in their life; someone who has relatively a little more Divine virtue. As a person who resembles Cain, we all fall short in the world of virtues in relationship to someone else. Back to Jesus.

Jesus demonstrated a tender, caring and sacrificial heart toward everyone, notably those who were in the position of his ‘Cain’. Those who could not understand him, those who persecuted him, stalked him, accused him, hated him, and eventually killed him, these can all be considered as Cain people before Jesus. Yet, Jesus loved them all. He even said that he came primarily for them.³⁷ He wanted to help them transform themselves into people like himself. He eventually gave his life for them. We can infer, then, that this is also the character and personality of the living God.

When we step back and survey the Biblical history of humanity, while the historical record is very short and certainly not

complete, we can begin to recognize that the primary reason God has been so long-suffering and patient in his efforts to guide humanity and change this human world into the kind of society he originally intended is because God desperately loves Cain. It is the basis and essence of Jesus' admonition to "*Love your enemy.*" It is the heart of God. It was the obvious essential heart of Jesus.

If God didn't have an unfathomable love for Cain, he could have and would have just disposed of him from the beginning of human history. He could have just taken the relatively good humans and crossbred them until he had better and better people, annihilating the lesser ones. But what about those who didn't make the cut? God's love seems to be too big, too deep, too unconditional to throw anyone away.

Well, wait a minute! What about hell, fire and brimstone? Doesn't this God send people to eternal suffering in hell? It's a pillar of the Christian faith for many believers. It's what motivates too many people to at least go through the motions of being 'religious.' It is said that love and fear are the two most powerful and effective motivators of human beings. Well, one has the impression that fear of punishment in hell is a mainstay of the Judeo-Christian and Muslim faith traditions.

But as surprising as it may be, a simple search and review of all the passages of the Bible which speak of the fiery pit of hell and suffering, etc., reveals a shocking fact. Out of the dozens and

dozens of these passages, only two can be taken to say that it was God who personally sent people there. How shocking is that? People were condemned to hell, found themselves there, ended up going there, were cast down into the so-called ‘pit’ of hell, etc., but it was almost never said that actually God personally sent them there.³⁸ The first of these passages speaks of the “pit of decay (or destruction)” and the second passage remains controversial in that it is unclear whether Jesus was referring to God or Satan when he said:

“But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.”³⁹

Scholarly commentaries admit that this is the only passage in the Bible which is obscure about just who it is referring to, namely God or Satan. But, these scholars choose to interpret this statement as referring to God as the one we should fear. They say we should not fear Satan, therefore Jesus must be referring to God here. However, we find in another passage that Jesus indicates in fact that he is talking not about God but about Satan after all.

“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”⁴⁰

Obviously he was speaking here of fearing Satan, not God. Thus, there is ample room to believe that Jesus was never speaking of God's authority to "throw you into hell," but rather the Devil's. Indeed, the perspective scholars *should* be taking is just the opposite: *'Why should we fear our loving Father in heaven? Jesus must be talking about fearing Satan.'*

It is also interesting to learn some background about the concept of the 'fires of hell (or Gehenna)' referred to in the Bible. *The Pulpit Commentary* tells us the following:

Luke 12:5 - *But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; literally, into Gehenna.* This is simply **Gehinnom**, "valley of Hinnom," translated into Greek letters. This valley was situated in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, and originally was noted for the infamous rites practiced there in the worship of Moloch, in the times of the idolatrous kings of Judah. King Josiah, to mark his abhorrence of the idol-rites, defiled it with corpses; fires were subsequently kindled to consume the putrefying matter and prevent pestilence. The once fair valley, thus successively defiled with hideous corrupting rites, by putrefying corpses, and then with blazing fires lit to consume what would otherwise have occasioned pestilence, was taken by rabbinical writers as a symbol for the place of torment, and is used not infrequently as a synonym for "hell."

Thus, we may have been grossly distracted by the imagery of a fiery hell and even worse by the resultant notion that God is a

mean and nasty terrorist, threatening to personally throw his children into eternal punishment in a burning hell.

The deeper message is that God has suffered for who-knows-how-long with the hope that Cain will someday come back home and let himself be embraced in his love. Man suffers because he is broken and selfish in so many ways. God suffers because of his unquenchable love for us. He is a parent. He is like a father and mother to us. He cannot help himself. In a very real way, practically speaking, the real living God has long been a hostage to his own unfathomable heart of love; his love for 'Cain' which effectively means for each and every one of us.

10. A God who is waiting for me

Most of the religious Jews, Christians and Muslims that I have met are waiting for God to come down and intervene in their lives or in the world at large. They pray for it almost every day. I'm sure there are some exceptions, but that is the general drift. We are helpless. God is all-powerful. He knows how to fix everything. We don't know how. We are at his mercy. Come Lord, come.

Humans are truly conflicted beings. On the one hand, we actually do know how to solve the problem of starvation, for example, but we still don't do it. We actually do know how to clean up the environment, but we still don't do it. We have found multiple cures for even the most troublesome diseases and sickness, but profits sometimes dictate how readily we make these cures available to those who really need them. We do know how to fix many of our ills, but we just don't have the will to take responsibility.

One of the problems of Western religions is that believers tend to look to God to come down and, like ‘superman,’ fix the problems that we humans have created. We want a magic pill. We look for an easy way out. Just throw money at it! Then we wonder why it doesn’t just go away. Our parents and grandparents sat in Christian churches week-after-week, praying for Jesus to return and take them home to heaven and out of this earthly mess.

Once again, because of many doctrines and preconceived notions, they totally missed seeing the real living God. If they had looked carefully at their Bibles with a clean mental slate, they would have seen things very differently.

From the beginning of recorded history, God is described as begging man to do his part; to carry his end of the bargain. God expressed some guidelines to the first humans but they ignored and violated them. All hell broke loose from there. God made covenants with the people he tried to work with, only to see them repeatedly broken. He seemed to be working a game plan through which people could get the help they were needing, but the people kept dropping the ball. He inspired prophets to verbally give us a clearer idea as to what he wanted to happen, but such guidance often fell on deaf ears. We sometimes killed them. Even when, on rare occasions, God spoke directly to a few key people like those in the first family, Moses, John the Baptist, etc. they still failed to listen or fully respond. What more can God do?

Rather than people waiting for God to come down and magically fix everything, our parents and grandparents just couldn't realize that God has instead been waiting for us. He has been waiting for me. Am I actively involved in the partnership? Is there any measurable evidence of it? It seems that he would gladly meet me in the middle if only I would make my way there.

Is it unfair? When I reflect on my experiences as a parent and a grandparent, I realize that it is nothing more or less than the expression of a parental heart toward his children. If we treat our own children any differently, if we fix everything they break, if we pick up after every irresponsible mess, if we pay all of their debts, we will certainly find that we have raised the worst of criminals. Why should God's situation be any different? We are like small children, waiting for mommy and daddy to take care of us and all of our shortcomings. But thankfully, God is like any good parent, standing back, admonishing us, loving us, and waiting for us to grow up.

The God that our parents and grandparents perceived was painfully distorted from what all the evidence would suggest. They missed the real living God. That's no excuse for us. If we are smarter, more critical-minded, more objective, superior in any way, then we need to grab the truth and run with it confidently.

11. A God who is *NOT* a judge

Look out! We have crafted God in the image of Santa Claus. He's keeping a list. He will judge if you've been naughty or nice and will reward you accordingly with heaven or hell. As a boy attending mass in our local Catholic Church, I recall vividly how some people would sneak into the back pews after the mass had begun and then scoot out the door as soon as the mass was over, just so they could fulfill their 'obligation' to be there. Others came only on Easter and Christmas, the 'minimum requirement to avoid being sent to hell,' or so they thought.

As I reflect on those experiences, it makes me realize that for those minimalistic believers I knew, God was not like a Father and they, his children. No. In reality, God was like a master and they were behaving like pets. *'Roll over or do a trick and I will give you a reward.'* If you just do this and this and that, God will let you get into heaven. This seemed to be their effective relationship with God. How sad. I fear that too many people have some of that motivation soaked into their life of faith.

The Bible is certainly replete with God's admonitions and scoldings, even threats and punishments, especially in the Old Testament. He sees our hearts and doesn't hesitate to call a spade a spade. He's a tough teacher and partner, but he is still a loving parent.

In order to recognize that loving parent side of God, we may need to differentiate between God's judgments of our faithless actions during our everyday life on earth and the ultimate judgment that awaits us upon our death. While our parents and grandparents may have seen no difference between the two, according to the Bible they are not the same at all. Let's take a look...

Following God's guidance and directions on how to live our lives has always been paramount. God has had a hard time getting people to do even that. He treated people pretty legalistically before Jesus, but his motivation seemed to be that he wanted people to live a virtuous life of faith, i.e., to resemble him. Jesus similarly wanted his disciples to live correctly according to his teachings and example.

Without question, how we live our lives has been important to God and Jesus. However, St. Paul wrote that no matter how many good works one may do, even healing people and serving others to an extreme, if it is not done with love, it is fruitless.⁴¹ Why? It is doubtful that God is so egotistical that he wants to brag to someone about what good and obedient children he has. Rather it seems that

God wants us to live a virtuous life of faith for the purpose of growing our hearts and personalities to resemble his own, as generally described by Jesus in his famous Sermon on the Mount, also known as The Beatitudes. Jesus even concluded in this sermon that “*You therefore must be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect.*” That would confirm our assertion. Growing ourselves to become like God is the expressed goal of our life, from God’s and Jesus’ point of view.

This then sets the stage for the ultimate judgment associated with our death. The judgment at our death is not the same as ongoing judgments of our daily life on earth: ‘*Do this or else!*’ or ‘*You will suffer because you didn’t obey me.*’ The judgment at death is a conclusion which determines our eternal destiny. The conclusion is determined by what kind of person we have become based on the sum total of how we lived our earthly life.

While most Jews, Christians and Muslims have thought that God just personally decides what our eternal fate will be, actually that seems to be a concept of our own fabrication. Jesus said many things about this and gave us some important clues which relate to this topic. In a very important parable, Jesus painted a picture of what happens when we die. He spoke of a rich man and a beggar who both died at the same time. The poor beggar ended up in a good place while the rich man ended up in a suffering place. The reason for their divergence was not to glorify a life of poverty.

When looking for meaning between the lines, it seems that the rich man had received much and become a proud and self-centered man. The beggar, of course, had received little in his life and therefore had less opportunity to be proud and selfish. He likely had a more generous heart, as many beggars do. If that is a viable rendering of this story, then it was the quality of their hearts and character that determined their eternal fates. Thus, it was they themselves instead of God who determined their final judgment. How they lived their lives and what kind of people they grew to be determined their fates. In this case, Father Abraham in the story was simply heaven's doorkeeper, so to speak. Notice that he also had no say in the judgment of either man.⁴²

This goes hand-in-hand with Jesus' Sermon on the Mount which was previously referenced. Jesus teaches about living a life of virtue and concludes with a commandment (not a suggestion): "*You therefore must be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect.*"⁴³ Again, the idea and goal is 'quality' rather than obedience and duty. Become like God in heart and character! That is the goal.

St. Paul also admonished us that "*whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*"⁴⁴ This is commonly understood to say the same general thing. If we live a life of virtue, we will benefit from that. But, this does not imply that heaven is some kind of 'reward.'

Rather, it conveys that if we live a virtuous life we will become a God-like person fit for heaven.

Jesus said it very explicitly when he said *“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”*⁴⁵ Again, it is not buying our way into heaven with good deeds, as a reward. Jesus is saying that we are shaping ourselves into God’s sons and daughters qualitatively by how we live, or not.

St. Paul also said that if you have not love, then all of your good deeds are worthless.⁴⁶ This again helps us to understand the importance of letting go of this ‘earn your way to heaven by good deeds’ way of thinking that is so common. He also said in Romans 12:2 and in 2Cor 3:18 that we must be *“transformed”* by the renewing of our minds into God’s image and likeness. Can it get any clearer?

Then what can we say about God being our personal judge when we die? In fact, the Bible says that ultimately God’s word is our judge.⁴⁷ *“...the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day.”* Jesus here is not talking about linguistics. He is saying that if people do not live according to his words, instructions, admonitions, commandments, etc., and transform themselves on the inside and in their lives, then they will be judged. This does not indicate that it is God who will personally judge

them. It says that the quality they attain when they die will determine their fate, like Lazarus and the rich man.

Some will remind us that Jesus said we should fear the one who has the authority to throw you into hell.⁴⁸ As we already saw in a previous chapter, most people assume Jesus was speaking of fearing God. Biblical commentaries echo that sentiment and say that he must have been referring to God because we certainly should not fear Satan. However, all of this may be in error because, indeed, Jesus *did* say, “*Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*”⁴⁹ He was clearly speaking here of fearing Satan, not God. Thus, there is ample room to believe that Jesus was not speaking of God’s authority to “throw you into hell,” but rather the Devil’s. So God seems to not be our personal ultimate judge after all. Once again, our matured or non-matured heart and personality will be our judge in the end, a result of how we related to God’s word in our life, or not.

It seems that there may be truth in the age-old adage: *‘What you are born with was God’s gift to you, and what you make of yourself will be your gift to him’* and it may also determine the life you will live after you die.

Finally, this harmonizes perfectly with Jesus’ famous parable of the prodigal son. God welcomes with open arms the repentful son, even though he did many bad things and lived an unholy life,

he changed his heart and became virtuous. His father had no concern for the wayward life that he had lived. He simply loved him as if it never happened, to the chagrin of his other son. Who you are and what you make of yourself is what is important; not what you did or didn't do along the way beyond how it affected your internal growth and maturity. We can even benefit from our mistakes when we learn from them. Of course, what you do or don't do shapes who you are, but it's where you end up on the inside, not the potholes along the way, that counts.

12. Only one God

You are probably familiar with the concept of ‘God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.’ This is the belief that there are three persons in one God. It is called the Holy Trinity or Trinitarianism. It is so fundamental to most of Christianity that anyone would assume this must be firmly rooted in the Bible.

But as you may have guessed by now, this concept is *not* clearly rooted in the Bible at all. The closest resemblance to the expression above can be found in the Jesus’ last departing words to his disciples when he ascended to heaven, known as the Great Commission:

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”⁵⁰

In reality, there is literally no explicit reference to Jesus as ‘God the Son’ anywhere in the Bible. Earthshaking?

Because Jesus was a man, but he did miracles and expressed such great virtue and love so as to be considered Divine, the early Church disciples and Church fathers wrestled with the question of who Jesus really was. Was he just a man? Was he literally God the creator? Was he the Son of God or was he God the Son? These and other perspectives were argued for centuries. The early Church held conferences, called Councils, and attacked this question head-on. They finally and democratically concluded that somehow God is one but there are three persons in this one God, namely God the Father, God the Son (Jesus) and God the Holy Spirit. No one has figured out how this can actually be so. It is purely and solidly a ‘doctrine’ or belief. There must be some Biblical support for it. What is it?

Jesus was a man. Few will argue with that. But there were individuals in the Bible who thought maybe Jesus was God. Some called him their ‘Lord’ or their ‘God.’ There are a few statements in the Bible that have been interpreted by many people to mean that Jesus was not just the Son of God as a man, but actually God the Son or one part of this three-way Godhead. However, the treatment of these passages can seem a little presumptuous.

For example, Jesus said, “*Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.*”⁵¹ This has been interpreted by many to mean that Jesus is saying he is literally God the Father in human form. But what does it actually say? Let’s read this statement again. “*Anyone who*

has seen me has seen the Father.” Taken at face value, it could just as well be that Jesus was saying that he was a living expression of God’s heart, character, personality and spirit.⁵²

Jesus also said, *“I and the Father are one.... the Father is in me, and I in the Father.”*⁵³ However, Jesus also said in a prayer to God, *“...so that they may be one as we are one.”*⁵⁴ This means that the “oneness” of God the Father and Jesus was similar in his mind to the oneness that he wished to see between and among us, his disciples. That would mean that Jesus is *not* literally God the Father but is distinct from him while also “one” with him, as we should be “one” with each other. It is clearly a relational ‘oneness,’ not an existential ‘oneness.’

And we must address the fact that many people think that somehow Jesus must have been a perfect Divine person from birth. This may have been a bit of imaginary wishful thinking on the part of our parents and grandparents because according to St. Paul in the same Good Book:

*“In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation (Jesus) perfect through what he suffered.”*⁵⁵

Thus, according to St. Paul, Jesus became perfect through the trials he suffered throughout his life.

There are some serious consequences to twisting the meaning of the text of the Bible into saying that Jesus was God the Son instead of the Son of God. If Jesus is God the Son, then there would be no hope that we mortal humans could ever become like him, yet he commanded us to do just that.⁵⁶ Such a belief undermines Jesus' role as a model and mentor for us. To justify this misconception, a minister once said to me regarding Jesus' statement that we must become perfect like God, "*Well, Jesus didn't really mean that. He must have been kidding.*" Some of our parents and grandparents were reluctant to recognize that God is God and man is man.

St. Paul said, "*For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,*"⁵⁷ Here we read that the fullness of God lives in Jesus. How marvelous! Jesus embodies all of God's qualities, virtues and heart. But, to extend this to become a proclamation that therefore Jesus is God the Son rather than the Son of God may again be stretching the meaning of the text.

Paul also said that God "appointed" Jesus heir of all things.⁵⁸ Would God appoint himself heir?

Like the statement before, 1Jn 2:23 says "*No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.*" Again, rather than blurring the Father and the Son together into one being, this actually affirms their distinction.

1Jn 5:20 reads,

“We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true by being in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.”

This is a tricky passage. But if you read it carefully, Jesus is affirmed as the “*Son of God*” who has come so that we may know “*him who is true*.” Who is “*him who is true*?” It is clearly God. The words “*He is the true God and eternal life*” are clearly referring not to Jesus but to “*him who is true*,” which is clearly identified as God.

We could go through many more such statements which have been interpreted in questionable ways. But, the overwhelming bulk of what the Bible actually says unmistakably supports a very different view than what some people see in the passages above. In fact, the text is heavily on the side of Jesus and God the Father being distinct entities and strongly makes the case that Jesus is the Son of God rather than God the Son. Consider the following few passages:

“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”⁵⁹ Here we read that there is something that God knows but which Jesus doesn’t know.

“My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me.

Yet not as I will, but as you will.”⁶⁰ They are obviously distinct entities. Jesus is the Son of God, pleading with his Father in prayer.

“*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*”⁶¹ Here again, if Jesus is God the Son, Jesus must be talking to himself.

“*Jesus asked the boy’s father, ‘How long has he been like this?’*”⁶² If Jesus were God the Son, he would know the answer to this question.

“*Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.*”⁶³ This only makes sense if Jesus is the Son of God and not God the Son.

“*And I will ask the Father...for the Father is greater than I.*”⁶⁴

“*...by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”⁶⁵ God “appointed” him. God “raised” him.*

“*For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus,*”⁶⁶ Jesus is in the position of mediator, or bridge. One cannot mediate for oneself.

“*He was faithful to the one who appointed him”⁶⁷ God “appointed” him.*

“*During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his*

reverent submission. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.”⁶⁸ This passage is full of evidence that Jesus is the Son of God and not God the Son.

There are many more passages which could have been mentioned. Again, if you want to dig deeper into this, read my book, *Church on Sand*.

To pull this all together, God is God and man is man. It is as simple as that. Jesus was clearly the Son of God and not God the Son. This should not diminish his value in our life at all but rather enhance it since Jesus is again in a position to be our model and mentor, as he wanted and intended to be. It should also remove some of the mysteriousness of the Bible and of the faith that our parents and grandparents chose to believe in. With the universe and nature being so understandable and relatable, why shouldn't our relationship with God be the same? It is all natural.

13. A God who wants only your fulfillment, happiness and love

Too many people fear God. He seems so judgmental and nasty. We've been taught that he holds the keys to your eternal prison cell in fiery hell. You wouldn't want to meet this God in a dark alley, especially if you've done anything he wouldn't approve of. He's fearsome. He strikes terror into our hearts. Muslims pray day and night for him to 'have mercy' on them.

Not only is this not good for our psychological well-being, it is totally inconsistent with the God that we believe created the most elegant, gorgeous and perfect nature and universe that we can imagine. We melt into its mesmerizing peace and tranquility when we go on hikes or fish by a lazy stream. We marvel at its tenderness and sensitivity when we gaze into a bed of beautiful flowers of all shapes and sizes, each perfectly crafted with every aesthetic sensitivity of balance, symmetry, harmony and complementarity. The variety of beauty and design defies Darwinian logic.

How can we reconcile this blatant contradiction? Hindu's simply believe in the existence of multiple gods; some harsh and legalistic and others gentile and kind. That's one way to reconcile it. However, if there is one living creator God as the Abrahamic faiths teach, then we need to dig deeper.

Nature is not lying to us and it needs no interpretation. What we see is what we get. How about the Good Book? Did we miss something there? Is it incomplete? Are we misinterpreting again? Is it really describing the same creator God that nature represents to us?

To successfully navigate this question, we need to be smart when looking for evidence in the Book. For beginners, we need to put on a welding helmet with a very dark glass so we can filter out all of God's expressions of frustration and anger at man's seemingly endless lack of cooperation and trust. Over millions of years of actual human history, his frustration would be expected and reasonable. We perhaps need to let God be God. Once we filter all of that out, we can begin to see what we are looking for.

It all started with God's vision given to his first human couple, the seed of humanity. He is said to have told them to: "be fruitful, multiply and have dominion."⁶⁹ This would be a totally positive, bright and happy vision. There was no condemnation, no threat, no fear, no legalistic mandates, nothing. It appears God was expecting a human world which would be in sync with his beautiful natural

world, a human world of peace and happiness. And if we became ‘fruitful’ people before we ‘multiplied,’ then we would be surrounded by happy families, as well. Certainly the ‘have dominion’ part would not have been envisioned as a dominion of selfish exploitation and greedy abuse, but rather one built upon this mature and happy human world that God intended. This would clearly not be the vision of a world full of forgiven sinners. Are we reading too much optimism and idealism into this simple sentence in the Good Book? There is reason to think not.

God later said that he was seeking “*godly offspring.*”⁷⁰ That reinforces the imagery of the previous paragraph. In other words, it’s all about quality. Virtue. Happiness. Goodness.

The prophet Isaiah painted the picture of where God wanted to go with this whole thing, and it not surprisingly resembles the original vision. He talks of no more war, unending peace, a righteous and just society forevermore. Former enemies will live in peace and harmony together. There will be no more violence or destruction and God’s people will own the land forever.⁷¹

Jesus gave numerous metaphorical descriptions of the kingdom of heaven. In one he described heaven being like a king who held a wedding for his son and invited many people to attend. One who was not dressed for the occasion was rejected. We can interpret this parable to mean that God’s kingdom is not a ‘come-as-you-are’ event but rather something that we must prepare

ourselves to be qualified to be a part of; not externally in terms of clothing but internally in heart and character.⁷²

It is so sad that people tend to interpret the instructions from God in external and material ways, rather than internally. That seems to be a Western tendency. Eastern cultures based on the teachings of Buddha or Confucius or Taoism tend to interpret truths and life more internally. They stress introspection and self-reflection. They tend to focus more on quality of life rather than on externals. This may be one reason many younger people take an interest and fascination in Eastern thought.

It is correct. Perhaps Christianity has been too externally oriented and needs more of these elements of Eastern mysticism and philosophy. An inward-looking, self-reflective Christianity would be far more authentic and true to what God and Jesus seem to be all about. The older generation will not take us there. Perhaps the younger generation can do it. The East and the West, if blended together, could produce a much more authentic faith than what we have ever seen before, and a much clearer experience and understanding of the real, living God; the God our parents and grandparents totally missed.

Thank you for reading this book. I do hope it gave you valuable food for thought and enhanced your life and perspective. If so, would you do me a favor and write a very short review for this book on Amazon.com? Together, you and I can help someone else to experience what you did in your reading. Thank you.

Dr. D. Michael Hentrich

- NOTES -

other books by Dr. Hentrich...

- *The Humanist God*
- *Dare to See*
- *God Doesn't Want to be God Anymore*
- *Angelic DNA*

¹ Gen 32:25; Hos 12:4 The Holy Bible NIV

² Gen 19:3

³ 2Peter 3:8

⁴ Mt 3:11

⁵ Rom 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5

⁶ Jn 8:39-44

⁷ Gen 2:24; Mt 19:5; Mark 10:8; Eph 5:31

⁸ Deut 30:19

⁹ Mt 18:12

¹⁰ Luke 15:24

¹¹ Mt 18:14

¹² Mt 10:29,30

¹³ Lk 19:41; 22:62; Jn 11:35

¹⁴ Lev 26; Deut 28

¹⁵ Gen 6:6

¹⁶ 1Sam 15:35

¹⁷ Zech 1:15

¹⁸ Lk 10:27

¹⁹ Mt 5:44

²⁰ Mt 21:33-43

²¹ James 2:16

²² 2Chr 7:14

²³ Mt 10:29-30

²⁴ Mk 14:21

²⁵ Is 53

²⁶ Is 9,11,60

²⁷ Mt 21:33-43

²⁸ 1Sam 15:11

²⁹ Hosea 6:6

³⁰ Prov 16:6

³¹ 1Sam 15:22

³² Micah 6:6-8

³³ Psalms 51:15-17

³⁴ Jn 3:16

³⁵ Mk 14:21

³⁶ Is 9,11,60

³⁷ Mk 2:17

³⁸ Ps 55:23; Lk12:5

³⁹ Luke 12:5

⁴⁰ Mt 10:28

- 41 1Cor 13:1-3
- 42 Lk 16:19-31
- 43 Mt 5:48
- 44 Gal 6:7
- 45 Mt 16:19
- 46 1Cor 13
- 47 Jn 12:48
- 48 Lk 12:5
- 49 Mt 10:28
- 50 Mt 28:19
- 51 Jn 14:9
- 52 Col 1:19; 2:9
- 53 John 10:30, 38; Jn 14:9-11
- 54 Jn 17:11, 22
- 55 Heb 2:10
- 56 Mt 5:48
- 57 Col 1:19; 2:9
- 58 Heb 1:2, 8
- 59 Mt 24:36
- 60 Mt 26:39
- 61 Mt 27:46
- 62 Mk 9:21
- 63 Lk 23:46
- 64 Jn 14:16, 28
- 65 Acts 17:31
- 66 1Tim 2:5
- 67 Heb 3:2
- 68 Heb 5:7-10
- 69 Gen 1:28
- 70 Mal 2:15
- 71 Is 9,11,60
- 72 Mt 22:1-14