

# **New Philosophy of God**

## *Christian Naturalism*

By

**Sean Wilson**

# **New Philosophy of God: Christian Naturalism**

**By Sean Wilson**

**This book first published 2025**

**Ethics International Press Ltd, UK**

**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

**A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library**

**Copyright © 2025 by Sean Wilson**

**All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.**

**Print Book ISBN: 978-1-83711-076-6**

**eBook ISBN: 978-1-83711-077-3**

*I would like to say, "This book is written to the glory of God," but nowadays that would be chicanery, that is, it would not be rightly understood. It means the book is written in good will, and in so far as it is not so written, but out of vanity, etc., the author would wish to see it condemned. He cannot free it of these impurities further than he himself is free of them.<sup>1</sup>*

---

<sup>1</sup>—Ludwig Wittgenstein. Taken from his book dedication in 1930. See *Philosophical Remarks*, ed. Rush Rhees, trans. Raymond Hargreaves and Roger White (University of Chicago, 1975), 7.

# Table of Contents

Abbreviations & Style.....	xi
Conventions.....	xvi
Preface.....	xvii
Introduction .....	xxi

## Part I: God

Chapter 1: Human Nature .....	1
Format.....	1
Teleology .....	5
Atheists.....	7
Chapter 2: The Soul.....	12
Felt Experience .....	12
The Concept .....	15
The Rival.....	18
Chapter 3: Near Death Experiences .....	22
Qualities.....	23
Death Perception? .....	28
Chapter 4: What is God? .....	34
Person?.....	34
Parfit.....	38
Continuity .....	42
End-Infinity.....	46
Chapter 5: Physics & Miracles .....	49
Miracles .....	49
Aspect-Miracles.....	53
Intervention.....	56
Conclusion .....	60

Chapter 6: Afterlife.....	64
Meaning of Life.....	64
Ultra-Reality.....	66
Resurrection.....	70
Politics.....	74
Ethics.....	76
Conclusion.....	78

## **Part II: Jesus**

Chapter 7: Virtue Ethics.....	81
Mental State.....	81
Levels.....	85
Chapter 8: Pluralism.....	94
Modality.....	94
Circumstance.....	99
Reciprocity.....	102
Extremes.....	105
Chapter 9: The Corrupted Jesus.....	109
The Issue.....	109
Apostles.....	111
The Problem.....	116
Conclusion.....	121
Chapter 10: Belief.....	123
Social Belief.....	123
Proof.....	126
Honest Belief.....	128
Aspect.....	130
Chapter 11: Secrecy.....	136
Induced Belief.....	136
Secrecy.....	140
Conclusion.....	144

Chapter 12: The Miracles of Jesus .....	147
Big Miracles.....	147
Healings.....	151
Possession.....	154
Chapter 13: God as a Human?.....	159
Jesus .....	159
Vantagepoint.....	165
Conclusion .....	170

# Abbreviations & Style

**Table A:1: Citation Short Form**

<i>Short Form</i>	<i>Full Citation</i>
Bond	Helen K. Bond, <i>The Historical Jesus, A Guide for the Perplexed</i> (Bloomsbury Academic 2014).
Dworkin	Ronald Dworkin, <i>Religion Without God</i> (Harvard University Press 2013)
Drange	Theodore M. Drange, <i>Nonbelief &amp; Evil, Two Arguments for the Non-Existence of God</i> (Prometheus 1998).
Ehrman	Bart D. Ehrman, <i>Heaven and Hell, A History of the Afterlife</i> (Oneworld 2020)
Eusebius	Eusebius, <i>The History of the Church</i> trans. G.A. Williamson (Dorset Press 1965)
TFC	Sean Wilson, <i>The Flexible Constitution</i> (Lexington Books, 2013).
Josephus	Flavius Josephus, <i>Josephus, The Complete Works</i> , trans. William Whiston (Thomas Nelson Publishers 1998)
Malcolm-1	Norman Malcolm, <i>Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir</i> (Oxford 1962).
Malcolm-2	Norman Malcolm, <i>Wittgenstein, A Religious Point of View?</i> (Cornell University Press 1994)
Monk	Ray Monk, <i>The Duty of Genius</i> (Penguin 1991).
Miller	Ed L. Miller, <i>God and Reason, An Invitation to Philosophical Theology</i> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> ed., Prentice Hall (1995)
NCT	Sean Wilson, <i>New Critical Thinking; What Wittgenstein Offered</i> (Lexington 2018)
NDE-1	Janice Miner Holden, Bruce Greyson & Debbie James, "The Field of Near-Death Studies: Past, Present, and Future" (Chapter 1) in <i>The Handbook of Near-Death Experiences, Thirty Years of Investigations</i> , eds., Janice

- Miner Holden, Bruce Greyson and Debbie James (Praeger Publishers 2009)
- NDE-2 Nancy L. Zingrone and Carlos S. Alvarado, "Pleasurable Western Adult Near-Death Experiences: Features, Circumstances, and Incidence" (Chapter 2) in *The Handbook of Near-Death Experiences, Thirty Years of Investigations*, eds., Janice Miner Holden, Bruce Greyson and Debbie James (Praeger Publishers 2009)
- NDE-3 Janice Miner Holden, "Veridical Perception in Near-Death Experiences" (Chapter 9) in *The Handbook of Near-Death Experiences, Thirty Years of Investigations*, eds., Janice Miner Holden, Bruce Greyson and Debbie James (Praeger Publishers 2009).
- NDE-4 Bruce Greyson, Emily Williams Kelly & Edward F. Kelly, "Explanatory Models for Near-Death Experiences" (Chapter 10) in *The Handbook of Near-Death Experiences, Thirty Years of Investigations*, eds., Janice Miner Holden, Bruce Greyson and Debbie James (Praeger Publishers 2009)
- NDE-5 Sam Parnia, Tara Keshavarz Shirazi, Jignesh Patel, Linh Tran, Niraj Sinha, Caitlin O'Neil, Emma Roellke, Amanda Mengotto, Shannon Findlay, Michael McBrine, Rebecca Spiegel, Thaddeus Tarpey, Elise Huppert, Ian Jaffe, Anelly M. Gonzales, Jing Xu, Emmeline Koopman, Gavin D. Perkins, Alain Vuyisteke, Benjamin M. Bloom, Charles D. Deakin, "Awareness During Resuscitation-II: A Multi-Center Study of Consciousness and Awareness in Cardiac Arrest," *Resuscitation* (Vol 191, 109903, Oct 2023); online:  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resuscitation.2023.109903>
- NDE-6 Janice Miner Holden, "Preface" in *The Handbook of Near-Death Experiences, Thirty Years of Investigations*, eds., Janice Miner Holden Bruce Greyson and Debbie James (Praeger Publishers 2009)



- NDE-7      Gang Xu, Temenuzhka Mihaylova, Duan Li, Fangyun Tian, Peter M. Farrehi, Jack M. Parent, George A. Mashour, Michael M. Wang and Jimo Borjigin, "Surge of neurophysiological coupling and connectivity of gamma oscillations in the dying human brain," in *The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (PNAS) (Vol 120, No 19, May 1, 2023); online: <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2216268120>
- Parfit      Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford 1987)
- Pinker      Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of our Nature, Why Violence has Declined* (Penguin Books 2011)
- Plantinga      Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom & Evil* (Harper Torchbooks 1974)
- Schechtman      Marya Schechtman, "Personal Identity," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Taylor & Francis, 2011), DOI 10.4324/9780415249126-V024-2 [version 2] & DOI 10.4324/9780415249126-V024-3 (2017) [version 3], both available online: <https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/personal-identity/v-2/sections/psychological-continuity-theories>; <https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/personal-identity/v-3>
- Spong      John Shelby Spong, *A New Christianity for a New World; Why Traditional Faith is Dying & How a New Faith is Being Born* (HarperCollins 2001)
- Tillich      Paul Tillich, *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality* (Chicago 1955)
- Tolstoy      Leo Tolstoy, *The Gospel in Brief, The Life of Jesus*, trans. Dustin Condren (HarperCollins 2011)
- Wiebe      Phillip H. Wiebe, *Visions of Jesus, Direct Encounters from the New Testament to Today* (Oxford 1997)
- Wittgenstein-1      Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Movements of Thought, Ludwig Wittgenstein's Diary, 1930-1932 and 1936-1937*, ed. James C. Klagge and Alfred Nordmann, trans. Alfred Nordmann (Rowman & Littlefield 2023)

Wittgenstein-2	Ludwig Wittgenstein, <i>Culture and Value</i> , trans. Peter Winch (Chicago 1984)
Wittgenstein-3	Ludwig Wittgenstein, <i>Lectures and Conversations, Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief</i> , ed. Cyril Barrett (University of California Press 2007)
Wittgenstein-4	Ludwig Wittgenstein, <i>Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus</i> , trans. C. K. Ogden (Barnes and Noble, 2003)
Wittgenstein-5	Ludwig Wittgenstein, <i>Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology, The Inner and the Outer</i> , vol. 2, ed. G.H. von Wright and Heikki Nyman, trans. C.G. Luckhardt and Maximilian A.E. Aue (Blackwell Publishing, 1992)
Wittgenstein-6	<i>Recollections of Wittgenstein</i> , ed. Rush Rhees (Oxford 1984).
Wright	Nicholas Thomas Wright, <i>Surprised by Hope, Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church</i> (Harper One 2008)

\* Short-form citation is used for works that are cited repeatedly. Works cited only once are referenced conventionally (in long form) and do not appear in this table.

Table A:2: Acronyms & Abbreviations	
Short Form	Reference
Acts	Acts of the Apostles
AI	artificial intelligence
AnB	Argument from Non-Belief
Col	Letter of Paul to the Colossians
Cor	Letters of Paul to the Corinthians
CPR	cardiopulmonary resuscitation
EEG	electroencephalography
Ex	Book of Exodus

Gal	Letter of Paul to the Galatians
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
Heb	The Book of Hebrews
Is	Book of Isaiah
John	Gospel of John
John	Letters of John
Jonah	Book of Jonah
Kings	Book of Kings
Luke	Gospel of Luke
Matt	Gospel of Matthew
Mk	Gospel of Mark
NDE	near-death experience
NET	New English Translation (bible)
Numb	Book of Numbers
OBE	out-of-body experience
Peter	Letters of Peter
Phil	Epistle to Philemon
PoE	Problem of Evil
prop or $p$	Proposition
Prov	Book of Proverbs
Pslm	Book of Psalms
RED	Recalled experience of death
Rom	Letter of Paul to the Romans
Thes	Letters of Paul to Thessalonians
Tim	Letters of Paul to Timothy
Tit	Letter of Paul to Titus

---

# Conventions

All references to the Christian bible are to the New English Translation (2019) unless indicated otherwise. And I use the following style conventions:

## *BC v. BCE*

I use the traditional notation BC and AD because the newer forms don't change anything in their grammar—they convey the same demarcation. Because the new form appears superfluous, I don't see how it improved anything.

## *him*

Because the grammar of pronouns doesn't work well for God, I stayed with a generic sense of "him." The use of "it" seemed alienating. I chose never to capitalize the pronoun because doing so felt like patriotism.

## *"logics"*

I use the phrase "assertability logics" when referring to Wittgenstein's idea of preconditioned inherency in assertion. I pluralize the word logic because the phrase tends to reference more than one preconditioned step, inference, derivative or product hiding within any act of human marshaling. I'm not referencing "the marshaling" but the collage of latent features hiding within. A synonym would be *assertability conditions*.

## *Wittgenstein*

I frequently mention Wittgenstein but never introduce him. Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) was an Austrian-born philosopher who is widely regarded as the greatest philosopher of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Wittgensteinians like myself widely regard him as the greatest philosopher ever (See NCT, 3-42).

## Preface

For many academics the difficulty with religion is that it requires a leap of some kind, as if we were asked to jump into a body of water. We don't like to take things at face value. What we see as being asked is for us to fall in love with something, as though we were handed a bride.

The problem then becomes what ensues after the leap. It feels like being on a ledge, with our faculties becoming "bent." We must either barricade the supplied propositions about God, keeping them separate from our normal intellectual life, as though the brain had a partition, or, in a much worse case—should the partition fail—we slip into an indefensible zeal that warps our good judgment.

And so, what many "believing" academics do, to be frank, is they cheat. They silently redefine the venture so that it doesn't involve "belief" after all. Nothing gets officially endorsed. Instead, we let broad concepts reside in the closet of our psychology as a kind of hope or trust in a picture of goodness that we simply *want* to be true.

We have no honest choice, in short, but to quietly abstain when confronting the God question in earnest. We store the whole problem in a closet somewhere and leave it at that. Surely this is the major reason why people like me would never go to church.

One of my ardent beliefs for many years was that God shouldn't be advocated for or against because looking too closely at the issue only despoiled everything. It either made you see unforgivable warts in the imaginative story-arcs that various proselytizers offer or threatened to unknowingly encapsulate you in someone else's parentage, as if you had become a child.

Yet, a curious paradox persisted. If you nakedly abandoned the whole concept outright—throwing it into the trash—something became *worse*. It became like those people who use reductionism to deconstruct romantic love, proclaiming the whole thing to only be the temporary effect of brain

chemicals. The problem is that this destroys the entire behavior of love (the sociology). It causes something cold and sterile, or even potentially malcontented, to enter through such a portal. We get changed for the worse.

I remember telling my daughter the same exact thing when she told me that she had become an atheist. She was an undergraduate in college, the time when so many of us become atheists. It has something to do with surpassing the trappings of community—our upbringing—in favor of the “educated arguments.” It’s almost like a rite of passage for the smart liberal arts student. I myself became an insufferably proud atheist in college. (Thank God YouTube didn’t exist back then).

But yet, as a father who went through all of that, I was now trying to help my daughter to avoid basic mistakes. “Look,” I said to her, “don’t completely close the window on the God question because you never know if something good might crawl in.” My point was that rejecting the whole thing outright was much worse than simply declaring neutrality. Agnostics are far more intellectually honest than atheists, I said.

For many years this was my counsel. But somewhere down the line, something within me began to change. I felt that the idea of god now needed affirmatively defended. A basic part of it no doubt has to do with my age—the back half of life causes a focus quite different from the front. But just as importantly, my instincts as a Wittgensteinian played a role. I became fundamentally irked by our era’s gripping confusions and inexcusable discourse. We are more blind and drunken today than at any other age. This, as much as anything else, was the impetus for the book.

Our era has two basic problems. The first is that we now live within these specious bubbles of imagination, digitally bequeathed, that conflate attitude for truth. You have so many of these insufferable proselytizers, both for and against, who broadcast in disposable platforms where an audience gets to self-select its neighborhood of allegiance, not unlike a dog who gets continuously fed a form of candy as his food.

The result is that we can no longer differentiate truth from framework. Not only has this destroyed our ability to contemplate, but it has transformed

“thinking” into a recurring deluge of wish-projection and fits of attitude. The digital age has taught us, quite frankly, that it is *we* who are the animals.

And secondly, our current age has bent our imagination for the unknown. We more easily believe in “aliens” and conspiracies than God. You can see this quite clearly when comparing the younger generations to the older. The idea of God is becoming lost in a technological age that increasingly sees the whole venture as an ancient fairy tale—a place card in our cultural development, amounting to a kind of stupidity in history. Only the dumb or old people believe in this, the perception goes, because it was all a product of some pre-technical past. The aliens, by contrast—now that’s the real stuff (the future).

And so it is for these reasons that I have written this book. My goal is to confront this social problem. What I provide is a fresh, defensible and newly clarified conception of God that hangs together across any time and epoch, and for any intellect. It not only provides an improved imagination upon the dismal picture that our atheist comrades harbor concerning who we humans really are in life, and why, but it greatly improves upon the frightful impairments that afflict the imagination of our evangelical friends.

In fact, I will show that both atheists and evangelicals are the truly unthinking people, each consumed chiefly by their own sort of possession (ideology). My book never says these things; it *shows* them.

And the tools that I shall use are philosophical rather than conscripting. My argument is founded in perspicuous aspect, discerning posits, factual indicia and connoisseurship—there are no naked faiths or orthodox declarations anywhere in this work. There is, in short, no dogma. Wittgensteinians like myself detest all forms of orthodoxy, and we work upon conundrums from the inside out.

We use, in short, a flashlight in the cave.

# Introduction

When pondering God, methods matter. In this book I am not interested in the way historians approach religious belief. They are only ostensibly concerned with whether something is truthfully accounted for in the human memory. I am not interested in, e.g., which parts of the Gospels are interpolations or who scribbled over what to make something look better.

Instead, I am fundamentally interested in how to think well about questions like who is God, why are we here, how can the God system credibly work, and what role to give to Jesus. My approach treats Christianity as a predefined body of belief—a program of public imagination that is continually reinforced by churches and adherents. I take the whole matter, in short, as a *philosophy*. And my goal therefore is to critique it as such.

The problem with religions such as Christianity is that they take their starting point as something given in sacred texts and proceed to construct its meaning using tradition and storytelling (narrative). This causes one to treat biblical text as though it were an independent directive, not unlike an instruction manual. The result is too resolute of a reading, i.e., that too many propositions get formed.

And so, if the text says that the universe was created in six days, the modus for a “believer” becomes how to make a *p* out of this. One either takes the prop directly, asking, e.g., what the idea of “day” might mean in the context, or one assigns an alternative grammar to the *p*, making it offer a literary point only, a tactic that still preserves the authority of the text. The truth always lies in either direct meaning or riddle. And that’s the point—bibles have to stay authoritative as the starting point.

But the opposite view holds that the writers of ancient religious texts were themselves offering nothing more than inspiration that arose out of socially



paramount experiences.<sup>1</sup> Because they had to interpret these experiences, religion became “a function of the human mind,” as famous philosopher and theologian Paul Tillich once said.<sup>2</sup> What theologians and prophets truly offer, therefore, are conceptions about metaphysics that they want believers to adopt—something that makes the entire subject a species of *philosophy*.

If we do, in fact, treat religion as being a species of philosophy, it changes the way that we must inspect and critique it. The fallacy is to think that we cannot objectively critique our metaphysical imaginations any more than we can a dream. This is blatantly untrue—even literature or fiction has assertability logics that affect its believability, something that becomes most paramount if we try to import the story into our real life. The whole thing becomes suspect to application logic (how it fits).

This problem was well appreciated by the famous American bishop of the Episcopal Church, John Shelby Spong, who once wrote, “I do not believe in a deity who can help a nation win a war [or] intervene to cure a loved one’s sickness,”<sup>3</sup> because, he said, such a thing contradicts “everything I know about the natural order of the world I inhabit.”<sup>4</sup> He is saying that there is a literary imagination about God that can’t fit reality very well. His point is that our idea of God has to fit what actually transpires in the experience of life. And this makes the God project one that involves inference and *aspect* rather than fomenting a loyalty-obedience to ancient sentences.

To be sure, there are those who steadfastly resist the idea that religious texts should be intellectually inspected. The classical view holds that the word

---

<sup>1</sup> As Phillip Wiebe says of famous pragmatist William James, “Experience is primary, and . . . religion is an interpretation of that,” Wiebe, 216 (citing to J.E. Smith, “William James’s Account of Mysticism: A Critical Appraisal,” p. 247). Wiebe also quotes Alister Hardy, “Any authority declaring the nature of God in the sacred writings of the various religions of the world is derived from the experience of the holy men of each of these particular faiths. All such authority is based upon original experience.” Wiebe, 216 (citing to *The Biology of God*, p.183).

<sup>2</sup> Tillich, 2. He continues, “The Bible is a document both of the divine self-manifestation and of the way in which human beings have received it” (4).

<sup>3</sup> Spong, 3 (“I do not believe in a deity who can help a nation win a war, intervene to cure a loved one’s sickness, allow a particular athletic team to defeat its opponent, or affect the weather for anyone’s benefit”).

<sup>4</sup> Spong, 4.

of God constitutes revelation itself, making it immune from critique. You simply take fundamental assertions as a “given.” The fear, of course, is that this results not only in a flawed story but in too much unexplained mystery in an imagination that might otherwise be salvageable.

And so, if you ask critical questions like, why didn’t God create the world in five days—or, if he can shout from the sky,<sup>5</sup> why doesn’t he just do that now to dispel certain problems—you end up with one of two replies. You either receive a supplementary imagination from the religious “teacher” that unhelpfully decorates what in truth is an incredulous postulate in the first place, or you hear the answer “just because.” And this results in the defective story line bequeathed to us by an ancient mind becoming organizationally mandated today, as fiat, using mystery or camouflage as the instrument to protect its assertions.<sup>6</sup>

There is yet another view that wants to insulate religion from critical inspection, but for more complex reasons. What makes religion different, this view says, is merely its “commitment and practice” rather than its propositions.<sup>7</sup> This is arguing that religion *isn’t* philosophy—it is something that you simply leap into and do, with the doing of it being what it “is.” Religion, in short, is just a social practice.

The fear, however, is that this account asks us to become pieces in something so long as one enjoys the play or direction. It becomes not all that indistinguishable in my eyes from the Moose Club. I don’t think any honest academic can or should approach the matter this way.

My view is much more in Paul Tillich’s camp. Tillich thought not only that philosophy was clarifying as a method, but that good philosophy was

---

<sup>5</sup> There are numerous examples in the Hebrew Bible where God speaks clearly. For example, Pslm 29:3–9 has God shouting in unmistakable ways. God clearly speaks in Genesis 3:8–19 to Adam and Eve; to Noah in 8:15 and 9:1–17; and to Jacob in 35:9–15. In Exodus 20:1–24 he clearly addresses Moses and others, and again in 33:1–22. And God’s voice is mysterious but very clear in Ezekiel 43:1–7 and 2:1–2.

<sup>6</sup> Ronald Dworkin reminds us of an interesting consequence of assigning too much mystery to something. Such a thing may render the matter unintelligible. See Dworkin, 31.

<sup>7</sup> See Miller, 5–7 (Philosophy is concerned with “critical reflection” while religion is concerned with “ultimate commitment”).

fundamentally oriented around big ideas in human existence, such as why we are here and what is the meaning of life.<sup>8</sup> He therefore saw philosophy and religion as intertwined. “No theologian should be taken seriously as a theologian . . . if his work shows that he does not take philosophy seriously,” he taught.<sup>9</sup> This is because philosophy is what allows us “to discover the principles, the structures, and the nature of being as it is embodied in everything that is.”<sup>10</sup>

Though I find Tillich’s attitude to have good spirit, the approach that I take in this book differs in one critical respect. I am Wittgensteinian.<sup>11</sup> Good philosophy never discovers new information; it merely provides the most clarifying arrangement of what is already there. The best critique locates the knots and kinks beneath the surface of our claims—things only seen by perspicuous excavation. What I do in this work, therefore, is critique and repair Christianity’s assertability conditions.

And the method that I use will work on the problem from the inside out. It will be descriptive in nature, keeping the author above explicit endorsements while utilizing bedrock insights of Ludwig Wittgenstein. The specific things I take from Wittgenstein include: (a) treating intellectual beliefs about God as propositions of aspect (not empirics); (b) seeing the darkness of humanity as the starting point for religious implicature; (c) rejecting orthodoxy in favor of seeing connections; and (d) stressing quietism in religious overtures.

Having just described my book’s method, I now wish to summarize its findings.

---

<sup>8</sup> Tillich rightly had a broad concept of philosophy. He thought that questions like why am I here were of the same type of concern as, “I think, therefore I am” (Descartes), which is a concern for significant questions of life meaning. Tillich, 5-9. He believed that philosophy was ultimately about “what it means to *be* . . . what it means to say that something *is* . . . a state of perplexity about the nature of being” (6), undertaken by “those who aspire to wisdom” (8).

<sup>9</sup> Tillich, 7-8.

<sup>10</sup> Tillich, 8. He continues, “Every human being philosophizes, just as every human being moralizes and acts politically [and] religiously” (8-9).

<sup>11</sup> See NCT.

## Findings

What I provide in this book is the most defensible view of God and his system, including how we should think about the role that Jesus plays. Some of my conclusions build upon paths laid by other thinkers, such as John Shelby Spong and existentialist thinkers like Paul Tillich, while others amount to fresh inroads.

I will show that the idea of God arises in us due to our form of life (the existential), not because of ancient stories or texts that were handed down (the sociological). God becomes paramount to us merely because of the way we exist as a species (chapter 1). And the idea that we have a soul, I will show, is not only one of the most reasonable posits that one could make in the entire field of metaphysics—smart people could easily go for this—but is also one that has honest indicia in reality (chapters 2 and 3).

I also show that it is false to imagine God as a “person.” The best way to conceive of him is not unlike Tillich did, as a ground of being, magnanimous in nature, who is responsible for bringing about other iterations of conscious life. The key similarity that God shares with us or any creature that has a mind’s eye like ours, is sentience itself (consciousness). That is what makes earth animals like us “in his image” (chapter 4).

Because sentience is focal, I argue that the best conception of afterlife is one that is dualist in nature. I therefore reject the idea of a “resurrection of the dead” due to its assertability conditions being so poor (chapter 6).

Perhaps most importantly, I show that if God really does exist, our experience of life on the earth would be no different than what it is right now. Reality in no way disconfirms God, as atheists like my former professor and wonderful human being Theodore Drange strongly argued.<sup>12</sup> This is because God can’t violate the rules of physics any more than you or I can. There are no “Disney miracles” in the properly understood system. Anything God does to intervene in our lives always remains socially

---

<sup>12</sup> See Drange.

contestable in format, having a perfectly natural explanation (chapters 5 and 12).

Building upon this idea, I show that the God project itself is one that is intrinsically defined by secrecy rather than demonstration (proof). You cannot have a credible imagination for God unless you place him perpetually behind a social veil. That is the only way that the system can credibly perform. One could even describe it as the ultimate conspiracy theory.

The second part of the book places Jesus into the picture. My point here is to show that this story arc is of dire importance. I claim that the Jesus additive, once it is properly corrected and reformed, should be seen as providing a universal conception of ethics, applicable to any theistic persuasion. What I offer in the book is the rescued story. The reason why it is urgent is because it officially captures God's magnanimous nature while universally clarifying the way that humans are to live and behave toward one another (chapters 7 and 8).

But I also claim that this universal additive gets hidden from us due to the Christian churches continually misrepresenting what Jesus actually taught. His teachings are fundamentally about intrinsic goodness (virtue), something that his first-century followers innocently maladministered (chapter 9), a fact that continues to afflict us today.

And I clarify the role that "faith" supposedly plays in the God system. I show that under the clearest account, neither God nor Jesus wants you to "believe in them" as a pre-condition of afterlife (chapters 10 and 11). What counts is only how well you retain innocence, develop good character and show intrinsic virtue in your life.

But perhaps the most important part of the book occurs toward the end, where I completely revamp high Christology. Using tools in philosophy of mind that amount to a reconstructed use of Derek Parfit, I present a credible way to theorize about how the ultimate ground of being could supposedly become a sole unit of consciousness at a fixed point in time (chapter 13). This is meant as a substantial improvement over the first century

aristocratic literary arc that sees a deity having a son who takes key title of the father through a magical birth, ascending to a throne and “kingdom.”

Having just described the findings, I now move on to discuss the book’s organization.

## Organization

The book is organized into two logical parts. Part-I is concerned with how to think about God and his system. Part-II is about how to think clearly about Jesus as an additive. These divisions are further organized around sub-themes, though not specifically denoted. The first half of part-1 is about why it is natural for humans to contemplate the idea of God in the first place; the second half then explains what the God system should logically entail. Likewise, the first half of part-2 is devoted to explaining the ethical teachings of Jesus—i.e., how to live righteously—while the last half is concerned with how his supposed system works.

The book opens with Chapter 1, *Human Nature*, which sets forth a teleological view of human existence while arguing harshly against its format. I contend that humans have a wretched form of life, disjointed at its core—something that, if it were truly an accident, would amount to a hideous wart in the universe, a sort of Frankenstein of the cosmos. The point is that our nature cries out for help; our life cries for purpose. This aspect is contrasted with its scientized rival, which sees no intrinsic reason to complain about the human format and provides a grotesque picture of what life fundamentally amounts to.

Chapter 2, *Souls*, looks at the issue of why it is reasonable for humans to think that they have a soul due to how life “feels.” An important concept is introduced, called felt experience, which is argued to be a legitimate epistemological ground, a sort of sixth empirical sense. I also clarify how we should picture the soul—not as a ghostly thing but as a point of access for vacating all of physics itself upon death, like a wormhole of some kind.

Chapter 3, *Near Death Experiences*, looks at the medical research concerning patients who have had brushes with death and claim to have come back “from the other side.” The chapter is an objective look into the evidence,

taking the reader through the pathbreaking developments that span from the Bruce Greyson dominated era, through Sam Parnia and even to the current works Jimo Borjigin. My conclusion is that this body of research, while quite fascinating, provides nothing more than indicia rather than “proof” of souls. But I also argue that belief in either God or souls could never involve anything more than indicia in any event.

Chapter 4, *What is God*, argues that God cannot be thought of as a “person.” Tillich’s idea of a ground of being is the best picture that we have. Although God must be a sentience in format, I argue that he must nonetheless have a post-physics form of life. My conclusion relies upon a novel use of critical tools in philosophy of mind involving both Derek Parfit and Ludwig Wittgenstein.

Chapter 5, *Miracles and Physics*, makes a fundamentally critical argument about the God system. I argue point blank that if God existed, he could never violate the laws of physics in our universe. No supernatural miracles are possible. Any intervention that God makes must always have a natural explanation. Reality in no way can disconfirm God because the set-up simply doesn’t allow for such a thing.

Chapter 6, *Afterlife*, argues that the best imagination we can have for life after death is something dualist in nature. “Living on” must involve being transported to another plane of regard. This not only best fits the way God was pictured in chapter 4, but it clarifies the purpose of life—we are here, quite simply, to developing good character. I also harshly criticize the rival view that awaits a “resurrection of the dead,” where we supposedly receive perfected bodies and come back to a perfected earth, due to the poor assertability logics.

The second half of the book then begins in Chapter 7, *Virtue Ethics*, which clarifies the views that Jesus held about how to be “good” in life. I focus upon a unique but often neglected feature of his thinking—that being good only happens when one has the right feelings or connection, not with how you otherwise behave. Righteousness not only can’t be feigned but must be experienced (lived). It can never involve tokens or forms. I also show that

being good in the Jesus system has “levels” that extends from basic goodness to wholesale transformation.

Chapter 8, *Pluralism*, takes up the issue of how assessment works in the Jesus system just described. That is, how do you know if you have complied with it? I argue that the system uses pluralistic assessment that takes account of your unique circumstances. The system grades on a scale, allows for partial compliance and even looks at your *potential* for goodness.

Chapter 9, *The Corrupted Jesus*, shows how the leaders in the Jesus movement accidentally transformed their master’s teachings after his death. Through no fault of their own, they turned his message into a first century policy state that issued rules of obedience. This resulting stricture, I contend, violated the true spirit of what Jesus actually stressed and remains today a persistent contamination in the contemporary Christian imagination. The Jesus system, properly understood, was never about social rules and dictates.

Chapter 10, *Belief*, addresses what may be the greatest confusion in Christianity. I argue that being right with God or Jesus cannot be based upon whether one “believes” in either, but rather is centered upon whether a person is good in life under the ethical system that Jesus set forth. The system is therefore about *merit*, not loyalty. The major criterion is the truth of one’s character and whether such a thing is worth salvaging. I also show that intellectual beliefs in God amount to something called “aspect propositions,” an idea given to us by Wittgenstein.

Chapter 11, *Secrecy*, presents the view that the God project, including the additive involving Jesus, has no choice but to be based in secrecy. It has absolutely nothing to do with “proof.” I show that basing any affiliation upon a psychology of proof is not only a corrupted form of adherence—a threat to every church—but is something that the Jesus story itself rejects. The God project was never for demonstrative purposes; it was only meant for dispensing comfort and relief, giving humans existential help (therapy).

Chapter 12, *Jesus Miracles*, picks up on the thesis announced earlier in chapter 5. It argues that the Christian memory of Jesus being a wonder worker could not have truthfully happened. The chapter relies heavily



upon the acclaimed scholar Helen K. Bond. It shows how it is perfectly natural for a first century Judaist historical memory to have falsely chronicled Jesus with certain kinds of miracles. But his beneficent works can still be relevant to us if we see them as a form of aspect therapy. I call this view “naturalized Christianity.”

Chapter 13, *God as a Human?* takes up a strikingly important theoretical issue. I present an entirely new solution to the problems of high Christology. I show how we should think, philosophically, about an infinite ground of being taking the format of a solitary human at a fixed point in history. I present a unique solution for how we might imagine this, using keenly harvested tools in philosophy of mind. My solution wholeheartedly rejects the first century aristocratic literary arc of God “having a son” in favor of something much more conceptually viable.

And now, onward we go.

## **Part I**

# **God**

## Chapter 1

# Human Nature

A fundamental conviction of mine is that humans become receptive to the idea of God not because of ancient texts or institutional teachings (human dictates), but because of the way that life itself is experienced. I don't mean the way that anyone's individual life happens—rich, poor, oppressed—I mean the way that humanity as a species experiences life itself. This is the so-called existential perspective.

In this chapter I present a way of looking at human nature that is teleological but is also dark and harsh. The fact that we are here in the way that we are, I contend, is solid evidence that we need serious help.

I call this view *disjointed teleology*.

### **Format**

When people debate whether human nature is good or bad, the discourse often conflates something critical. There are two dimensions that exist: the social and the existential. The former are the things that humans do when *behaving*—things like starting wars, inventing democracy, committing murder; doing science, art or charity; going to the moon or contaminating the environment; procreating, stealing, discriminating, healing, etc., etc. I want to set this dimension of humanity aside in this chapter and instead focus upon the other, which concerns the *format* of human life, i.e., the existential.

For this dimension my thesis is that humans truly are *gross* creatures—flawed to the bone. Think of the hideous way that each of us comes about in life. We get thrown into the world as weak and completely dependent imbeciles, having to start from scratch, with the very process of birth inflicting so much anguish and sacrifice upon its sponsors. Think of how many women throughout the start of human history have died just because

this was the method needed to start our lives.<sup>1</sup> Even today, birth and rearing remain an astronomical sacrifice for parents.

Of course, the process of birthing is not awful if we picture ourselves to be an animal, because we see certain things as being normal for “the animals.” Part of us considers it shameful that we are, in fact, offshoots of apes who proliferated in number as a result of hideous inbreeding and “cousin mating,” finally arriving in a modern social life through a process that, in hindsight, seems much more appropriate for animals.

And it doesn’t stop there. The setup in life itself is also as revolting as anything can be for those having any sort of conscience. Think of the universal role that death plays in anything that lives in what we are forced to call “reality.” The brutal truth is that death is the single, definitive event that is the sovereign over life itself. The process of living is but a clocked process that always concludes in death.

Not only is every single individual pre-programmed to die after being “born,” but entire *species* regularly die within the ordinary course of nature,<sup>2</sup> a fate that is destined to happen to humanity itself at some point in the normal working of the physics of the cosmos.<sup>3</sup> What we call “life” in this world is actually a catalogued process of propagation and death, where the clock begins to run the moment that life has the very nerve to appear—

---

<sup>1</sup> For those who see childbirth as joyous, what you see is the baby and not the process. The arduous system—its pain and sacrifice—has become cloaked by a social psychology that forces a happy and sanitary picture. My point is that your joy would be the exact same in a world where the stork brought it.

<sup>2</sup> This happens to humans whether in the past or future. In the paper cited below, new paleoclimate evidence suggests that an extinction of archaic humans occurred in southern Europe around 1.1 million years ago due to climate change (extreme cooling). “These extreme conditions led to the depopulation of Europe.” See Vasiliki Margari, et al., “Extreme Glacial Cooling Likely Led to Hominin Depopulation of Europe in the Early Pleistocene,” in *Science* (Vol. 381, No. 6658, 2023), 693-699. Available online: <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.adf4445> (accessed April 22, 2024).

<sup>3</sup> According to David Kipping, an assistant professor of Astronomy at Columbia, when the sun’s core collapses at some point in the distant future, the earth will basically turn into another Venus, becoming dry and barren, with intense acid rain that will dissolve the rocks. See his video “Watching the End of the World,” published by *Cool Worlds*, with over 6.1 million viewers, available online, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p9e8qNNe3L0> (accessed May 22, 2024).

and provided, of course, that one does not die before nature requires, in which case even that gets stolen.

Notice that virtually everything that makes our form of life despicable is due to physics itself. Pain, depression, decline, ignorance, accident, death—all of this comes about through natural processes. Even our joys are bound in something repugnantly controlling (euphoria, proclivity, craving, power, greed, lust). Think also of how physical genetics is so ethically grotesque. Deformity, disease, mutations, virus, cancer, ugliness—all of this inflicts itself where it does while the lucky few have these “pretty” shells or lucky genes, without any apparent justification.

Think also of how awful the basic recurring processes of life are—things like hunger, odor, defecation, bodily cycles, the need to continuously eat other life, etc. And think of the simple problem of how stupidity inheres in all of us. So much of our learning amounts to bumping into things in the dark, a terribly inefficient process called “social learning” where we learn through mistakes (trial and error).

And we have this hideous aspect blindness where we can’t even see how other minds perceive happenstance. It’s so weird that we share this life format but are divorced from basic things occurring in each other’s perception. In fact, guessing how others perceive things is actually a behavioral proficiency, a skill that we have to try to pick up in life.

Even when we are ingenious enough to know or master something remarkable, we still can’t snap it into the social fabric properly. This is due to the natural problem of the bell curve, which produces only average realization for most. Among the majority, for any substantive issue, the social comprehension becomes dimmed, distorted and cliché. We can’t honestly share any exceptional intellectual understanding in any body politic due to our ridiculous format.

And again, none of this would a problem for “the animals.” It makes absolutely perfect sense to us that dogs or apes should have recurring hunger, odor, defecation, limited intelligence, a definable lifespan, a messy process of birth—because these are creatures perfectly suited to living out in the yard or in the backwoods, as if nature itself had made the earth and

her animals absolutely perfect for one another. The imagination that we have for the Garden of Eden is actually one that is true for the animals and plants, not us. We are so in raptures with this picture that we even create something called a “zoo.” An interesting question is what exactly is the difference between Eden and a zoo?

And yet, as we think more closely about this blatant contradiction in our perception—that we, too, are one of these earth animals—something odd begins to protrude upon our thoughts. At the very least, we—the grotesque humans—can *see* this. We can see the way that we are horribly formatted. How is that possible? It seems that seeing our own disgust brings us to a ledge of some kind, a moment of realization that becomes very important.

I doubt very seriously that many other animals on the planet, if any, are disgusted with their format. Why am I disgusted at the way we are born? Why do I hate the fact that we resemble apes in uncomfortable ways? Why do I hate human odor and life’s meaningless repetitive tasks? Why do I hate superficiality? Why do I hate tragedy? It isn’t because, as a psychologist might say, I don’t have a life or a girlfriend or something like that. It is precisely this sort of stupidity among human explanations that is driving my very objection.

What I describe here is an existential realization. When humans see their own grotesque nature, it subtly inaugurates this idea: we are *disjointed*. Something about us is partial in format, like we are half animal and half something else. Something inside us can feel more. Or as Paul Tillich once described this hybrid perception, “We are a mixture of being and non-being, and we are aware of it.”<sup>4</sup>

And this insight then suggests that we are *worth* being upset with our existential station. It’s actually a privilege that we can perceive it in the first place. The idea is that, inside of me—inside of all of us—there must be something more commensurate with the feeling that animates us (conscience).

---

<sup>4</sup> Tillich, 13. “Certainly we belong to being . . . but we are also separated from it; we do not possess it fully. Our power of being is limited” (11).