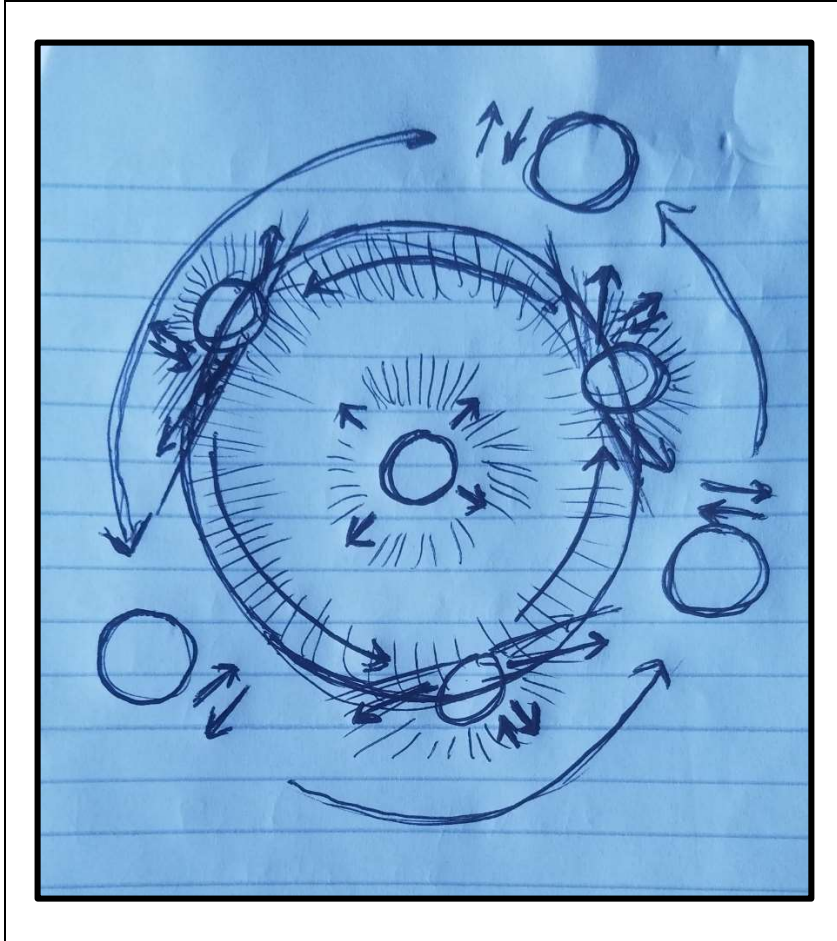# Three Circles

A Philosophical Argument for the Larger Reality and El Elohim

Jeff Metcalf

For those searching for reality.

For Wayne,
the black cowboy oil company vice president who bought me
a $10 Starbucks gift card in downtown Orange, CA.

Also

For Michael & David,
May this give you each perspective that affects your view of eternity.

Also

Those looking to apply philosophy & pragmatic measures
as a tools that help make sense of reality.

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Introduction

What This Is & Isn't

This isn't, and isn't intended to be an airtight philosophical argument. If that is what you are looking for, I'll save you time – you can stop reading here. If you read this anyway, you will be left with a plethora of areas where you can poke at using philosophical concepts.

This is intended to use philosophy as a tool to assess what I experience, make sense of it, and determine what I believe to be reality. This exercise was helpful for me, so I thought I would share.

Either way, I would like to point out that you are currently making and operating with many faith-based assumptions, even to assume the material world and interact with it by reading this. You may not think about it like that, but at the very least I'd encourage you to consider the following arguments.

Introducing the Argument

Philosophy is like playing chess. There is no game of chess where you don't lose a piece as part of a strategy to win the game. The opponent can surely say, "well, you've lost a bishop or a knight!" But when faced with a winning strategy they must also face a checkmate. Philosophy isn't as clear cut. There isn't a winner and a loser, only those that strategize through a process of thought and arrive at a model they believe. Or perhaps a model good enough to be a work in progress as they define their reality.

Believing is a great word to use here. When I studied epistemology, or the study of knowledge and belief, I came to realize that we can know very little and we believe most of what we think we know. Knowing is absolute and certain. Belief is something we could be wrong about. However, a difference still remains between belief which we can justify in pragmatic terms, and pure opinion.

A good term for justified belief could be faith, which feels shaky to a lot of people. But the reality is that they have faith about many things that in their mind seem to be certain. Emotion lends a lot to this. For example, I've met very few atheists who weren't angry about the existence of God, probably stemming from being hurt by people who claimed to represent God in one way or another. These hurts, offenses, and feelings are not God. Most agnostics realize that to assert the non-existence of God is just as problematic as the assertion that there is, and given arguments like the watchmaker are probably more difficult. Lastly, there are theists that have a model based on faith in something. Theists can be further divided into two groups. There are the many who blindly accept what they have been taught without attempting to separate themselves to a less subjective point (assuming here that pure objectivity is impossible). Then there are the few, who struggle with the intellectual concepts about their faith, but still end up accepting their faith as the model for their reality. From a philosophical perspective, none of

these positions are better than any other, and all can be justified in terms of model building. The important thing to underscore is that everyone makes a decision about what they believe about their reality.

Given all of this uncertainty, a better metaphor for a philosophical endeavor is probably that the use of philosophy is like that of using a tool. The tools wear, dull, lose power, and break, but the result is that something gets built. Rather than meander aimlessly, I intend to take you on my philosophical journey to reach God. It requires concessions along the way, but always for the purpose of understanding practical experience. For me it became necessary to leave philosophical precision on the shelf, because that ended up in a posture of skepticism about everything. This left me with nothing. Quite literally, a no risk and no reward situation. When I began to experiment with different organizations of the model, I ended up getting back rewarding evidence that demonstrated something beyond what I could prove absolutely - reality.

The difference between demonstrative philosophy and inductive philosophy.

I've been thinking about, and will provide an inductive argument for the spirit world, and ultimately for the existence of and our relationship with El Elohim. But before I get to that, I think it is important to discuss the mechanics of how I will argue, and the foundation of my conclusions.

A demonstrative argument, as the name implies, proves through demonstration that something is true. "A clear sky is blue at noon," is a true statement because we can all look at the sky on a clear day at noon and demonstrate that it in fact appears blue. Moreover, we can now demonstrate through our understanding of (almost) full spectrum light, the science of wavelengths, and the filtering of the atmosphere, how the sky appears blue at noon on a clear day.

An inductive argument is one built over time, through anecdotal experience. Famously this is known as Hempel's Paradox, or "all ravens are black." Here the seeming paradox stems from the idea that we gain information about ravens by observing objects that are not black, thus they are not ravens. But what if, for example, an albino raven was born that looked white. That would seemingly make the statement "all ravens are black" false. In this example, we might be able to look at the genetic anomaly of the albino raven and understand how that raven is not black. In other words, explain the difference in our sensory experience of that odd bird. But with the odd bird example aside, generally we can agree that "all ravens are black" is true by virtue of the common and recurring experience that all ravens that have been encountered are black, and thus, being black is a trait or characteristic of being a raven. Therefore, it is a pragmatic "truth" to assume that all ravens are black, and we can live expecting that all ravens we will encounter should be black.

The goal of an inductive argument is to identify what I would call a general truth, or a probable truth. In the same way that a skeptic could easily say "ah, but what if I produce a raven that is not black," any inductive argument could be challenged on those terms. And when making the argument it is fair to say that sure, the skeptic is well within their rights to counter an argument in that way. Nonetheless,

understanding and interacting with our reality is still the goal. With that in mind, agreement about probabilities is where these arguments reside.

Having that ability to decide things about the existence of the spirit world, or the reality of God, or what that would mean to our human condition is an essential element to these very things. This is demonstrated through what I'll call the concept of the rich suiter. Suppose a man begins to date a woman, and by comparison he is far more financially wealthy by comparison. Suppose that he enjoys an affluent lifestyle and she benefits from this both with things and with status. Does she really love him, or does she love the money and the status? It may be possible, but it is difficult to delineate. Now suppose that the same man with the same wealth lives a humble lifestyle at par with or below that of the woman, and she is unaware of his great wealth. In this case she does not benefit from the affluence or the status, and neither are considerations for her affection. In this case her love for the man is for him and not his money or social position.

In this way, El Elohim has designed our current lives. We can search for Him, and when we do with an open mind and a heart determined to find Him, He makes Himself findable. Now, He tells us of the riches He stores in Heaven for us, but also explains that these things are beyond our understanding. To receive these blessings, it requires persecution in this life. This obfuscation from demonstrable proof, at least to the world, is what allows individual choice. It also means that should a person choose this path they will forego what this world has to offer in exchange for the greater benefit of God's blessings in the spirit world.

Epistemology, which studies what we *know* and what we *believe*

Absolute skepticism allows very little to no room for true knowledge. While we assume that seeing, touching, smelling, feeling, and tasting are evidence that something exists, if we aren't experiencing whatever it is directly at the immediate time, the reality of its continued existence is placed in question. Moreover, the problem of hallucinations, dreams, and fantastic experiences plagues even these things. So truly we are not able to know for certain whether the physical world really exists or if we are simply having an incredible dream.

Pragmatic acceptance of the physical world allows for science to appear factual. Even though we can philosophically assign doubt to it through skepticism, the nature of practical acceptance is aligned with the skepticism of David Hume. In other words, whether we can or cannot prove that a bus exists at every moment does not mean we step out in front of one, because we pragmatically accept that this behavior will have negative consequences for us.

Pragmatic acceptance of the spiritual world appears to be based more on personal or anecdotal experience. Because of this, everyone else in the world asks, "is it relevant?" The popularization of this question is also a foundational component to a modern worldview that seeks to eliminate all theological thinking in favor of transplanting the self as a new god head. As an individual, if we must ask, "can this be overcome?" Rather than moving quickly to dismiss the spirit world, I think we should at the very

least approach it with an open mind, and see if we can end up at a similar level of pragmatic acceptance that we afford the physical world. And this is where I will begin my inductive argument.

Skeptics and Skeptics

People can be skeptical about a lot of things. In this argument I'm using the term to refer to skepticism about the point at hand. An absolute skeptic would challenge everything. A skeptic about a priori knowledge would challenge that. A skeptic about the spirit world would challenge that, and so on. In other words, there are skeptics, and then there are skeptics. As a critical thinker, a person can decide to become skeptical at any point and say to themselves, "this is it, this is where I stop." That is a fair position to take, as long as the skeptic is willing to consider the argument before them and decide not to agree based on the merits of what is being presented, or on an argument for a contrary model that is equally thought out. From my perspective this is legitimate skepticism. Not agreeing simply because you don't like the idea, or that it is offensive, is not a reason to lock in on skepticism, it is a reason to wrestle at a deeper level with the concepts.

There are also skeptics who have their own agenda. When the motives shift from philosophical disagreement into a need to promote one's own desires, critical thinking gives way to making oneself a god in their own life. Another word for this is pride. When money, power, sex, and worldly success are the reward for taking a point of view, it becomes all of these worldly things in exchange for good thinking. The real-life philosophers I've encountered in my life, most of whom would disagree with my arguments for their own reasons, would also be willing to listen, consider, debate, and disagree. Sophists on the other hand are paid teachers and rhetoricians. To get a sense of how these were thought about in Ancient Greece, read Plato's Euthyphro, where Socrates debates a sophist regarding piety. My takeaway is that calling someone a "sophist" is really an accusation that carries a strong derogatory connotation. Even so, it isn't hard to find modern day sophists in our universities, non-profit organizations, and the agnostic front.

Regarding the Philosophy

I reference my philosophical building blocks as I move through this argument. These are the philosophical stepping stones that worked for me. My purpose here is not to debate them, and I'd recommend that you read and study them yourself. In this argument I won't spend time beyond a basic explanation and move on. This is my own journey of building a philosophical model of reality.

§1 Pragmatic Agreement about the Physical World

§1:1 The Problem with Solipsism

As I wade into these philosophical waters, I always start with Descartes'[1] premise "I think therefore I am." This is solipsism, and it is a fairly safe philosophical place where you don't need to justify yourself to anyone but yourself. But I hope you continue the journey with me, because it is also a lonely place to be.

The solipsist is allowed to be skeptical about everything, because all they can truly know is that they think. Everything else can potentially be wrong. In fact, the thinking of a solipsist can also be wrong, but what they know to be true is that it is happening in their thought, and therefore they can be sure they exist because of this active thinking, regardless of what the thinking is.

All information that comes from the senses or from the mind is a matter of interpretation. There are many ways of tricking the senses. And most people have had dreams at one time or another that "felt real." My point is that even the physical world within which we galivant requires us to make a "leap of faith" in order to believe. As such, there is some level of faith or trust that we place in our senses. When our senses become compromised or as we age, our ability to physically respond to situations also degrades.

The problem with the physical world is that it seems so immediate. We can, well, literally touch it. With the exception of the pure solipsists, we all pragmatically agree with its existence. We must. Otherwise, we couldn't eat, sleep, have a job, or read a book.

§1:2 Skepticism About the Physical World

Despite the seeming immediacy of the physical world there is still ground for skepticism about the physical world. Empiricists argue that knowledge of the physical world can only be gained through our senses, building from Locke's tabula rasa[2] or "blank" mental state at birth. Rationalists believe that we are given some a priori knowledge[3] about certain things, pointing to things like instincts and untaught self-sufficiency as examples.

For the empiricist, knowledge builds based only on what we experience. In this case, continual knowledge of things we have experienced would be impossible. A simple example of this is the experiment of the lectern. Start by assuming we trust the information our senses deliver, in this case sight. When the front side is facing us, it can be seen because it is in our field of vision, but the back side which is outside of our field of vision cannot be seen. When in view, or while being experienced, the

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[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solipsism
[2] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tabula_rasa
[3] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_priori_and_a_posteriori

front of the lectern must exist. But if someone then turns the lectern around so that we see the back side and not the front side, then we can only verify the existence of the back side of the lectern. Obviously, there is the practical assumption that we all make, that the front of the lectern must still exist, even if we are not experiencing it immediately. We are forced to make this assumption for many reasons.

On philosophical grounds though, if we are not experiencing it immediately then we cannot know for sure whether it still exists. The rationalist could perhaps argue that we can obtain information through sources that are outside of our five physical senses. But that begs the question, from where does this information come from? Even if this is true, which it may be, the problem remains that we can only potentially know about things for which we have received information. And further, both the empiricist and the rationalist are both accountable to a group measure for things that are possibly knowable commonly amongst all people. Either way, what they encounter with their five senses in the physical world, or from additional rationalist sources, is still the experience of the individual. For the individual, a baseline of discerning what is real and what is not must be determined. It doesn't matter whether an individual has pondered and done this with intention or not considered it at all and has done as what seems an arbitrary step in the interpretation of experience, both are valid to the individual.

A harder problem can be considered, that of determining a reasonable baseline for personal experience as a method of communicating what is and is not reasonable to explain personal experience to others. There are two issues I want to discuss that form the foundation of this problem for me, because they are additional contributors beyond merely sensing the physical world. Can purely physical objects self-animate, and if not, does that mean that there is something more or additional to the material world? If there is something more, how do we communicate any kind of objective proof from one to another, or is everything fundamentally on a spectrum of subjectivity?

§1:3 Many Minds

First, the many minds problem[4] proposed by Bishop Berkeley[5], which asks "given that I can only observe the behavior of others, how can I know that others have minds?" This challenge is raised by the skeptic, but from my perspective they can take a position where they don't care because they can't have demonstrable proof, or they can assume the existence of other minds for practicality. And again, to me this approach underscores how lonely of a position skepticism becomes for someone taking skepticism out of the thought experiment and attempting to implement it as a lifestyle.

The inductive argument I propose is a philosophical failure because it bends thought models to fit the common experience, rather than attempting to construct a viable and philosophically perfect thought model to explain it. For me, observing how I behave, and seeing similar behavior among other physical objects that appear to be people reveals commonality. Observing how I can think about moving my

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[4] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Problem_of_other_minds
[5] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Berkeley

body, and it see it respond by animating tells me that I have both a mind and a body. Therefore, I have at least these two parts, so everyone who acts like this must also have at least these two parts also. When I talk to another person, I believe that the other person is in fact another mind and body pairing that is thinking and behaving in conversation with my thinking and behaving. Through these interactions I develop ongoing conversations or relationships with some of the other mind body combinations, which is the forming of relationships. This continues in the form of families, friends, towns, cities, and so on.

Even those who form the most skeptical arguments must make the assumption that others exist. Otherwise, they would only be arguing with themselves. Which is to say that because they make this assumption about the existence of others, whether it be on a pragmatic or philosophical level, there is still agreement about the reality of other mind body beings. Because this agreement exists, I further believe it is acceptable to call these beings "people" and move on. But even more, I believe that most people also believe in the existence of a soul as a part of their personal identity. This is to say that we are all multi-part beings that have a body in the physical and some sort of component we can call a 'soul' that comprises our identity as beings. (Heb 4:12; Job 30:25) This part of our identity is not physical, and exists in the part of reality we can call the 'spirit world.'[6] In the same way that our bodies are physical, our souls are spiritual. So, we are part soul and part body, or part spiritual and part physical, or a soul and body pairing.

§1:4 Objective Proof

The second problem is in the forming of an objective baseline for proof between two or more beings. Off the cuff, science seems to solve this problem. But as we have seen above, the problem is much closer to us than the instruments we use. Again, if our senses can be fooled, then what is to be trusted?

The notion of objective proof is alluring because it feels tangible and strong and reliable. Part of our curiosity is to figure out all we can about the physical world all around us. This is a good and healthy curiosity that is edifying both to individuals and to the cultures in which they contribute. Determining the motives for using this information is a different problem. But looking specifically at demonstrating something to be what we would call a fact to another person is important.

In the same way that we assume by common observations that we all exist, we also are forced to assume that by common observations things in the material world are what they are. For instance, two people can measure something with a ruler and derive the same measurement, which gives us the scientific principle of reproducibility. But what about Descartes argument about the wax?[7] Is the wax the same thing when it is cold and hard, and when it is hot and liquid? We define these changes as physical changes that occur based on the characteristics of the matter. Because they are reproducible, just as with the measurement if two people were to apply the same conditions to the same type of

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[6] https://www.gotquestions.org/soul-spirit.html
[7] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wax_argument

material they would expect to derive the same type of result. This ability to replicate the same results over and over begins to feel tangible, and something we can call "fact." The wax however, is an analogy to help grapple with things that can't be dismissed as a simple physical change.

When experiences occur that cannot be replicated, measured, recorded, or observed by others, the reality of these occurrences fall into the area of doubt. It is easy to say that someone who has experienced an out of body experience has lost their natural mind. Or when they know things that they couldn't possibly know, we say they just got lucky. Or when things like fire don't consume something like a filament or a bush they are burning, that it is just an illusion. The problem with these types of occurrences is that they don't make sense to the many, because the many haven't experienced them.

Most people have stubbed their toe. So, when I say "ouch, I stubbed my toe," most people could relate to what that feels like. But if I say, "I saw a vision of end times," most people couldn't relate to the experience of having a vision or what I was even talking about. However, the reality is that there is more similarity between these things than differences. When I say that I stubbed my toe, what you really relate to is a time when you stubbed your toe, and you translate what I'm telling you based on your own experience. If I say, "I had a vision of end times," or anything else that you haven't experienced, it becomes much more difficult to relate. Without the ability to relate, interpretation becomes more difficult if not impossible. But in either case, you have to take my word for it because you can't absolutely prove what I am saying.

When we talk about things in science, it is no different. We can measure them, and communicate them through these measurements to one another. In many cases, only scientists trained in a particular field will be prepared to interpret the deeper meaning of the report. For the rest of us, a summary must be provided. In the same way, observations about the spirit world are available to those who experience it, and a summary must be provided to those who do not, or to those who experience it in a different way. Where the astronomer may tell you about what is happening with the stars that you can look up and see in the night sky with your own eyes, someone in touch with the spirit world can tell you about the deeper reality of what you experience all the time but might have forgotten about.

With the physical world, science gives us a working understanding of what we interact with. And this practical understanding is all we need to operate our daily lives. That this practical knowledge rests on top of deeper science is nice, and gives us peace about how things work. For instance, imagine yourself standing on the Grand Canyon Skywalk at Eagle Point. This glass "bridge" that cantilevers out over the rim of the Grand Canyon and allows a view straight down over seven hundred feet. Whether you are comfortable with heights or not, if you were at the end of this, you would know that someone must have done the structural engineering to ensure that it won't fall down into the canyon. Some people have no issues with this, while others are content to get off quickly, and others won't even walk out onto it. No matter how we feel about heights all of us could stand safely on the ground near it, watch it for a while, and experience that it isn't falling. That may not be enough to convince people afraid of heights to casually stroll out onto it, or to walk onto it at all. But again, we can all be confident that some science went into the design and development of it so that it doesn't fall.

For many people, this same confidence is not afforded to the spirit world. To be fair, the leaps of faith required to assume the physical world and the spirit world are different leaps. The smaller leap to the physical world seems easier to make. Just as we are two-part beings made of body and mind, a good way to challenge ourselves is to investigate what the mind actually is. But for now, it is important to see that we are actually making a leap of faith from solipsism, into a pragmatic assumption about the physical world, other people, and within this world in context to one another we are assuming that there is some standard of consistency which can be measured and explained. Whether we completely understand it or not, we are agreeing to this leap of faith, and for most of us we are agreeing to believe that what the scientists tell us is correct.

This isn't a bad position to take. It is a practical position. Functioning within a common, or close to common, assumption affords us something greater. The ability to communicate within context. Contrary to Wittgenstein's[8] logical positivism, which attempts to accurately define all words for exacting communication, his later realization about context helps us greatly. Words are not like a physical tool, like a screwdriver. You can try to use a screwdriver as a hammer (something I've done personally), but it makes a terrible hammer. Words carry more than their definition, and the context in which they are used, and the tone in which they are said, and the emotional quality that is given to a word can all influence the interpretation of the word. Words are the closest tangible elements we have to ideas. We literally "hear" the idea. Within context, we can communicate the essential idea to our audience.

One of Wittgenstein's examples is a sign shaped like an arrow to indicate which way to go. But if you don't have the context of what an arrow means, how do you know which way to go? You can define the arrow with another arrow. Or maybe with a sign of a pointing finger, pointing in the same direction the arrow is pointing. And if that isn't enough you can write, "go this way," on one of the signs. But none of this gets you out of the problem, and in fact it makes it worse, because each new sign then requires a new definition. Moreover, how would someone without context reading all of these signs know that they are even related? All of this is to say, context is a good thing. It is our alley in communicating and understanding each other.

§1:5 Contextual Proof

So, when it comes to proof of things, my approach then is less philosophical and more practical. For example, I assume that other people exist because I can observe my own existence and behavior. Therefore, I assume that others that look like (what I believe is) my physical body, also have minds like the mind I experience to be myself. While communication between me and another person can never be exact, it can be close by relying on the context in which it is communicated. Assuming that the other person experiences similar things and communicates in a similar context, by extension we should be able to discuss theoretical models. Given this, if I can find relatable experience that explains my pragmatic assumptions about reality then the other person can understand my model. This leaves room

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[8] htttps://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ludwig_Wittgenstein

for disagreement, but may also be persuasive if the assumptions made seem reasonable to the recipient after consideration.

§1:6 Using Science in the Physical World

For the collective interpretation of experiences in the physical world science seems to provide a perfectly good baseline. Science measures the physical world, and based on our pragmatic assumptions about the physical world, at least in this context we can agree with what science measures. To be fair, science measures some incredible and interesting things.

However, science measures the "what" and not the "why," something that has been pointed out by many. Of course, the world of academia, not-profits, and the agnostic front use the measuring stick of science to rule out other information and sources of information. I used to do this too. My thinking went something like this; if I can't experience God, spirits, ghosts, or whatever, then whether they exist or not is irrelevant to me, and I'm not going to worry about it, and I'll think less of people who believe in these fantastic imagined dragons and fairy tales. Often confused with atheism, which is different than agnosticism and is equally subject to the assertion that there IS a God, agnosticism simply doesn't care.

The ambivalence sounds passive and tolerable as a philosophical position, and that is exactly how they would want it to appear. The problem is that it isn't ambivalent at all. They care greatly, because by cutting the existence of a higher being or moral authority off at the legs it opens the door to crown themselves "god" of their own life. They believe they can determine what is good and evil, right and wrong, for themselves, because they will assert that humans at their core are basically good. This is the goal, because it allows its believers to operate and make decisions as their own god. They may not think of it with this vernacular, but effectively with no higher system of accountability the standard becomes "what you can get away with." This is really a position of relativism that allows them to determine relative truth, and paves the way into humanism and self-centered identities. Investigating the moral consequences of this is another pursuit, but for now I'd assert that the following are worth asking:

- Could a spirit world actually exist?
- If so, do we interact with it in ways we haven't thought of as "spirit world" experiences?
- Are there gods or a God that are higher or equivalent in hierarchy?
- Does any of this impact who we are and the context for our lives?

§2 Pressing Beyond the Physical World

§2:1 Experiential Investigations

Because science is not able to measure or define answers to questions about the spirit world, science is insufficient for this pursuit. This is where the agnostic stops and claims that if there is anything else it isn't knowable, and therefore is irrelevant, regardless of its existence or nonexistence. Though the skeptic would say that these types of questions are not answerable, the problem is that we do it all the time. Moreover, as I've argued above, I believe that we also do it with ourselves when we think of our own identity as a soul and body combination. What is even more, I would say that because the reality of our own thought is the only thing we can probably ever truly know with certainty, then the skeptical argument against the reality of the soul is contradictory. If anything, the existence of the body is more questionable than the existence of one's own mind, which I think is a function of our soul. Therefore, I would conclude that not only is the soul real, but it is more knowable than the body, and therefore has a greater probability of being real.

Pragmatically, the body is also real, or something that can be assumed. This is a great example of what we will need as we begin to explore non-physical constructs. When I assume the reality of my body, and use that assumption to do something like move a pen from one side of the desk to another, the result is that I can see the pen, feel the pen, observe it on one side of the desk, observe my movement of that pen, and finally observe the pen on the other side of the desk. This insertion of my will to move the pen based on an assumption about the reality of my body and the material world results in the feedback through sensory observation that the pen has moved.

If I were to punch an agnostic with no provocation, that person would likely retaliate. But why? Wouldn't this just be a random experience in a series of experiences for that person? It seems that their retaliation would be based on some sense of what is right and wrong. In other words, we have all made assumptions that we agree to like what I've proposed above. We are all soul body pairs, through input of desire and will we exert ourselves into the material world and experience corresponding outputs through sensory experience. These outputs seem better and worse to our minds, which operate as part of our soul. In a purely physical world, there is no good or bad, there is just matter that reacts with other matter. This is because the non-physical constructs of "good" and "bad" exist in the spirit world. These are used in relation to our sensory experience in the material world and is subjectively comprised into an interpretation by our mind. Understanding these non-physical constructs is critical to our experience, because without them we wouldn't be able to operate effectively in the material world.

Effective interaction with the material world typically precludes things like randomly punching another person in the face. But is this simply a subconscious agreement with Hobbes social contract that we take on as part of a functioning society? Perhaps. But if that is true, then how can we possibly agree on any type of commonly acceptable set of social behaviors? When I was an agnostic, I would chalk non-physical experiences up to various "flukes" of the brain. This was an important step for me in my

agnosticism because I actually experience what I would now call visions, lucid dreams, and many other interactions with what I now understand to be the spirit world. But when I was agnostic, I didn't have a good definition for the mind, other than that it was some sort of attribute that occurred as part of the nerve tissue and the energy running through our bodies. I couldn't define anymore because I didn't recognize any "spiritual" component to our existence, and thus it didn't work with my accepted model of reality.

Just because we don't understand something doesn't mean it isn't real. For instance, today most people accept black holes as a real and essential thing in our Universe. This wasn't the case as recently as the nineteen sixties. It is impossible to experience them, because it is impossible to see them or get to them to have sensory experience of them. To even imagine the hypothetical experience of falling into a black hole is not to really know it. Yet it is real. And for most of us, relying on the scientific measurements, writings, and explanations of those who can study them with the right tools and education must form our generally accepted baseline of what we agree about regarding black holes.

Is it any different for the spirit world? Before I understood what I was experiencing, I didn't really understand what it was. Once I "broke through" and experienced that part of reality that is on the other side of my physical world experiences, I realized I was encountering something much bigger and deeper than I have before. At first, I was confused by it, wondering what exactly I was experiencing. Then I found others that had these experiences as well. I read books that accurately described the types of experiences I was having. In the same way that we could describe what a visual experience is, and what an audible experience is, and define these as sight and hearing, I was encountering experience types that had names and descriptions. I realize that not all people have these kinds of experiences, but of those that do, there seems to be a general consistency with regard to the way that these experiences present themselves. In the same way that we can say that waves travel at various wavelengths and are captured and interpreted by the ear to be called hearing, and by the eye to be called sight, so too are we designed to receive input in a way that is quite different than our physical sensory inputs.

However, the spirit world is not a new concept. In fact, humanity's acceptance of experiences with the supernatural used to be more common, and more pronounced. The percentage of people in touch with the spirit world may not have changed, but a degradation in common beliefs about what the spirit world is and its existence seems to have transpired. It begs the question, "why?" A common standard applied to this is, "we are smarter now." The idea that because we have science, technology, can analyze and explain more, and have more apparent control over our immediate environments, then we have evolved as a species. This seems to be implied by the term "modern man," which is juxtapose to "ancient man" or "the ancients." I think this is bad thinking however, because true understanding of the spirit world and enlightenment that comes from it requires long focused study and meditation with a refining of our ability to sense and interact with the spirit world. All of those that I've known who really understand it have been studying it a long time and have had to become educated about it, the same way a person would have to study to become a scientist in a particular field.

While it is true that we've had more time to learn more and build more based on technological advances, does that really mean we've evolved? That we are better? Are we really smarter than Confucius, Plato, Sun Tzu, or Gautama Buddha? Could a majority of us beat Socrates in debate? Or paint a better painting than Van Gogh? Or invent better than Leonardo da Vinci? A fair assessment of intellectuals today seems very similar. We do have brilliant minds living, or recently living, that have made key contributions to our civilization. We also have a wide variety of academics billing themselves as intellectuals who are actually sophists with an agenda that has everyone else in mind. These things are no different. So, it appears that we've become unbalanced in favor of science and become intentional about eliminating the spiritual side of ourselves. Again, the problem with this is that our mind, or functioning of our soul, is the only thing we can absolutely know with certainty through the self-authenticating activity of our thought. By this measure, we've chosen to accept a standard that requires a leap of faith, and undermine something that comes prepackaged as a self-evident truth.

§2:2 Historical Versus Modern Thinking

The change that has occurred in recent times is the conversion of science into the modern religion. More and more, people are looking to science alone as the answer. It seems that the god of science delivers many blessings in the form of technology. These technologies bring us comforts, make jobs easier, allow conveniences, and introduce efficiency into our culture. We are addicted to this god, and invest our money, work, effort, and time into developing, building, and worshiping it. We also view ourselves as the creators of these things, which in a circular way makes humanity the inventors and controllers of this technology godhead. In other words, we don't need another god, because we are our own god.

What about the history of cultures and societies that had technology, and also firmly believed in the spirit world? Can this easily be dismissed by saying "well, they didn't have our understanding of science and technology, and were therefore ignorant of how things really worked." In all the apparent sophistication of the modern age, this seems like a simplistic view, especially considering that some of the historical cultures of the past were in some ways at par, and in some ways more advanced than we are currently.

Ancient Egypt pioneered in areas including medicine and surgery, architecture and engineering, maritime and shipping technologies. We can't even figure out how they did some of it! Which is to say that they weren't stupid simple people. Nonetheless, Pharaoh was titled with 'lord of the two lands,' upper and lower Egypt, and 'high priest of every temple.' In this most powerful role, the people literally believed that these leaders were not only kings, but gods or immortal reincarnations of Horus who was one of the ancient Egyptian gods, and Ra on Earth. In terms of reporting order, the Pharaoh was required to communicate with and interpret the will of Ma'at, who was the Egyptian goddess of order. All of the Pharaoh's responsibilities stemmed from this.

Ultimately the Pharaoh was responsible for maintaining social balance. To ensure this was done, it was expected that ceremonies, laws, monuments to gods, and temples for worship were enacted, built, and

maintained. When afflictions like famine, plagues, floods, and drought came the blame typically fell on Pharaoh, who obviously wasn't properly maintaining balance or appeasing the gods.

Ancient Greece was also a culture of technical innovation in the areas of mechanics, metals, timekeeping, and military weapons. Moreover, they were known as the birthplace of philosophy. Aristotle is attributed the title of 'father of science,' but one could easily argue that Plato, Euclid, and Pythagoras all had a hand in the mix. An interesting practical example of the depth of thought and tactical execution can be experienced in a Greek amphitheater. Stand in the center of the stage area, whisper, and be heard by a person standing at the top of the bleachers. This is a result of their understanding of sound and acoustics. I've done this with my dad at several amphitheaters including those at Corinth and Epidaurus, and if you ever go to Greece, I highly recommend giving it a try.

On a side note, you can experience this kind of thinking first hand today by auditing a debate between current day philosophers. You can probably find this at a college or university somewhere near you, and might even be able to find one published online. In my philosophy studies I experienced these debates a few times and realized four things. First, I don't have the mind to dig that far down the mental chess game of philosophy, and don't really care to. Second, that decisions about existence and reality are still the responsibility of every one of us whether we consciously decide to consider it or blindly accept a doctrine. Third, that pragmatic decisions about existence and reality are probable for most people. Finally, because these pragmatic decisions can be challenged, it is better to understand the objection, realize what you are agreeing to, and have an appreciation for someone who takes a counter position.

Despite all of this technical innovation, capability, superiority, and overall mental depth in what we call the ancient world, the notion of the supernatural was not eliminated as fantastic imaginations. Deep thinkers pondered the supernatural and how it interacted and influenced the physical world. Plato famously investigated this in his Allegory of the Cave. Based on their understanding about the interaction and influence of the spirit world, military leaders and politicians would consult the oracles about strategy and policy. Oracles would consult the gods, the dead, and other spirits from which they were able to interpret supernatural responses. So much of the ancient Greek culture depended on the supernatural.

There are so many cultures from all over the world that have some sort of role that interacts with the supernatural. Medicine men, wizards, enchanters, magicians, witches, prophets, psychics, fortune tellers, gypsies, and many more. A part of us has a strong desire to connect to the supernatural. In fact, the success of many space and superhero movies that feature characters with supernatural powers has to do with their resonance with the part of us that senses the truth in the storyline. And just like the rest of human history we want things like supernatural healing, physical and financial blessings, to be able to see our loved ones whose bodies have died, and get answers to our questions from a god. If we weren't driven by these desires, the long history of these roles in society and the stories about these kinds of characters would feel irrelevant. But they don't. There is a self-authenticating resonance about these things from the core of our being, which is itself a spirit-world based component known as a soul.

The observations about ancient technical innovation above are not happenstantial, because they seem to form the baseline with which we justify our pride. The hubris in modern Western culture seems to stem from the idea that because we've innovated technology, we are superior to all previous generations. As a justification for this we point to the smartphone in our pocket. But these innovations that have been produced by the few means very little with respect to most of the people in our society. Probably a better barometer of our ignorance is how quickly we look to people in the entertainment industry to be our current sophists who will represent the changing rhetoric of our moment-by-moment cultural paradigms and progressive social agenda. Nonetheless, the argument goes something like this:

> *We have created better and smarter tools and figured out more about how our physical reality works with a scientific system to measure our results. Because we have done this, then we are better and smarter than all of the generations of people that precede us. Therefore, any thoughts they may have had about things that are not measurable, scientific, or demonstratively provable (assuming we are not skeptics about the physical world) are antiquated, irrelevant, stupid, and unnecessary*.

In ancient culture when an oracle or prophet spoke it was taken as a direct word from a god. Specific people seemed to have been bestowed with this ability. Some were magicians or false prophets, but some were able to provide correct information most or all of the time. A distinction between their level of accuracy has to do with their source in the spirit world. Nonetheless, when these people spoke it was taken with the authority of the gods. Anything less would not have motivated and influenced the leaders of nations and armies, as their lives and the lives of their people depended on it.

We have these kinds of leaders and advisors today. Regardless of how you feel about them, leaders like the Dalai Lama and the Pope command large followings wherever they go. United States Presidents surround themselves (or have in the past) with ministerial advisors. Social reform like the Civil Rights Movement was led by spiritually focused change agents like Martin Luther King Jr. In other words, the need for a spiritual connection has not gone away, we have simply moved these figures to the margins. Also, many of the spiritual leaders that make the big headlines have little more than good showmanship, lack the fundamental qualities of good spiritual leadership, and thus have not represented this role well in the public eye. This isn't to call out guys like Martin Luther King Jr., but there are many examples from television evangelists to psychic hotlines spokespeople to superstar illusionists that make spirit world and supernatural experiences look like second stage circus acts.

In the information and digital age of seemingly ubiquitous media, it is easier to marginalize leaders like these through the publication of their faults. If they can be marginalized, then the faiths they represent or supernatural things in general can be marginalized along with them. There are many examples of people making bad mistakes, and charlatans who falsely represented a faith to gain power and wealth. Many among the modern era believers lust for the same power and wealth. They, like all of us are fundamentally flawed. Regardless of these bad examples, or how any of us feel about them, they have nothing to do with an investigation about reality. I mention them because many people reject the idea of faith because they were hurt by someone advocating faith. I also mention it because it is a

manipulation to make faith equivalent to religion and turn religion into a scapegoat when spinning an agenda. The deeper realization is to set aside personal bias in order to objectively consider the constitution of reality, and what it means for us.

§2:3 Consistency in Spirit World Experiences

With all that said, let's look further at people who claim to experience the spirit world in an everyday capacity. Even though these experiences are personal, there is consistency in the methods of having these experiences, and also in the types of experiences that are had.

It is important to ask questions like, "what are these experiences?" "Why do similar experiences happen to different people?" "How would it be that a large number of people could experience supernatural experiences?" And, "does the consistency in 'perception type' constitute consistency in experience?" The good news is that everyone can make a decision about what these mean from their own perspective, which allows a person who hasn't had experiences like this to walk away and disregard this. In other words, the approach here is not intended to persuade someone that these experiences are reality, but only investigate the idea that they could be part of reality. But, if a person decides that these are part of reality, then the question for them becomes, "what do these mean?" I've heard people who experience the spirit world say, "at some point you have to decide, either this is an incredible experience, or it's God."

In his book "The Seer: The Prophetic Power of Visions, Dreams, and Open Heavens," James Goll[9] describes many supernatural experiences and methods of impartation from the spirit world. Reading his book was like somebody accurately articulating the exact experiences I'd been having all of my life. I highly recommend his book to anyone interested in understanding the spirit world at a deeper level. To give you a taste of some of these kinds of experiences, I want to provide a list of the Greek and Hebrew words used for these experiences, their definition, and a description of each here.

Keep in mind that these descriptions are presented from a Christian perspective. I will agree with that perspective later in my argument, because I believe that the Bible provides us what we need to know to understand who God is. Moreover, these kinds of experiences are scriptural and essential depending on what giftings you were given, to have a full relationship with Him. But for now, if you are not a follower of Jesus, I encourage you to read on. If you do believe that you experience and or interact with the spirit world, I encourage you to read these and apply them to your understanding about your own experiences. If you don't believe that you experience the spirit world, or think that is impossible, or simply don't believe in it at all, I encourage you to keep an open mind and consider how it is that many people have had common experiences and what that might mean for you.

As you read these, think about the following points. First, that many people have these same kinds of experiences. Second, that while the content and intensity of these varies from one person to another,

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[9] Goll, Seer, "The Seer," 2012, ISBN: 0768441102

and one experience to another, the type of experience is relatable between people in the same way as describing an audible hearing or visual sight experience would be. Third, that information can come from these experiences that in some instances can be validated precisely by future experiences. And finally, if these are common experiences that are relatable, that can provide some type of validation external to the individual, then that which makes up what we are must include the ability to experience this part of reality.

Onar, Greek, is a common word for "dream." Because it is something we all do, it feels like a good place to begin. I now believe that what we think of as a common and inconsequential experience in our lives is actually an experience with the spirit world. In fact, so many of our experiences with the spirit world have such a common feel to them that they don't feel supernatural at all. Dreams, like all impartations from the spirit world, can originate from three different sources in the spirit world. These are our own soul, the Spirit of God, and spirits of the enemy. As such, it is important to be careful to discern the sources of our dreams and other experiences.

Nataf, Hebrew, which means "let it drop like rain." It describes a slow impartation a bit at a time, that pools up inside of the recipient. I've had this happen many times. It begins with a passing thought that is refreshed over and over, each time adding more information until I have the whole idea.

Massa, Hebrew, which refers to the "hand of the Lord" releasing the "burden of the Lord." For example, when you have a concern about something, and that is on your mind, that would be the type of burden being expressed here. In a prophetic sense, this burden would be to pray or do something that you are being led to do. I've received this many times. When I've prayed for other believers based on this burden, I am told by the recipient that they really needed prayer for that exact thing, and that it was obvious to them that God put that on my heart to intercede for them.

Nabiy, Hebrew, which describes a "bubbling up," or "flowing forth." This is a description that explains how information from the spirit world can come up from within us, or more to the point, within our soul. For me this describes what it feels like to receive an unction to pray in the Spirit of God. But ideas also come to me in this way. The "bubbling up," or "flowing forth" of information has the same feel to me as an unction from the Holy Spirit.

Horama, Greek, means "that which is seen," and is associated with visions had while the seer is awake. I've experienced this in my own life with examples I've described as "a face of fire," the "blinding light," "flocks of demons," and many other things in the spirit world.

Optasia, Greek, is another kind of visionary state where the one being seen is allowing themselves to be seen. I've experienced this several times as well with different spirit beings like angels and demons, sometimes alone and sometimes in groups. In most cases I've only seen them, but in some they have spoken to me.

Ekstasis, Greek, is a visionary state which involves "amazement" or "astonishment" or "like a trance." This is the root of the English word "ecstasy." This state is created by the Spirit of the Lord to catch the seer up in a supernatural displacement that allows Him to communicate specific revelations.

Apokalupsis, Greek, which describes a "disclosure," or "appearing," or "manifestation." It is usually translated "revelation" because this type of experience is intended to reveal something hidden. In a simple sense the Spirit of God has given me words to share with someone who needs confirmation in their heart, or an encouragement to go to God directly about something. I've also experienced more profound visions where I've seen circumstances and things appearing in the future.

Egenomehn ehn pneumati, Greek, and means "I was in the Spirit." Many of the Biblical prophets and leaders describe the Spirit of the Lord coming on them. This phrase could also be thought of as being in the spirit world, although, but by virtue of being there through the Spirit of God. This is a condition brought upon someone in order to receive revelation from the Lord.

As I mentioned, these are just a sampling. For more and deeper explanations of these experiences you can read more about it in James Goll's book "The Seer."

To investigate these experiences a bit deeper, let's consider potentiality and actuality. Aristotle[10] discusses the concept of potentiality (dunamis or potentia) and actuality (entelechy). He applied these concepts to a wide range of topics. Potential things have a chance of happening versus things that are actuality happening or have happened. All the parts to build a thing or make a thing happen have potential to be that thing or event. But when assembled and functioning, it is at work in being that thing.

I've known several people who lucid dream, but don't believe that these are anything but a greater state of consciousness while dreaming. Similar to this, some Buddhists will say that this is a continuum, where meditation is wakeful awareness and lucid dreaming is restful awareness, but on the entire continuum the person maintains awareness or consciousness. But suppose that awareness, whether wakeful or restful was a connection into the spirit world. In other words, our awareness or consciousness itself was in fact our spirit which is able to comprehend ideas. By doing this it operated in a spiritual reality with ideas which are one of the currencies of that reality.

One of the simplest ways that the spirit world operates in our lives has to do with our thoughts. These originate from our souls, or can be influenced by other spirit beings. For the moment, only consider your own thoughts. These exist in your soul. They are conveyed to your brain, then through your nervous system to other parts of your body. As this happens the spirit world literally manifests into the physical. Again, it is such a normal operation that we don't even notice it. As other spirit beings influence our souls through one method of impartation or another, we experience them and receive information. This occurs much like our physical senses derive information about the physical world, but

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[10] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potentiality_and_actuality

through our spiritual senses we sense them. When it happens, we struggle to understand it, and have to work and learn how to use these senses, or determine if we even have them.

Some people dismiss these experiences as fantastic imaginings, which I did for many years. But at some point, the information received through these experiences was all too real for me to ignore. The information I received began to validate future events in my life. I told others about these visions, and when the events foretold happened, I couldn't ignore the reality of these experiences any longer. Moreover, I couldn't dismiss the experiences, or this other part of reality in the spirit world that I was experiencing by calling it a delusion. Very clearly, I could discern the physical world from the spirit world, just as you can tell whether you are inside or outside, seeing blue or red, or tasting as opposed to feeling. Realizing how real the spirit world is allowed all of the pieces of my previously fragmented reality to fit together - whether I could measure it, control it, prove it to anyone else, or not. I knew without a doubt what I had experienced.

For me, given my own experiences, I no longer doubt the reality of this any more than I doubt the reality of the material world. So, ask yourself, "what would it mean for these types of experiences to be real?" Especially since many others like me have experienced these things and openly agree about them. Wouldn't that make these experiences a window into a spiritual world? Wouldn't that mean that things like lucid dreams would give us another way of experiencing this spirit world? It would definitely mean that each of us would naturally be attached to both the physical and spiritual parts of reality. If several people received the same information through these kinds of experiences, just like two people seeing the same thing in the physical world, what would that mean about our ability to measure the spirit world? Let's consider several questions about these kinds of experiences.

§2:4 Spirit World Experiences and Understanding

If we are willing to accept that our mind is distinct from our brain, or in other words, is a non-physical part of our being. If it is not a physical part of us, then we have a spiritual component to our being that we can call a soul. If the soul is not physical, then it resides in a non-physical part of reality, which we can call the spirit world. And if we pragmatically agree that other soul (mind) body pairs exist by virtue of our recurring experiences, then we can agree that this spirit world must contain not only our soul, but the souls of these other soul body pairs.

If our thinking occurs in the spirit world as part of the function of our own soul, then other soul body pairs must also do the same, and we can call all of these people. The conveyance of ideas from one of us to another most commonly occurs by conceptualizing an idea in our soul or mind, transferring it to our body, which manifests the idea from our body through verbal and non-verbal expression. These expressions are then interpreted in context to common language through the physical senses of other people, and conveyed back into the spirit world through their souls or minds.

Now suppose there are other spirit beings that are not a soul and body pairing. This method of communication that we view as common would not be available to them. However, does this mean

that these spirit beings could not communicate with each other, or to us? One answer is to claim that there simply are no other spirit beings. However, what about people who claim to have experienced this spirit world, and within it experienced spirit beings? I've had these experiences personally, so I don't require further evidence from anyone about it. But even though I had experienced this before I understood the spirit world was a part of reality, I was still able to dismiss it. I know others are in this camp as well.

In my personal experience there are a number of ways in which information is imparted from the spirit world. First, take a simple example most people can relate to. Have you ever had a good or bad feeling for no reason? Then later, you find out that at that time something wonderful or terrible was happening at the time you were having that feeling, or soon after? It isn't that you had a complete picture of what was happening, just a sense of it. Where did this information come from?

Now consider that you were to get information about someone else, and it is nothing that you've been told. In fact, it might be something that the other person has been keeping private for one reason or another from everyone else. When you tell them about it, they are amazed that you knew about it.

What do these experiences tell us about the spirit world? The information must have come from somewhere. Just like seeing something in the material world was an image of light, color, shape and context. This introduces the concept of other sources. The "other" here means not my mind and not the minds of other people. It is another source in the spirit world that is capable of communicating with people in a way that is not the common physical world conveyance described above.

To underscore, the unavailability of the common physical world conveyance, must mean that these other sources use other methods of communication. The point here isn't to be redundant, but rather to stress these two distinct concepts. First that there are other sources, and second that they must use communication methods that are outside of the common conveyance method that we typically use from one person to another.

This takes me back to the types of spirit world experiences described above in Greek and Hebrew, and experienced by many people in a common way. As a means of positioning this, if we are required to take a small non-Kierkegaardian leap of faith to pragmatically assume the existence of the physical world, and within this physical world our systems of measures can fall victim to the true skeptic, then we use some level of faith when interpreting the measures of science. However, in many examples it requires an astrophysicist, biologist, or chemist to conduct experiences, determine the scientific results, validate or build an argument for theories, and explain what they think is happening to the rest of us. In a similar way, still not requiring a Kierkegaardian leap of faith, we are able to identify people who have similar experiences with the spirit world where they receive information in common ways, and are able to validate this information that was not knowable to them in any other way. I am not saying that these experiences in the spirit world form a type of pseudoscience, because that would be a mistake.

I am making a few key points.

First, that the commonality of experiences with the spirit world are common because they happen in a common way to different people. Second, that the people who experience them, or experience them in a more profound way, are able to receive and validate information about our reality that comes to them in this way. These first two points are observable. While they can't be controlled or created on demand, that doesn't invalidate the reality that they happen.

Third, that some people experience them and some people don't, or don't seem to. And within the group that does, there are levels of intensity that different people have with these experiences. This would be similar to having better or worse sight, smell or taste.

Fourth, out of these experiences, information is derived. Like the scientists explaining their results, these people explain information they receive from the spirit world.

Fifth, the measure for providing reliable information is found in the ability to validate this information. Just like there is bad science, there is bad information that comes from people who claim it comes from the spirit world. Sometimes it doesn't, because people want to manipulate others for their own benefit. That is a reality of the human condition. But setting that aside, there are those who in many cases have nothing to gain from disseminating the information they receive. Moreover, there are many who provide this information purely for the encouragement, benefit, and assistance of others.

If you are willing to assume that these things can happen, whether it is based on your personal experience or not, it is important to ask, "what can I learn about the spirit world based on these experiences and information?"

If other spirit world sources can provide information to us, and we find that some of the information is correct and some of it isn't, then we must ask the next question, "are all spirit world sources equal?" The answer must be that they are not. However, this opens up another reality about the spirit world. If sources are not equal, that by definition requires there to be more than one source. If every person has a soul, and constitutes as part of their whole identity a spirit being, then there are multiple spirit beings. If there are other sources, or beings in the spirit world that are not equal in reputation, then there must be multiple spirit beings in the spirit world that do not have a physical component to their whole identity which as described are capable of providing information to us through supernatural experiences or non-physical conveyances. Because in the same way that people can communicate to each other, beings that are spirit only also seem able to communicate to us without using the common conveyance of the physical world. If these spirit beings can communicate with us through our spirits, then they must be able to communicate with each other using similar methods in which they communicate with us.

The last area to explore as we press beyond the physical world is to look at the impact of spirit world experiences on those who have had them. Why is it that people, myself included, who after having these kinds of experiences, come to an understanding about their relationship with the spirit world and a deeper sense of the supernatural around them? That these experiences would be profound enough to

alter the course of someone's life must be a valuable measure. Why else would people change their beliefs and begin to espouse new faiths and revelations?

Gautama Buddha lived a disciplined human life in connection with the spirit world. Saul of Tarsus converted to Christianity following an encounter with the manifestation of Jesus Christ, and this changed his entire approach to life. Muhammad, the founder of Islam openly accepted the spirit world and founded his religion after receiving a revelation from who he believed was the angel Gabriel, and regularly received revelations from the spirit world and taught based on them until his death. These are a few key examples of notable people from various belief systems whose lives were changed based on spiritual revelation, but the list is obviously much longer.

For some, and possibly many that we don't hear about including people like me, when the veil between the physical and spiritual world is lifted, the resulting change is dramatic with a resolve that is beyond a mere "brain fluke." There are many examples of people who have died for the cause they wholeheartedly believed came from the spirit world, was handed down from a greater power, and defined who they were and the purpose for their lives to the end of this physical life. Others simply changed doctrine to support their immoral lifestyle. Nonetheless, the effects coming from the reality of spirit world made an impact that was measurable on their lives.

I realize that most people don't think they have a basis for experiencing these kinds of spiritual experiences. This is why the experiences that are natural to us are so important. The act of thinking and talking for example. For many, the sense of what you might call intuition, which I would say is actually receiving information from the spirit world. Even so, I understand that most people may reject this whole idea of the spirit world. On one hand, that is okay with me, because I don't feel commissioned to prove to anyone the reality that I understand. On the other hand, I do want to share my experiences, journey to the spirit world, and the amazing realities of it with everyone. With that said, I want to consider for a moment what all of this means for people who don't think they experience the spirit world, and those who reject it.

If you don't believe you experience the spirit world, but think others do. I would encourage you to think about how the most amazing miracle you experience every day is waking up, breathing, thinking, and interacting with your environment and other people. Most of the physical world is made up of inanimate objects. That you are able to think and act is incredible. What you have at your disposal is already an amazing portfolio of capabilities. And if you agree that others experience the spirit world in a more profound way, I encourage you to stay with me on this journey, because I think there are some wonderful treasures for you to discover.

If you don't believe you experience the spirit world, and don't even think it exists, I would like you to consider how we are able to think. Is it just electricity flowing through our bodies that causes our mind to operate like a computer or 'meat robot'? If so, why can't we build a person, or even repair our bodies with technology such that we could live forever? Why can't we solve the problem of aging, which is no different than solving the problems of say, an information technology network, but in a biological sense?

If there is no spiritual component to us, then what makes us work? Why can't we just 'reboot' a person who dies? Or build a living cell – just one? Are we too stupid to do these things? I think these are more difficult questions to answer. It takes me back to the pragmatic acceptance of the bus - where I may decide to be a skeptic about it, but I'm not going to step in front of it. In other words, it is a choice to accept the practical experiences we see, think, and feel every day, or stick to our guns in the state of absolute skepticism. Another out, if this is where you are is to accept the physical world, take the smaller leap, and not the bigger Kierkegaardian leap. This allows you to live a practical life in the physical world. Ultimately this is the step your spirit world enemy wants you to take, because it allows you to make yourself a god, and believe that humans are by nature good and not evil. Of course, that opens a whole line of ethical questions and study that I don't have time for here.

At a bare minimum, the reality of the spirit world seems like a worthwhile area to explore. And from there, discerning what we can from what we find.

§3 Non-Physical Constructs

§3:1 The Existence of Non-Physical Constructs

This is not an argument for structuralism, although there are similarities due to the language. And because language carries the ideas, it isn't a surprise that these things quickly become conflated. The focus here isn't on structuralism, or non-structuralism, or even on the language. Rather it is on the idea beyond the word. While the word 'good' carries with it a definition. If we look beyond the words themselves and consider what the construct of 'good' is in contrast to the construct behind the word 'evil' we can understand 'goodness' and 'evilness' unhinged from the word form of these constructs. Operating within this medium of understanding should allow us to assess the core building blocks, despite the awkwardness of the language that must be used to deliver it.

Plato[11] describes the connection between the physical and spiritual worlds as trying to discern reality by referencing the shadows on the walls of a cave made by dancers dancing around a flickering fire. We can more easily agree about what we experience immediately, but the shadows on the wall are open to more interpretation. Nonetheless, we still search for answers, because whether we can all agree about the exact interpretation the reality is that we all experience these shadows on the wall. Since we are all in the existential condition of experiencing this reality, it is worthwhile and relevant to ask and investigate what this reality is. For most, some notion of the spirit world still resonates, and it is more a question about what and where it is. For others it feels distant or detached, and possibly just a figment of the imagination. I'd like to investigate some areas where I think we can all agree are real, and ask about where they originate from.

Yin and Yang: Eastern thinkers in ancient China presented the model of yin and yang, opposite but complementary forces. Many things could be attributed to this model that are in the physical world, like day and night or the weather for instance. But a deeper application of this model is that one force was the way of heaven or cosmic realms and the way of man or Earth. During the Han dynasty, philosophers attempted to fuse metaphysics and cosmology, showing how they were connected. More commonly this model is used to explain vital energy operating in both sides of the yin and yang, and how it is connected to the five senses and six diseases. In other words, the origin of these physical things comes from a metaphysical source.

Instinct and Intuition: Rationalists pointed out that many animals are born knowing how to survive. Where did this information come from? What about when we have a feeling or a sense about something? Is that intuition, or something else? Either way we are talking about some sort of a priori knowledge, and arguments have been made either way. Yet, something nags from the background. I saw a documentary about hatching marine iguanas who somehow know they need to run for the water or be eaten by snakes. How would the iguanas know about the water, where it is located, which way to run, that these snakes have bad eyesight, and how to evade the assault? It seems like a lot to know by

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[11] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allegory_of_the_Cave

accident. Since they just hatched, and there is no mother iguana there, where would they get the information? It is a real example. Is it instinct? Is it related to intuition? Where does the information originate from?

Good and Bad: A common human belief is a sense of good and bad, right and wrong. Why do we have this? An easy answer to the question is that I know when something feels good or bad, right or wrong, when it is happening to me, and therefore I can understand this as a concept. But this answer is incomplete, because if done in isolation it leads us to a position that only values what happens to me, and cares not for others. Ayn Rand[12] covered this and promoted selfishness as a virtue. Supposing that I am the only existing mind, then I could agree with her point. But that would lead me back to solipsism, which I cannot agree with pragmatically. Therefore, I must consider this question in context to a many minds environment. How does good and bad, right and wrong influence my interactions with other people, and how is it applied culturally?

Hierarchy of Beings: If we were to create an ordered taxonomy of tools, where "better" tools were higher in rank, and "worse" tools were lower in rank, we would have to determine the criteria for "better" and "worse." Is a screwdriver better or worse than a hammer? It depends on the job I suppose. Maybe a ranking by the number of jobs a tool could be legitimately used for would suffice. In looking at animals, a common method is to consider their ranking in the prey versus predator schema. Another piece of the puzzle has to do with cognitive thought. While these two concepts work together, they are also independent of one another. Dolphins are smart, but they aren't as smart as humans, and they sometimes get eaten. Of course, humans are considered to be the top of the food chain, but we sometimes get eaten also. But hopefully we are smart enough to not put ourselves in a vulnerable position. But at some level we would probably agree that there is a hierarchical ranking that could be established, debated, and revised, such that we are not equal to ants.

The recurring idea in these examples is a realization that these concepts actually exist. Which is my point. These things are more than ideas alone. They have a commonly recognizable reality by people. Our perspectives into these realities might be like the analogy of discovering different parts of an elephant in a pitch-black room. We all have a piece, or overlapping understandings, but in the end the elephant is real. To pursue an understanding of these concepts is to first acknowledge their existence. Moreover, if they exist, the question about where they originate from, or where they actually exist, is critical. Because if they were only in our own mind as an idea, then they could not be recognizable at some level by many people or entire cultures.

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[12] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Virtue_of_Selfishness

§4 The Natural State of the Spirit World

§4:1 Pragmatic Agreement About the Spirit World

Think about relaxing your core. Then your arms. Then your legs. Did it work? Unless you suffer from paralysis, of course it did. This is a very natural example of consciously making a physical change in our bodies. The last mile of that is through our nervous system, but where did it originate?

Some would argue that it occurs in the brain. But if the matter of the brain, along with some sort of electrification were all that were required, then why can't we reuse brain matter? Shouldn't we be able to take a brain out of a sick or dying body, implant it in a younger and healthier body, and effectively recreate ourselves? Or couldn't we go the other way, and somehow catalogue all of our memories into a hard drive that can operate in some kind of a robot? If all we are is a collection of our memories, this is all it would take! Isn't this the 'singularity' that is now the hope of those wanting to live a mortal life that lasts forever? But options like these feel off, because they don't really seem to represent our own identity.

Our mind seems to be different than our brain. While we speak about brain activity and recognize that a damaged brain prevents us from operating our bodies correctly, it seems that our brain is something of a conduit that allows our cognitive identity to remain attached to our bodies. In other words, our identity is made up of both a body and a something that is not body, which in common terms is referred to as a soul. If we consider our soul to be the counterpart to our body, then the soul is the counterpart to our brain. Because just as the brain acts as a touchpoint for this conduit in the physical world, our soul acts as a touchpoint or organ for this conduit in the spirit world. And further, just as our brains can become damaged and cause problems in operating our bodies, our souls can become damaged or callused and cause problems in operating our spirit.

When we conceptualize an idea in our mind, this occurs in our soul, which in turn exists in the spirit world. Suppose the idea is to move our foot, then that idea is passed through the conduit from the soul, through the brain and nervous tissue, reaching our muscles that cause our foot to move. This process does more than cause our foot to move. It is literally a transfer of spirit world concept into physical world reality.

Because all minds are the thinking reality of other souls, and these other souls are also connected to a body through a similar conduit, then the thing that defines "people" is this soul body combination through a soul brain conduit.

Before I understood the reality of the spirit world, I would define our "spirit" as electrical energy that flowed through our body. Or some incredible happening of our physical state that produced this cognitive reality. But if the explanation is something like this, then why can't we reproduce it? Or replicate it into an everlasting model? Is science simply deficient? I would struggle with these issues,

because the answer that we had a soul as a central part of who we are was not something I wanted to accept. Yet, for me it is the most natural and obvious answer.

Think about how natural the interaction is between our soul and body. It just happens. We don't even, well, think about it. Considering this, and the alternatives for what our consciousness could actually be, I'm hard pressed to come up with another explanation that is reasonable. Like the bus that I don't step in front of because of my assumptions regarding its reality, I also now assume the soul to be real.

However, let's be very clear about this. With the bus I took a leap of faith outward to assume the material world. But the step with our soul is different and counterintuitive. In fact, my own soul is more knowable than my body. So, while I take a Kierkegaardian leap from my own self-identity to my soul, it is a shorter leap than I once thought. Remember, from Descartes, I think therefore I am" is the most knowable reality I can have and is in fact what I'm defining as my soul component to my own self-identity. Further, because of my pragmatic assumptions about other minds I make this assumption about other people as well, going the other way. Because these souls exist in a place that is not the physical world, I also assume the existence of a "spirit world," which in my understanding is another dimension to reality or a place where these spirits reside.

If the spirit world exists, and if there are other souls, then the spirit world must have attributes that can be knowable. Some of these are the constructs discussed above like yin and yang, instinct and intuition, good and bad, and a hierarchy of beings. Starting from the solipsistic knowledge of ourselves with the "I think therefore I am" position, and taking the Kierkegaardian leap inward from our soul to assume the spirit world, and outward by observation of others and the commonality between them and us. What can we know about the spirit world that stems from this knowledge of ourselves?

Piety and Treachery: At some level we assume we have an inherent sense of justice. However, there are many problems that are not solvable with a basic human understanding for following the rules. If we were better at it, we wouldn't be so litigious. Who are the rules for anyway? A pious person is religious, which simply means they follow the rules. You can be religious about anything. Piety also denotes some form of reverence however, and in this case, it would be for the rules, or for the governing body that implemented the rules. Does a pious person lie? What about a person who hides a victim from an assailant and lies about it in order to keep them safe? Would it wrong to lie? Treachery is in many ways the opposite of piety. It has betrayal at its heart. The juxtaposition of reverence and betrayal are the key forces at work within us as people. Sometimes we make altruistic decisions, but many times we do not. Either way, when we are removed from a situation and consider it from the outside looking in, we can identify these forces. Piety seems better than treachery, but why? Is it because that is how we would want to be treated? Is it more just? Maybe we aren't capable of making a judgement call, particularly when situations become complicated, and especially when they involve ourselves. Being good at deciding isn't a requirement to agree that one is better than the other. When we are involved, we can see how, like yin and yang, our spirit and flesh work together in some ways, and war against one another in other ways. It is a more complex blend of thought, emotion, logic, and context. How do we,

or can we govern these forces within ourselves? Humility and pride? Don't these relate to behaviors? And if so, how do we decide?

Conscious Decisioning: I used to think that logic was a gateway to making better decisions. This is why my major in college focused on logic and philosophy of language. But it turns out that there are many human conditions that force us to make decisions where logic isn't applied. Here is a good philosophical thought experiment that demonstrates that point. Suppose you could save a hundred people or one person, what would you do? But what if you didn't know any of the people in the group, and the one person was your child? It becomes more difficult. Despite the difficulty, it doesn't get us off the hook with respect to decision making. At some level we attempt to make the best decisions we can, applying common sense, a touch of altruism, and a dash of selfishness. Nobody is perfect, but we don't need to be to understand that our own framework for decision making is also flawed. At a minimum our decisions are based on what is good or bad for us and others. We want to think they are based on constructs for absolute "good" and absolute "bad," but at their best they are based on a much more subjective set of references. Given this, an honest evaluation of ourselves is that we are not the inherently good beings we'd like to think we are. This is why many of us look to the spirit world in search of enlightenment from beings that are greater than ourselves. Here too, however, we have options and a choice to make. What do we believe? What do we follow?

Holiness and Evil: Is there an absolute "good" or something that is actually "perfect"? What does this say by comparison about something absolutely "bad" or "evil"? Is "goodness" and "badness" derived from these absolute ends of the spectrum? Since we are not so good at making judgements about "goodness" and "badness," are there sources in the spirit world that can be trusted? The concept of "holy" is a model for absolute good and perfection. Using this model, we can test information from the spirit world and derive the accountability of the source. Interestingly, some information is reliable, and other information is not. Sources that provide reliable information then would seem to be better than sources that do not. The reliable sources then could be called holy, and the unreliable might then be considered bad or "evil." Using these non-physical constructs, we need to spend time listening to sources from the spirit world and develop an ability to discern between these sources. Like learning the voices of other people, our ability to receive information and determine the voice of the source spirit being is within our reach. Truth, or holy information always comes with a comforting feeling, even when it is bad news. Deception often comes with a veneer of truth, but the voice of the source being will lack the feeling of comfort. This ability is known to us. We know as kids that if we are stealing something at a store, the discomfort about the possibility of being caught. A similar feeling accompanies a deceptive voice.

Hierarchy of Spirit Beings: If there are different beings with different voices, and some are holy or speak truth, and others are evil and seek to deceive, then we can attribute a hierarchy to these beings. Holy beings seem to be better, or higher in the hierarchy, because they have our best interests in mind. Those that seek to deceive are trying to make us fail, cause contention, and create destruction in our lives are evil. These beings are not only lower in the hierarchy, they are our enemy. They come to kill, steal, and destroy. A choice we must make is to seek after the holy being or beings that bring us truth.

§5 Working Out Disagreements Regarding the Spirit World

There are several general challenges regarding how we experience reality and make decisions about it that are worth addressing. Many of these common objections are made as people grapple with the concepts of spirits, gods, and the spirit world in general. The foundation of my rebuttals will follow from the assumptions made regarding the pragmatic leap of faith to assume the spirit world.

§5:1 The Many Gods Problem

Volumes have been written and argued about the "many gods" problem, but here is the way I think about it. Truth flows from one source, and untruth from another. There can only be one true and perfect God, and there can only be one source of opposition to that truth. This requires the True God to remain perfect and faithful to the structure, law, promises, and covenants that He has established. He can't fail at this, because it would violate His character as the One True God. The enemy of truth however, can violate these things to the extent that he is allowed in an attempt to divide people from the truth. This means that the enemy of truth can veil itself in many different and contrarian forms to the truth.

An argument against the reality of a single True God goes something like this. The idea of an omniscient (all knowing) omnibenevolent (all good) and omnipotent (all powerful) God is a contradiction. Because if this God were all knowing, then they would know about all the bad stuff that happens to people that hurts them. If He was all good, then they wouldn't want bad stuff to happen to anybody. And if He was all powerful, then He would be able to stop the bad stuff from happening. In other words, God is a contradiction, and thus, He cannot exist.

A similar idea is explored in the book of Job in the Bible, where Job is subjected to the loss of everything he has. Job claims that he is innocent, but his friends say that Job must have sinned (or missed the mark) somewhere. Their line of thinking argues that because God is a just God, if you do what is right you are rewarded, and if you do what is not right you are punished. Clearly Job is being punished, so therefore he must have sinned. While the point here isn't to question the reality of God, but rather focuses on Job's behavior, it does investigate the nature of God and His justice.

The problem with both of these arguments is that they make the assumption that we as humans understand what is good and evil, right and wrong, and are wise enough in our own right to discern justice through the application of these. In both cases God does not defend Himself.

In the case of the first argument, we can learn the answer when we look at parenting as a model. There are good parents, bad parents, and evil parents. A good parent doesn't give their children everything they want. Rather, they present challenges, allow their children to fail so that they can grow. They teach them responsibility and forgiveness for others so that they can mature. These are exactly the things we see God doing, who in this model can be called our Heavenly Father. Contrary to this, a bad

parent becomes a friend to their kids, feeds them unhealthy food, allows them to get fat, and does not instill in them in the characteristics that grow them into a mature adult. This is exactly what the "contradictory argument" proposes should exist. But this wouldn't actually be a good God at all! Some religious systems argue that because they create an environment of tranquility and enlightenment, they are better. But in fact, this sanctuary is used to justify immoral behavior, like the overeating child, who becomes gluttonous and defiled through these iniquities. Finally, there are evil parents who neglect and abuse their children. This causes hurt, pain, and lots of terrible problems. This is exactly what we see the enemy of God wants. The enemy masks himself in a little bit of truth on the surface, the way an evil parent keeps up public appearances. But on the inside, or behind closed doors, the enemy is at work defiling humanity by instilling hatred, unforgiveness, selfishness, pride, anger, and everything contrary to grace and mercy. In fact, the enemy uses the human sense of justice to influence us into getting exactly what we deserve - judgement.

These concepts are important building blocks as we consider the many gods problem. To many people there seem to be a portfolio of gods to choose from and you can just take your pick. I do think that there are many gods, and I do think that people can pick. But I don't believe that most people are choosing based on the right criteria. This is where these concepts about good and bad, holy and evil, and what constitutes a good God come in. In the same way that getting prophetic insight can be validated by the evidence of whether it was true or ended up happening, or whether it didn't, there are similar validation points about the character of these gods.

One thing that all of the gods have in common is relationship. They all want a relationship with you. This can be through worship and sacrifices at a temple, relying on their oracle, being a meditative monk, making a pilgrimage, or walking a supernatural lifestyle with them. Some don't care if you follow others, as long as you follow them too. And most don't care about you necessarily, as long as you are appeasing them, then they might do you a favor in return.

Really what we are talking about are the fruits of the relationship. If you have a relationship with a person, like a friendship, you have a social contract with that person. When you have a need, they help you out, and when they have a need you repay the favor. If you are always there for someone else but they are never there for you the relationship begins to feel one sided, and you might let this friend go. While friendship is a more rich and complex relationship than simply doing favors for one another, to keep the example simple let's call these favors the fruits of the relationship. These are the things that grow out of that relationship that have meaning, or can be demonstrated as a result of being in that relationship. So, let's consider a couple of gods you could select from using these criteria.

On the surface some gods claim to promote some positive attributes like sexual modesty, giving, and religious piety. However, some of the concepts central to their teaching are not great. For this thought experiment let's investigate the concept of religious war. Not to be confused with spiritual war, which is a fight in the spirit world. Religious war occurs in the physical world and is a manifestation of evil through men who follow lesser gods. This concept is used by what we consider extremists to promote hatred, murder, terrorism, and military war. When the requirement of religious war is a central part of a

god's doctrine, it can't be divided from the faith or the god. Even if some followers of the religion, what we might call moderates, do not practice religious war, it does not negate this as a characteristic of the god. By contrast, people can pursue their own fallen agendas and label it with the name of a god, but this does not make their actions part of the god's character. In the first case, the fruits of the god and its faith are hatred, murder, terrorism, and military war. These are observable and measurable. In the second case, the acts of the people outwardly look much the same. The crusades are a great example of people hurting other people and labeling it with God's name, but these fruits originate from the people and not God.

Using fruits like these, we must make determinations about which god or gods to follow. Using the non-physical constructs like good and bad, piety and treachery, holy and evil, and so on, we can evaluate the fruits of these gods. We must ask ourselves, what does the god or gods offer me, and what is required of me in return?

§5:2 Chemical Manipulation of Reality

Hallucinogenic drugs, as they are defined cause us to experience things that are not present. I know from personal experience that these kinds of drugs present a spectrum of sensory experiences. At the low end of the spectrum colors seem more vibrant, music sounds incredible, and touch and textures are vivid. At the other end of the spectrum a veil gets lifted to reveal a spiritual environment full of light, shadows, and spirit beings. This is a dangerous area to step into under the influence of chemicals, because it reduces inhibitions and leaves us exposed to spiritual influences that do not have our best interest in mind.

In 2000 Rick Strassman published his book "DMT: The Spirit Molecule: A Doctor's Revolutionary Research Into the Biology of Near-Death and Mystical Experiences."[13] DMT, or Dimethyltryptamine[14] is a chemical compound that naturally occurs in both plants and animals, and humans have it in the pineal gland located near the center of the brain. When injected with doses of DMT, subjects experienced what they described as very real encounters with angels, aliens, demons, and other supernatural experiences.

In one way we can say that these were not actual encounters, because in the physical world the subject patient was on a medical bed being observed. So, it is true that these were not real physical world experiences. But if you accept that the spirit world as part of our reality, then it is possible that these experiences were real spirit world experiences. In other words, the DMT and other hallucinogenic drugs can act chemically in a complex way. Some of these are measurable, like an increased or decreased heart rate, dilated pupils, and more or less energy. But some of the effects may not be so measurable, even if they are observable by the subject. In this case, the lifting of the veil to see the spirit world and the beings that are in proximity and present with us in that part of reality.

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[13] https://www.amazon.com/DMT-Molecule-Revolutionary-Near-Death-Experiences/dp/0892819278
[14] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/N,N-Dimethyltryptamine

To underscore the difference, many people want to limit reality to the physical world alone. With this view, anything supernatural is a fantastic imagining, created by the brain itself, and therefore not real. However, if the spirit world is a necessary part of our reality, and is the place where our souls reside, then experiences like these can absolutely be encounters in the spirit world, despite their physically impaired context.

The manipulation then becomes two-fold. The first is a manipulation of what we are capable of experiencing, a lifting of the veil so to speak. The second is in an altered capability to interpret and respond to these experiences. It is always better to experience the spirit world in the methods by which we are designed, in a way that is safe. These safe methods abound and are available to everyone if we are willing to invest the time and discipline, and receive the spiritual gifting that the Lord has provided. But so many people want to experience a quick fix. And these fast solutions can end up breaking you physically and defiling you spiritually.

Since pre-recorded history many cultures have used hallucinogens to invoke the spirit world. But there is another problem with this that is implied by the two problems listed above. A true God would not need us to administer drugs in order to have relationship with Him, and in fact, He doesn't. But we must choose relationship with Him in order to experience the spiritual and supernatural sides of Him. A false god will thrive when you are in a diminished state. This is to say that when you are under the influence of drugs, the spirits you encounter know you are impaired the same way another person could tell that you are not in a normal state. These spirit beings desire to influence you toward defilement, destruction, and death. If you don't possess spiritual discernment or know how to test sources, and even if you do have these gifts and skills, you are exposed in a dangerous environment.

§5:3 Spiritual Social and Cultural Roles

Relevance to society is another way to investigate the spirit world. There are many ways to explain this away. One way I've mentioned several times, which is that science now allows us to be smarter about our reality and civilizations, and in up to near-current times we have, out of our own human ignorance, required spirit world answers to explain the things they didn't understand. Another proposition is found in Matthew Alper's book "The God Part of the Brain."[15] He believes that our brains contain a coping mechanism to deal with things like death by creating and believing in gods and an afterlife.

Attempts like these seem to explain away part of the problem, specifically, why do humans believe in things like gods, ghosts, spirits, and so on. But these arguments aren't sufficient answers to other parts of the problem. They assume the material world and build from there. As I've argued that our soul is actually the most knowable thing, and to get to the material world we must make a leap of faith or be stuck in absolute skepticism. And if we are going to make that leap, then we have to accept a model

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[15] Alper, Matthew, "The 'God' Part of the Brain," 2008, ISBN-10: 1402214529

that takes into account some type of likelihood based on the response inputs we get from things we believe to be real.

I've known people who have been supernaturally healed. I've known many who have experienced supernatural events. I think that historical cultures valued the role of their spiritual leaders because they were more in touch with the activity of the spirit world. This is to say, they were more in touch with the spirit world, and placed a value on people who could connect and interact with it in a greater capacity. Medicine men, shaman, healers, oracles, mystics, prophets, psychics, and others that have represented this role in these cultures. Historically more cultures to date have believed in the reality of the spirit world than have not believed.

When things can happen that can't be explained with science, or are contrary to science, where are we left? If the spirit world can still interact with the material world in profound ways, shouldn't we be attempting to understand it better? This isn't just nonsense. In an environment where people believe the spirit world to be real, they are open to it and available to have experiences with it. When they are not, it is sort of like closing your eyes so that you can't see anything. Having spirit world experiences can, however, be as natural as thinking, dreaming, and imagining. When a person is sensitive to the spirit world it simply means that they experience it at a greater level, like having better eyesight or hearing. Then there are people who develop relationships with specific spirit beings who are able to impart information. These are the people qualified to serve in these spiritually based roles.

§5:4 Return to the Many Gods Problem

If we accept the assumptions that the spirit world exists, that we experience it is a common day-to-day capacity, that some of us are more sensitive to it that others, and that a few have developed relationships with spirit beings that allow the impartation of information, then it is important to return to the question of many gods.

Originally, we were created to have a relationship with the Living God. Our design was a bridge between the material and the spiritual world. And initially our ability as humans was such that all humans were in touch with the spirit world and our Creator in a very real way. During this time, when humans understood the existence of both the physical and spiritual world, there was an enemy in rebellion that wanted to disrupt humanity's relationship with the True God.

These spirit beings in rebellion are unable to create on their own, but are able to replicate in a way that degrades creation. One example of this is the lie. There can only be one truth, but there can be many lies. Lies are best when they incorporate some percentage of the truth. In the end however, all lies from the enemy are intended to be nefarious. Each of the lesser gods that constitute the enemy of the True God are a type of lie about who they are. The True God must remain exactly who He is, faithful and unwavering, because He is the Truth. But these false gods are able to be whatever they want, or nothing at all. They can change their doctrines, what they represent, what they require, and levels of

reliability as they want, or for no reason at all – all of which serves their current motive of survival at all cost.

For all of human history the enemy to the True God has been busy redirecting worship, and a key way this has been accomplished is through the lesser gods that humans to follow. The enemy was at work following supernatural replications (or copies) of how the True Creator interacted with humans. But the intentions of the work of the enemy were evident through his fruit. They always manifest in the defiling of the human creation. Humans who followed these false gods always end up worshiping lower beings like cows, mice, or anything below the level of human. And they may also end up introducing violence toward other humans into their worship in the form of human sacrifice, warfare, hatred, bigotry, and other methods of defilement toward Yahweh's creation. It is an earmark of the enemy, that he and his fallen spirits cannot actually create anything on their own. This power is only found in the True God Himself.

Nonetheless, humanities ability to discern between one spirit and another was tainted by our own fallen state. The enemy was skilled and unrestrained at the pursuit of defiling humanity. In response, humanity chose the things that appealed to our pleasures, our greed, and our lust for power. The lesser gods represented these things. The enemy developed cultural dependence on many gods through culture and false religions. The lesser gods took on identities of general things and specific things. The enemy didn't care which god people were believing in, depending on, or following in their religious practices, as long as it wasn't the True God. In fact, an inventory of many gods gave the hope that all of humanity would select a god, and in the noise those that even knew who Yahweh was would fade out. Today we see this continuing with the expanding religions of science, atheism, and agnosticism. As a strategy, it makes sense. A war of attrition through obfuscation which for the last (roughly) 2,000 years has served their 'delay and stay' strategy.

§5:5 Science as the Way to A New God

Yahweh has created mankind in His image. The enemy knows this. So, when people give way and devote their will to these lesser gods, agents of the enemy, they lend a power given by Yahweh to the use of the enemy. Humanity's creative power began to evidence itself through imagination and innovation. Slowly it was brute force and physical changes. But over time greater things came from the pursuit of the sciences. As mankind began to develop the results of science, mankind's hubris grew along with it.

In an interesting twist, the enemy has observed that science can be a replacement for theology. Or rather, it can be its own theology of sorts. Through humanity's hubris, we believe that if it isn't measurable by science, then it isn't real. This cuts off the whole idea of the supernatural and makes our scientific discoveries the standard, the test and its own proof. For if science by design is only capable of measuring and demonstrating results in the material world, and the evidence that it can show only relates to the material world, then what does it have to do with the spirit world? What can it tell us

about this other part of reality? Nothing. It isn't the correct tool. Nonetheless, we've believed that science is the standard for all discovery and understanding.

As long as the enemy held the dominion he had stolen over the Earth, his goal was to steal worship. But the sacrifice by Jesus Christ and his Resurrection won the dominion back. This created a problem for the enemy, and the plan changed. The renaissance brought about new thinking. The industrial revolution began to modernize the world. Soon there were automobiles, airplanes, atomic bombs, trips to the moon, and the internet. So much of it initiated with the guise of benefiting all of us, but ultimately failing to benefit more than the few.

The introduction of science which powered all of this should have developed our understanding of the measurable physical part of reality. To be fair, it has in some pretty incredible ways. However, it also introduced the lie that the other part of reality, the spiritual part, does not exist. This lie was intentional, and introduced by the enemy in an effort to divide us from El Elohim.

The lie rolled out by the enemy was also satisfying to believe, because it came wrapped in the hubris of our success. It began with a replication of the plan El Elohim had designed for mankind, where we were given dominion over the Earth and went forward to create like Him, but not needing Him. This was the same lie promoted for the first time in the Garden of Eden, to be like God but without God, to know good and evil as God does, to become our own gods. Using God himself as a template, the enemy fanned our desires and motivated us develop fantastic instruments that can now be used to defile each other in new and interesting ways. When we are our own god, we get to decide what is right and wrong. We define our own justice and move to implement it swiftly.

Science as a religion has delivered a system that elegantly accomplishes three things simultaneously. First, it removes the need for the spirit world, anything spiritual, and ultimately God and anything that comes with Him. Second, it grows our hubris to a point where out of pride we are comfortable consciously or subconsciously ready for the third step of making ourselves our own god.

There are many inflection points that demonstrate this transition. For example, if nobody is getting hurt, what's the problem? We are all consenting adults, aren't we? I was born this way, and validate myself by hating all who hate me! We can spin rationalizations that rage claiming social injustice while creating our own, growing our power, and making mountains of money. Truly, we are our own worst enemy. We just needed a little push!

The new god emerges to be ourselves. Out of pride we establish ourselves as our own god. There really couldn't be any better position for the enemy, except unless we are willing to worship the enemy directly. But short of that, if we believe ourselves to be a god, with science being our doctrine, then he has successfully divided us from our Heavenly Father

To be careful, it is important to say that science is absolutely a great tool. Just like philosophy. These are the tools we have to approach, test, and understand reality. The pitfall is when we turn science or

philosophy into a doctrine rather than a relationship to reality. When this is done with philosophy it becomes theology, and turns into religion. Religion is man's attempt at defining a god or gods, and following it in a regularly disciplined system. Science becomes this same thing when it is used to say that only it can define reality and nothing else outside of it can be real. Nonetheless, people employ science in this way every day, which cuts off the and makes void the possibility of the spirit world from their perspective.

This is an important step, because it allows ourselves to make decisions regarding ethics, justice, definitions of identity, and so on. We remove the limits of any other context, and fully embrace the standards of the world. These standards we believe to be our own standards, because this theology if you will, asserts that humans are at their core basically good. It blames our long history of wars, ideological disagreements, and disfunction on a faulty belief in a spirit-based god or gods. The new thought for the new age is that we have evolved as a species and have no need for that nonsense anymore. We become fully capable enlightened beings who, once the rest of us come around, will step into a new age of human achievement. Humanity as our own gods.

But this is a faulty sense of security. I understand it because I embraced this ideology for decades. Then I realized that the things I was experiencing were real. That the spirit world was a reality. That there are many spiritual enemies, and only one True God in El Elohim. I was shown how the many gods stem from the enemy. And I came to understand how all of these false gods leave us in the most vulnerable condition possible, a victim of our own pride and fallen nature.

§6 The Reality of the Spirit Word

There are many who accept the reality of the spirit world in different capacities. As I've argued, many have a piece of the elephant in a dark room. For those that do accept this part of reality, there are different levels of commitment, and a commitment to different parts of the spirit world itself.

§6:1 The Anti-Spiritual

In the modern age of technology enabled conveniences, most people don't *think* they experience the spirit world. But they actually do. Most commonly I'm referring to agnostics who take a position of skepticism and would say they can't know. This is a safer position, because if you say you can't know, then if that changes and you realize you can you can change your position at that point. Then there are atheists, which is a harder stance to defend. They would say that they are absolutely positive that no spirit world or any gods exist.

I see that we are multi-part beings. Our mind *is* our soul, and it connects to our bodies and controls it. But this is so natural that we've forgotten how unique this is. This means that we experience spirit world experiences like thought, dreams, and so forth all the time. But there are those even within the Body of Christ for whom spiritual experiences are "weird" or "strange." As I've mentioned, a failure to understand this leaves us in a vulnerable position. We remain exposed in a fight that defiles us, without arming ourselves with the necessary spiritual weapons that can defend us.

For those who do not believe in a spirit world it prevents them from understanding the spiritual realities that surround us every day. These realities are both good and bad, or Holy and evil. By not recognizing their reality and presence it prevents us from receiving protection, and allows spiritual authorities to rule over them (even if believed to be unreal by the person) that are able to build spiritual strongholds within them. Science cannot answer everything, and it can't measure and define the spirit world. If all of your faith is in science, you have weakened your position against the real forces that are working against you spiritually.

This is also true, and a seeming contradiction, when people on one hand believe in a god who is a spirit being but deny the ability of that spirit being to interact with the material world. Within the Body of Christ there are many who argue against an infilling of the Holy Spirit and supernatural works done by Him in our lives. This is not to say that everyone is equally equipped with these experiences or impartations, for these are provided by Jesus and the Holy Spirit as they choose. But I am saying that we should all be open to the activity of the Spirit of Truth in our lives. In fact, Jesus told His disciples before He returned to the Father in John 14:16, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever." Without the Spirit of Truth, we lack what we need to defend ourselves in a dangerous spiritual environment. This is why teaching against the power and presence of the Holy Spirit is not only dangerous, it is an act that quenches the Holy Spirit.

§6:2 Worship of False Gods

It is worse for those who believe in the spirit world, but subscribe to worshiping a lesser false god. These gods & idols are used by the enemy to deceive humanity, designed with an element of truth and a core of lies. Accepting these gods and their rituals into a person's life give authority to the fallen god and its spirits to defile the person and separate them from El Elohim. Selecting a god to worship isn't like choosing a favorite band or sports team. This decision has very real and eternal consequences. There are two sides to this, those that seek the aggressive gods, and those that seek the enlightened gods.

I suspect that the allure of aggressive gods through the practices of psychics, witches, and dark magic is a sense of control. It is easier to reject everyone else and show hatred to those who hated you by defining yourself as a radical, different, and (in your own eyes) a superior being. Leveraging dark arts in spirit world appears to advance these goals, and positions the follower elevated and apart from humanity. But this is a justification rooted in pride, and the reality is that the deeper someone entrenches themselves into it the deeper they are held by the prisons of their hatred and selfishness. Through hatred they lack love for others and through selfishness they lack love for themself. It defines a new self that is obscured from the one created, and actively pursues further defilement. The results of this are detrimental to the self because these actions remove any good ground within them. The consequences of this manifest in the immediate and in an everlasting sense.

The enlightened gods appear better. After all, they are enlightened. However, enlightening is an adding of light or wisdom to something that is dark. These religions require a follower to practice through works the activities which can impart wisdom. As a person as a practitioner of the religion becomes more adept at these practices, and learns more about the control of their identity, then peace, focus, and enlightenment will follow. Some follow gods who direct their religion, for others it stems from their center or core (the self as a god), and for others it is a combination (Gnosticism). Based on my experiences in the spirit world, I understand that any god other than the Living God is a facade of the enemy. This can include the self when instituted as a god. The peace received through these practices is a lack of war. In other words, if you are aligned with the enemy, and accept a position that is divided from the True God, then bringing tribulations against you would be counterproductive. Because these practices are by definition aligned to something other than the True God, they are also by definition uncentered. Through an entirely different set of experiences this leads to a self-centered approach to reality that is misaligned from the truth. In this case it is detrimental to the self because it fails to align with our correct design of alignment to the Heavenly Father. Again, the consequences manifest in the immediate and in an everlasting sense.

§6:3 The Three Circles and Leaps of Faith

Going back to solipsism and working our way out we can now more clearly see the leaps of faith that are required. While these are not equal leaps of faith, they are both assumptions that require a level of

faith, and assumptions about reality that allow us to interact with what might exist. I've given an unequal weighting up to this point to these leaps, looking at the leap to the material world as a smaller leap and regarding the Kierkegaardian leap inward as a greater leap. But zooming out to assess the landscape, we begin at the soul, which is the mind.

We think and therefore we are. By the process of our own thought, our own existence is the only thing we can absolutely know for sure. Everything else is belief. Everything else if faith. By its nature the soul exists in a non-material part of reality we can define as the spirit world. By virtue of our spirit needing to exist somewhere, this means that the spirit world must also exist too.

Let's be cautious with this. I am not saying that because our own soul exists and its need to exist somewhere non-material we will define as the spirit world, that this alone predicates the existence of the rest of the spirit world. A leap of faith is required as we assume the remainder of the spirit world. What do you know better, your own identity, or the sensory experiences you have? It must be our own identity, because our senses can be fooled. Moreover, our ability to be certain that any part of the material world we are not directly experiencing exists falls into even greater levels of assumption. But we know our soul exists.

We can observe our interaction between our soul and our material body. We can observe similar behavior with other bodies, and discern that these other bodies must have souls that exist as well. It is a pragmatic step, not a provable step. It is a step that requires faith that the material world and the things we experience in it are real, and that the manifestations of experiences are something we can interpret, understand, and make decisions about.

But if these other soul body pairs exist, then the other souls like ours must also exist. If this is true, we can ask if other beings exist that do not have bodies in the material world. In the material world we find inanimate objects like rocks and dirt, and minerals. These are bodies or matter or material without a soul. They are not like our bodies which do have a soul. We also find bodies like animals that are animated, but are not thinking beings like (or in the same way as) humans. So, we are able to establish a hierarchy. Could there be parallels in the spirit world?

In the same way that some people have sight or smell or hearing, and others do not or are impaired to some degree, there are people who have lesser (thoughts, dreams, ideas) and greater (visions, prophetic insights) ability to experience and discern the spirit world. In the same way that I might try to explain to a person that has never had sight what the color blue looks like, or how light casts a gradient of shadows, I could make an attempt to explain my experiences in the spirit world. If these experiences are mine alone, what basis would I have assurance that these things are real. However, if others also have similar experiences, then it might allow me to make a pragmatic assumption regarding these kinds of assumptions.

To be fair, I am basing my assumption about the material world to observe and make an assumption that other souls of soul body pairs, or people, exist. Then I'm assuming that these other people have

common experiences as I do, because when they explain their experiences about both the material and spirit worlds I can relate with common experiences of my own. Because these experiences are common in type, it gives me additional confidence that these interactions are with something that actually exists. If these things actually exist, like a bus, or a spirit being, I won't step in front of one, and I can assume the other exists as part of reality.

This connects back to my knowledge about my own existence, how I know I exist through the process of my own thinking process, and can then relate as a part spirit being to the reality that other spirit beings exist. All of these assumptions are connected. They are interdependent. In other words, if I don't accept the existence of the spirit world, and the existence of other spirit beings, then what can I make of my experiences in the material world? How do I explain the manifestation of activity by other people? Their thoughts, their ability to think and communicate the way my spirit does? These two parts of reality are codependent. If I pragmatically assume the one, then I must pragmatically assume the other. There is no halfway. I'm either stuck at solipsism, or I assume the whole thing.

I use to think a model of reality had my self-identity in the center. From there I took what I thought was a small leap of faith to assume the material world. From there I thought I had to take a second larger leap, the Kierkegaardian leap to an outer circle. Aristotle coined this as 'metaphysics' or the part after 'physics,' which was his writing about the material world. Thus, metaphysics was after or beyond physics. But this second leap seemed fraught with problems, primarily that I didn't think anything in the spirit world could be experienced. I knew nothing of ghosts, spirits, demons, angels, or gods. Since I couldn't know anything about this proposed part of reality, then it didn't matter to me whether it existed or not.

Then one day I realized that my own thinking was a function of what was my soul. If this was true, that would mean that all of the experiences I had with lucid dreams, visions, knowledge of future events, and the like might also come from another part of reality. This sent me on a series of thought experiments which I've outline for you. This led me to a new model of reality.

The new model still presents itself as a three concentric circle model. However, in this new model our self-identity is the middle circle. The leaps between the inner and outer circles are proportional to their radius, because our knowledge of the spirit world is so closely aligned with the certainty of our own reality. While it takes a round trip to come to terms with the reality and existence of the spirit world, once assumed it begins to return results in a way that is as natural as knowing our own existence.

First, the Kierkegaardian leap inward is actually a smaller leap. There is no question it is a leap of faith. But the remainder of the spirit world is more akin to our own identity than the material world. It is more alike to the things that are certain than the things that are in question.

Second, the non-Kierkegaardian leap outward to assume the material world is a larger leap. However, this is a very natural leap. The material world feels, by definition, tangible. But more than a feeling, we have little issue agreeing that this part of reality is real.

Third, that both leaps of faith are required to pragmatically explain our experiences and understand our reality. With this larger view we can experience both spirit and material, we can observe and identify things in the spirit world that do not have bodies, things in the material world that do not have souls or are inanimate, and things that have both soul and body like humans.

As a baseline it requires that both the material world and spirit world exist, are related, and interact. From this perspective it is possible to begin interpreting more about what this means for all of us.

§6:4 Why It's Not the Few, It's All of Us

Most people think of the spirit world as something apart from their reality, far away, and abstract. But if you agree with my definitions and argument, then we all experience the spirit world, because we are all a part of it just as much as we are a part of the material world. We all think and dream, so we all interact with the spiritual part of ourselves.

Each of us also experiences the material world through our senses, which is something agreeable to all but the solipsist. Because we all have both spirit world and material world experiences, we all experience the interrelation between these parts of reality. If these assumptions help explain our practical experience, then it becomes important to dig deeper into an understanding of common baselines.

§6:5 Measuring the Spirit World

The assumptions about reality allow us to believe in spirits and gods, because it accepts the reality of the spirit world. But we are left with another problem. With the material world we have science as a common baseline for measuring and explaining what it is and how it works. There is no exact equivalent with the spirit world. This subjectivity of individual experience makes it difficult, but not impossible.

We have to return to the non-physical constructs like good and bad. We may disagree about what is better and what is worse, but we commonly understand that things can be better and other things can be worse. The measurement of these are the fruits, and we do this either individually or as a group or as a society.

For example, I prefer cold beverages to hot beverages. Someone else prefers hot beverages to cold beverages. Neither one of us is wrong, we are both correct for ourselves. Our level of enjoyment defines our preference, so in this case the level of enjoyment is the fruit of the preference. To say that another way, the enjoyment is the 'fruit' of the non-physical construct of 'better' when comes to making an individual judgement about beverages.

This can become more complicated. For example, 'better' might be defined not only with respect to temperature, but flavor, nutrition value, health value, cost to acquire, impact to the environment, and so on. Each of these axioms factors in with its own fruits. A beverage might be very nutritious which we like because we want to drink things that are healthy. It might be cold, and have a good flavor, all things that we appreciate. But it might cost too much for us to buy on a regular basis. Another drink might be more affordable, and while it doesn't deliver the same nutrition or health benefits, it is still cold and has some of these attributes. So, we make a decision to get that beverage instead.

Decisions as groups and as societies can be even harder. What is good for me is not necessarily the same thing as what the group wants. Or even what another individual wants. The point is not to completely deconstruct good and bad, or how we make decisions, but to say that we do base decisions on these concepts.

Good and bad are examples that are easy to grasp, but more difficult to apply. There is a complex array of these non-physical constructs that govern our decision making, and an even more complex tapestry of context within which we apply them in social situations. Is a person pious, intelligent, pleasant, nice, thoughtful, and so on? All of these project ideas from the spirit world onto things, people, and situations occurring in the material world. A wise person has or has acquired a spiritual fruit derived from the non-physical construct 'wisdom' that can be aligned to and witnessed in either a spirit being, or the soul body combination of a person. A fortunate situation is an array of non-physical constructs that form a spiritually based concept about either a particular event or series of events that manifest in the combined material and spirit world, or reality. These constructs have no meaning in a reality made of only matter.

If the idea of a scale can be agreed, we don't even need to agree on the fruits themselves but only that a gradient exists between concepts like 'good' and 'bad.' If we agree on this, then we also agree that hierarchies exist. And if hierarchies exist, then it means that more than one thing must exist, because otherwise the concept of having something 'better' and something else that is 'worse' would make no sense.

Using these non-physical constructs and implementing them into a context we have the ability to discuss and debate the scale of things in relation to one another. It is a different paradigm than measuring something and agreeing that it equals a fixed length, because everyone has a unique perspective to spirit world. Even so, we must not slip into relativism. If we are willing to accept the physical and spiritual worlds, then we must also accept that these parts of reality are apart from our own self-identity, and that the continuum and hierarchy of the constructs is what is, and that we only interact with it. To think that we can self-create these constructs to suit ourselves is a deception and does not align to any form of pragmatic experience.

However, this doesn't mean that we can't come to general agreements about important matters that affect us in the spirit world, even if the final decisions will be unique to everyone based on their own perspective and the things that resonate with them. I would liken this to the Wittgenstein's rejection of

logical positivism (like words, the spirit world experiences cannot be absolutely defined) and realization that context (every person's set of personal interactions with the spirit world) makes all the difference in discerning this part of reality. The commonality and general agreement will give us the confidence we need in our own personal experiences that allows us to explore deeper into the spirit world. And the community of similar experiences will give us guidance that helps direct us in interpreting and understanding what we learn through our spirit world experiences.

This also doesn't mean that absolute and relative non-physical constructs don't exist. There are absolute non-physical constructs like 'perfection' and 'Holy' for example. The deficiency isn't in these constructs, but in our ability to effectively measure them. The best we can do is attempt to understand them despite our inability to reach them.

These aren't outrageous paradigms. We do the same with our assumptions about the material world. When we push on a wall and it doesn't move, we make judgements about the reality of the wall, like it's inability to move, temperature, texture, color, and so on. In a more precise way science shows us how subatomic particles make up atoms, that make up molecules, that make up cells and compounds, that make up the things that seem tangible to us. In a similar way as we trust our experience with physical things like the wall, and the scientists that can explain atomic and molecular structures, we need to work with our own spirit world experiences and the commonalities between each other's experiences to detect and understand the spirit world.

Of course, the spirit world doesn't hold up to the same measure of reproducibility as science explains the material world. But the things we learn in the spirit world are not of like kind to the structures in the material world. The things we find there are conceptual, non-physical constructs, and the things that make up deeper understanding about who we are and why we are. They are by definition, spiritual.

§7 Drawing Baselines for Measuring the Spirit World

§7:1 Defining a Baseline

Defining a baseline for this requires things that are self-authenticating, and also that stand up to collective experience. If in the material world, for example, I said, "the sky was purple," someone else could say, "no it is blue." Assuming that we are not arguing about how we define the colors, and that our visual experience confirms the sky is blue, then the first statement is false and the second statement is true. We know this through our own personal experiences of seeing the sky.

In the same way, there are self-authenticating measures that we can agree to be "true" or "good" or "right." I propose three categories can be applied this way. There may be more, but for the purposes of this analysis these should be sufficient.
1. The rules of interpersonal behavior, how we treat each other, and the social contracts that govern this.
2. Results, outcomes, or the "fruits" of something that allow us to interpret an applied concept in context to a thing or situation.
3. Hierarchies, specifically, the levels of physical world beings and the analogue of spirit world beings.

In order for this to even begin to work it requires several assumptions. First, that there are other people, animals, and beings. Even if at the onset we only agree that these are physical world beings, the reality of their existence and their ability to exist as thinking beings (in response to the many brains problem) must be agreed upon. Second, a pragmatic assumption that the material world exists, so that we are not immediately pressed into a solipsistic state by the hardcore skeptic. That there are in fact interactions between beings, and that these interactions are real. And finally, that there is some sort of ethical fabric that exists wherein some actions are "good" or "better," and other actions are "bad" or "worse" in comparison to others.

Ayn Rand's work that has argued for things like the virtue of selfishness has done wonders for the modern mindset. Through egoism all I need to worry about is myself, and I can even say that altruism is bad. For people and groups that want to form agendas that support a contrarian or self-defined goals, this is a terrific rationalization. It goes against everything we used to believe as people, eliminates the need for any kind of god or external baseline, and sets us up as our own god. No longer do we need to do unto others as we would have them do unto us because we are right, they are wrong, and they can only be right if they agree with us. If everyone uses this same rationalization, then everybody is right, and everybody is wrong, and there are not common baselines to resolve disputes. It is an outcome of anarchy and nihilism. And a nihilists work is done when no two rocks sit upon one another.

This is why I eventually turned from a purely philosophical approach. It makes concessions, but does so based on the interaction and probabilities, rather than absolutes. It decides that something is

knowable, or at least strongly believable, and starts to look at consistencies in the interaction with what is probably real.

§7:2 Relationship Based Behavior

A practical baseline for interpersonal behavior is the golden rule. If I don't like being treated a particular way, then I shouldn't treat another person that way. There is variability in this because people have different personalities with different preferences. To overcome this, we have different social contracts with people that buffer against these nominal differences. When differences are beyond the scope of what is tenable, we can react by placing more distance between us and the other person. Then there are those that we probably won't include in our life at all. But in the grand scale of things, these differences are nominal. Even someone who we may not be close to or even like would still be a person we would help if they were in a desperate situation.

Philosophies and theologies that draw lines that allow different treatment to different types of people seem fundamentally flawed. This is because we all have our own problems, we all fail one another, and no group is perfect. Bigotry seems like an appropriate word that captures the different treatment of others because they are different than ourselves and our group. Bigotry is practiced and taught as a cultural norm in many religions, or denominations of religions. It is seen in social equality organizations, political parties, and resistance-based groups. In fact, these approaches to ethical behavior seem to take the Rand type of egoism as a foundational assumption and run with it in many different directions. Perhaps that is what was intended to begin with. But it leads to cultural confusion and validated misconduct.

It wasn't fair or good for people to oppress others because they weren't white, male, Christian, or insert a favorite oppressor group here. But we've overcorrected in so many ways. No longer is society fighting for equality, groups are hunting for dominance in the name of equality. It is no different than the injustices performed by oppressor groups in the past that used the names of gods, skin color, social causes, or political objectives to rationalize their evil deeds. This is because as humans we are fundamentally flawed. Cliches like "absolute power corrupts absolutely" are cliches for a reason. We can't help ourselves.

A better approach seems to be that we should show each other the way we would want to be treated ourselves. If we do this, we will demonstrate respect, especially when we disagree. If everyone were to do this, it would make for a much better world. I think that is something we could all agree on. Unfortunately, applying this ethical model of conduct requires us to behave in this way even when others don't, and especially when they come against us. I think of it like this, that retaliation and hate are easy, but demonstrating love and respect to our enemies is the hardest thing we can ever do. If we want to be the right kind of counter-culture, tough, strong, and right-minded, then we have no choice but to be this way. It doesn't mean taking offenses on the chin, but it does mean that we must govern our response by following the correct spirit. Which begs the question, what is the correct spirit?

With egoism what matters most is what is best for ourselves. This is easy to know, and requires no further validation or proof to anyone else. A mental experiment that is fun is to imagine that everyone else on the planet has somehow vanished. We can do whatever we want, go wherever we want, and we don't hurt anyone except maybe ourselves if we aren't careful. While this might be fun for a bit, it would soon become lonely. If we did get hurt or into a bad situation there would be nobody to help or rescue us. We would be alone. In a way, this is what egoism becomes. Out of selfishness we can choose to accept the material world, but not believe that other people are people at all. Or if they are, the egoist can't ever be sure if other people are being honest about what they really think, so it is better to be selfish. After all, if the egoist can't really know if the other 'people' are really happy about what we've done for them or are just being polite, there is no reason to make an attempt. But an egoist can be sure of how they feel, so they should just try to make themselves happy. If it means doing something nice for another person to make themselves feel good, then they can do this, but there are under no obligation. Acting selfish becomes easier by removal. In the same way as we can buy meat in the store without seeing the animal get slaughtered, the internet and mass media allows us to be selfish and hate others at a safe distance with the insulation of anonymity.

The problem enters in when we put our actions in practical context and close proximity to others. Selfishness at close proximity is just being self-centered, and in practice is a great way to push other people away from you. Even if you claim to be fighting for a worthy cause, being a jerk is just being a jerk. I think a better approach still begins with what we want. This is the piece that is self-authenticating. I know what I want in my current situation. I probably know what I want when I'm in another situation. I can imagine what I would want when I'm in a situation like the person I see. When we have experienced specific hardships, it makes us more capable of helping others in those situations because we can relate to what they are going through. It isn't a debate about whether we can truly feel sympathy or empathy, because an imperfect ability to understand what a person is going through is enough. So, we start with a self-authenticating truth about what we would want, and then interpret the situation with ourselves in the position of the other person. Using this we are able to help, respect, understand, relate, exercise kindness, and ultimately demonstrate love to the other person.

§7:3 Interpretation of Fruits

I'm applying a results-based evaluation system within an assumed fabric of relationships. It includes my own self-identity and a relationship to the material world and to the spirit world, which both require a leap of faith on my part. It includes an understanding about physical items that are only matter and exist only in the material world. It includes non-physical constructs that are only spiritual (like 'good' and 'bad') and exist only in the spirit world. It assumes the existence of other people as soul body pairs and that some spirit beings are spirit only with no body.

A fabric of relationships then exists between me and each of these types of things that are external to my identity, and between each of these things to one another. Each of these relationships between two things is then influenced by the other relationships between everything else. To simplify, allow me to use an analogy. There might be a spatial relationship and a temperature relationship between my body

and an open fire. If I get closer to the fire it adjusts both the spatial relationship to a closer proximity, and the temperature relationship to being hotter. 'Hot' is a characteristic of a material world thing, in this case the flame. If I am feeling cold, then getting closer to the fire not only makes me 'hotter,' but it might also be considered 'better.' Then again, if I get too hot, then I might want to move 'further' from the fire, which is now an opposite move to 'closer' and is now also 'better.' Which is to say that depending on the spatial characteristics, physical characteristics, spiritual characteristics of 'better' and 'worse,' and my own identity, there is a relationship between each of these one to another, and between me and each of them.

This fabric of relationships only becomes more complicated, and establishing context becomes more difficult. We cannot begin to positively define the absolute relationships between every possible thing in every situation any more than we can define all of the things in the Universe. In fact, defining all of the things in the Universe is already impossible, and is only a subset when assuming all of the spirit world components of our reality. But in the same way that astronomers statistically approximate all of the stars in the heavens rather than attempting to count them one-by-one, we must do the same thing as we interpret context.

The interpretation of context then is based on the fruits of a situation. These are the qualities, results, or outcomes of context. What becomes difficult is that our reality is not designed for the benefit all people and things. Reality is fluid and ever changing, and our ability to operate within it requires perpetual learning and development.

How these fruits are interpreted stands on the shoulders of the ethical model, which gives insight into relationship-based behavior. If 'better' is only defined by what is 'better' for me, or 'better' for my group, then I will live a lonely life or being hated in return. If 'better' is what is 'better' for all of us, that is a guiding principle that helps eliminate bigotry. 'Better' then is demonstrated through acts of respect, patience, forgiveness, and kindness. In other words, 'better' is demonstrated through acts of 'love.' In this context instead of 'love' we can use the word 'agape,' which proposes an 'unconditional love.' In practice as humans this would be an attempt at 'unconditional love,' since 'unconditional' would be something like the concept of 'perfection' which with respect to the human condition is reasonable to debate philosophically. But in a human sense, this may be better applied as an 'unconditional behavioral love,' which is to say that our behavioral response is not based on pre-existing conditions of the actions or events that came upon us. Nonetheless, as a component to a pragmatic ethical model and interpretation of fruits, an attempt or effort toward 'unconditional love' is sufficient.

Feeding someone who is hungry seems to be 'good' and taking food away from them seems 'bad.' Paying bills for someone who is poor seems 'good' and stealing from them seems 'bad.' Giving a blanket or jacket to a homeless person who is cold seems 'good' and taking away their source of heat seems 'bad.' All of these things are self-authenticating when interpreting the fruits of a situation from the perspective of the proposed ethical model and fabric of relationships.

Unfortunately, many situations are far more complex than these, and even these can easily become complicated with other physical and spiritual characteristics. This isn't to propose that we should acquiesce to relativism as a baseline. It is saying that interpretation is difficult, and we never understand everything about all of the relationships that influence the context of a situation. Therefore, we do have a relative perspective about the context. But as we get better, we begin to see things more objectively, even though pure objectivity is another non-physical construct that is impossible for us to achieve. However, we can use these non-physical constructs to guide us.

This guiding capability of non-physical constructs like 'unconditional,' 'perfection,' 'objectivity,' are included in the set along with 'worse,' 'better,' 'bad,' 'good,' 'evil,' and 'holy.' Some of these only define a gradient like 'worse' and 'better,' and are only understood within that gradient as applied to a context. Others define absolutes like 'evil' and 'holy,' which themselves imply a gradient between them, but exist independently of the gradient. The better we understand these non-physical constructs, the better we get at applying them in our pragmatic interpretation of reality within the ethical model and fabric of relationships. These non-physical constructs reveal the fruit. They show the qualities of things and the character of people and spirit beings.

§7:4 Hierarchies and the Levels of Physical World Beings

Because we assume that other people exist as soul body pairs, and that other spirit only beings exist, we can refer to all of them collectively as 'beings.' Something we know about beings is that they all have different characteristics. Some have to do with their physical or spiritual composition. Some have to do with their personality. Some have to do with their relationships to each other and to everything else in the fabric of relationships. Combining these characteristics and relationships with the assumed reality that there are multiple beings implies that there are various gradients that these beings exist within. This is just a complicated way of relating the fabric of relationships into what we might more commonly say are 'good' and 'bad' beings. A person can be good. A person can be mean. A spirit can be demonic or angelic. A topographical analysis of this allows us to begin to define hierarchies of beings.

In the material world this is easier, so let's begin there. Let's assume an ant, a racoon, and a human. In some ways, like getting into tiny places, the ant is the 'best.' In others, like seeing at night, the racoon is 'best.' But in general, the human is 'best.' This isn't simply because I am human. While there are many things that a human will never be able to do in the way an ant or a racoon do them, a human can accomplish similar tasks using a different method. Moreover, there are a great deal of things that a human can do that an ant or a racoon will never be able to accomplish. This is because humans have the greatest spiritual abilities. Certainly, ants and racoons think, but they don't think at the level of humans. This assessment allows us to establish a hierarchy within which ants, raccoons, and humans can be ranked.

Incorporating this into the ethical model and fabric of relationships, humans exist at a higher level than an ant or a raccoon. Our ability to interact and apply non-physical constructs in the course of our life is far more profound than these comparisons. While ants and raccoons have relationships to these in the

fabric of relationships, it may be a purely responsive relationship in some cases. For example, 'good' for a raccoon may mean that it gets fed. 'Bad' may mean that it is caught or killed. But a raccoon doesn't think altruistically about whether it is 'bad' to dig through the trash for food then leaving garbage all over someone's driveway. The raccoon doesn't think to itself, "maybe if I put everything back the way I found it, the owner won't mind if I dig through their trash." Animals like raccoons don't think about situations from the perspective of other animals or humans. They think about things like their survival, the survival of their pack, and procreation. In some limited fashion their instincts as raccoons and life learning form their behavior. What supports their goals of survival and procreation take precedence, beyond which they don't exercise a thoughtful conscience.

In these ways, humans have the capacity to appreciate the plight of their neighbor. While some people might behave like the raccoons, as a species we are far more capable than animals. In the hierarchy we can create we can assign various animals rank at some level. But no animals in the hierarchy have the capabilities we do as humans.

This may call into question what is 'better' after all. Humans, while capable, are one of the most destructive forces on the planet. We can do horrendous things to the environment, to animals, and to each other. Looking back to the discussion on ethics, this supports my view that humans are not fundamentally 'good' but require structure, discipline, and effort to be 'good' in one way or another. Even so, modern man's capacity to interpret, understand, think, then act, is at a level unparalleled by any other being that we've ever discovered.

This indicates that humans are comprised of something different and more than animals. We may not stand much of a chance in a one-on-one fight with a bear, but a bear isn't even in the game when it comes to thinking. Our chance of beating a bear in a fight relies on our ability to imagine the circumstance of fighting a bear, understanding the capabilities and behaviors of a bear, preparing for the fight, and bringing the requisite weapons to win the fight. I'm not advocating that anyone should fight with a bear, but if you happen to be hiking in the mountains where bears live, it might help to be prepared. The greater point is that humans have more capable souls and allowed us to develop our dominance in the material world hierarchy of beings.

§8 Analysis of Beings

§8:1 What Are Spirits?

To begin this investigation, I start again with the soul. I used to argue that our souls were the energy that flowed through our body. We are like a battery, and when our physical body dies, so do we. And if you want to talk about 'eternal life' then in an Einsteinian sense, our energy never dies, so then maybe we live forever. But now it seems to me that our 'soul' must be more than energy. It must also carry consciousness. If it were only energy, then we should be able to replicate a living body of material that has a soul of energy and consciousness (not artificial intelligence but actual intelligence) to pilot it. But we can't. We can't even put all the material together and 'create' a seed that can grow. GMOs are absolutely genetically *modified* organisms, not genetically *created* organisms. And if we can't do that for a seed, I doubt we will be able to do this for a complex organism. All of which is to say that our souls are something beyond what is understood by science. Our consciousness comes from somewhere that can't be replicated or developed by man. So, we ourselves are an amazing example of a unification between body and soul.

Souls then are more than energy. They carry our ability to think. As the thinking part of our identity, the soul is also where our emotions and personal will originate. Our physical brain matter is designed to receive this thinking and transmit it into the rest of the body. What is more, we can recognize that damage to the brain affects this connection. It is the way we are wired up. Injury to one part or another affects the connection to our soul, which affects our ability to receive thought from the soul. Abuse to the person through horrible experiences injures the soul, which requires healing in a different way, and can adjust how a person thinks about and reacts to different situations and topics. We can also inflict self-injury to our soul through iniquities that make us numb to situations and allow us to intensify our pursuit of these defilements. Finally, we can corrupt our soul through alignments to negative non-physical constructs in the spirit world which defile us.

Our design is complex and has interrelated parts. Injury to one part affects the other parts. But it also shows that our brain, while fascinating and intricate is not solely responsible for our entire identity. If it were, we would be able to separate ourselves intellectually from things that didn't kill us, and allow them to make us stronger. But this is not always true. It is possible to injure our bodies in a way that prevents our soul body pairing from working correctly. Becoming blind, losing our hearing, or incurring some form of permanent paralysis.

These things tell us about their analogue in the spirit world. In the same way that our nervous tissue from our brain outward throughout our body can become disabled, so too can our bodies counterpart. Consider the continuum. Our body is controlled by our brain. Our brain is connected to our soul, where our thinking occurs. Our soul exists in the spirit world. But some people seem to experience supernatural experiences more than others. This comes through spiritual senses which are capable of

experiencing the spirit world portion of our reality. These spirit senses are part of our spirit, which is part of our holistic spirit being.

Everyone has a spirit, but when we are first born this spirit isn't fully activated. That it exists however, allows other spirits to interact and influence it. We can activate our spirit by alignment to the non-physical construct of 'life.' In more common terms, there is a spectrum between 'death' and 'life.' Our bodies are alive when we are born, and move through a physical process of dying. Our spirits are 'dead' or 'not active' when we are created, but can go through a process of being 'activated' or 'coming alive.' The alignment to 'life' is the association required through our choice to make this happen. The life that flows to and activates our spirit comes from the Living God, which is the source of all 'life.' When we choose to activate this by following His prescribed method of salvation, we are cured of the things that cause spiritual 'death' and we become permanently fused to the Spirit of the Living God, who activates our spirit as we are plugged into the eternal source of 'life.' Our spirits are then our "bodies" in the spirit world.

§8:2 Levels of Spirits in Physical World Beings

Jim Collins investigated the differences in people while trying to figure out what made a 10xer, or someone who was capable of leading as a CEO that could take their company to success. He analyzed many different ideas like, "maybe 10xers had to overcome poverty," or "maybe 10xers were just lucky people." Unfortunately, all of the CEOs in his study came from a diverse set of backgrounds and experiences, and nothing seemed to fit. Except for one. At some point in life, they had all experienced some sort of traumatic or monumental life event that changed them. This isn't a surprise however, because we all experience these at one point or another. What he found was that the way in which these 10xers responded to these situations made all the difference. Generally, people react in one of three ways. First, about a third of people will be defeated by the situation which launches them into a downward spiral of disaster. Second, roughly another third of people will fight to recover from the injury and will get back to the way they were. Finally, the last third of people will use the situation to recognize that events in life can potentially always change rapidly and will use the event to develop what Collins calls 'productive paranoia.' This quality doesn't mean a person is walking around scared and afraid all the time. It is a quality that allows a person to become hypersensitive to changing conditions, and to be ready to react when they identify that something is happening. This last response, and the development of 'productive paranoia' was a distinguishing characteristic with all of the CEOs in the study.

This tells us that we have different souls with different personalities. On one hand that seems like the most obvious thing we could say about people. On the other, if biology and science were able to define the mechanics of our thinking, the way a person would react to a situation could be reduced to an algorithm. But it can't. It is deeper than biology alone. The science will never get there because the discernable parts of our soul extend beyond the material world, into an area where science has no purview.

Our own soul should be a very natural thing to experience, because we experience it all the time. With respect to our own identity, it is the only thing that we will ever always experience. Other people have souls, and while we may need to base their existence on some assumptions, it seems reasonable and practical to assume that other people also have souls and that they experience them in this same way.

If animals or other animate beings have souls, they don't seem to be a like kind to ours. Their thoughts are not our thoughts, and therefore what they can do is not the same as what we can do. This is true with respect to theoretical, emotional, and resulting acts of our will that we exhibit as humans. If we assume these other animate beings also have souls, their souls are not the same, and do not seem to be as capable as our own. Thus, we can establish that there is a hierarchy of souls in the spirit world based on this alone.

§8:3 Levels of Spirits in Spirit World Beings

There are those that have experienced spirit world beings that do not have material world bodies. These encounters occur in dreams and visions, and the various types of supernatural experiences I've described before. I've known people who deny the existence of the spirit world altogether, yet have these experiences they can't explain, and so they explain them away as delusions or fanciful imaginations. I've also known people who adamantly believe in the spirit world and believe these experiences to be real. For over thirty years I was like the former. I couldn't tell you what these experiences were, I only knew that I had them and that they were hard to explain. However, when these experiences began to give me insights to my personal future events and were validated in time exactly as foretold, it required a reevaluation. If these revelations were true, what did that mean about the rest of what I was experiencing in the spirit world? Answering this question is what moved me from the former to the latter, from explaining away these experiences to embracing them as part of my reality. When I did this, it allowed me to experience more and more profound spirit world experiences.

Regardless of whether I accepted the spirit world as reality, I've experienced spirit beings for years. Prior to accepting this reality, I would have lucid dreams and regularly meet what I thought to be a guide who I would follow as I ventured into what I now know to be the spirit world. I've had visions of god-like figures perched on the edge of space surrounded by hordes of other spirit beings. I've seen demonic spirits individually and in flocks. I've seen angels who have talked to me, leagues of angels surrounding me individually and groups of other people I've been with who couldn't see them. And much more.

Knowing people who have also had these types of experiences, who have experienced them in the same way gives me confidence in their reality. Moreover, since these beings don't exist with a physical body, I understand them to be spirit only beings, or simply spirit beings. Because of their characteristics I know that some are more capable than others, and are aligned to different non-physical constructs. In other words, the spectrum of capability and development of these spirit beings is like the ant, raccoon, and human. Just as animate physical beings have types of souls and fit within a hierarchy of spirits, these spirit beings fit within that same hierarchy – that is the larger complete hierarchal structure of all beings in reality.

Given that there is a spiritual hierarchy, in order to begin fitting spirit beings into this structure it is worth considering the non-physical constructs they are aligned to. From my perspective the most essential are 'evil' and 'Holy.' Many cultures have undertaken this exercise of spiritual discernment and hierarchical placement in order to direct their worship of the gods. Baal was primarily revered as a god of weather. Asherah was a goddess of sex and fertility. Zeus and Thor were gods of thunder. In some ways these gods helped explain events and conditions in the natural environment, but in others they were false gods that were unreliable and unfaithful to their followers.

The reason a continuum between 'evil' and 'Holy' is so important is because alignment in this continuum defines the character of a being. This is true for all spirit beings, ourselves included, and all are aligned more closely to one as opposed to the other. The influence of other non-physical constructs interacts with the identity of both material world and spirit world beings and vary the composition of personality, talents, giftings, and so forth. But all of these characteristics provide influence according to their strength of alignment in relation to the way a being is aligned along the continuum between 'evil' and 'Holy.' For example, a spirit with the characteristic of 'deception' will be more aligned to 'evil' than 'Holy.' In fact, a deceptive spirit would not be aligned with 'Holiness' because by definition being 'Holy' intrinsically requires the characteristic of 'truth,' which is opposed to 'evil.'

To understand this a little better, consider again that there are non-physical constructs that define absolutes, like 'perfection.' If you imagine a 'perfect' ball bearing, it would be made of metal in a 'perfect' sphere, without blemishes, weaknesses, or 'imperfections.' It couldn't have imperfections because it would be a 'perfect' ball bearing. If this 'perfect' ball bearing were made of lead, then the characteristic of being led would apply to that ball bearing. If it were made of aluminum, it would have that characteristic. And if it were made of steel, it would have that characteristic. Each of the qualities of these types of metal or metal compounds would apply. Their strength and ability to resist heat, and be less affected by pressure. All of these things are important. If we put an aluminum ball bearing in the wheel system of an automobile it probably wouldn't last as long as a ball bearing made of steal.

Spirit beings have relative characteristics based on their association to non-physical constructs also. Some spirit beings are skilled at lying, others are charming; there are those that are generous, and some that hunger for power. We see these qualities represented in human souls, and they are also attributes of spirit only beings. These spirit-only beings can be skilled at influencing, protecting, providing, or deceiving. The characteristics a spirit being exhibits, and more importantly the way that it uses these characteristics, has everything to do with its affiliation to the 'evil' or 'Holy' continuum. A 'Holy' spirit and an 'evil' spirit may both have the characteristic of 'influence.' But the 'Holy' spirit will align to the truth and will influence in a way that benefits the recipient. An 'evil' spirit will influence in a way that separates the recipient from the truth, because it seeks to defile the recipient.

Given this continuum, insight into a hierarchy of beings can be formed starting at the bottom and working our way up.

The enemy of truth, Satan (Azazel) is at the bottom. He represents evil because he is opposed to everything Holy.

A Biblical investigation yields more detail about the fallen angels and disembodied spirits that currently report to him, but for the purpose of this investigation I will associate these into a group I will call 'rebellious spirits.' These spirit beings come in many forms with many characteristics, and present themselves in a variety of ways.

Next there are human souls which are not aligned to the Holy God. They exist in the spirit world and are attached to a spirit that is 'dead' or not functioning.

Above this are spirit beings aligned to the Holy God. Again, a Biblical investigation will yield more detail, but I will associate these into a group I will call 'angelic spirits.' While there are different types of angels, they all must represent the True God exactly.

Humans that have received Christ Jesus as their savior are elevated to be Children of God. This occurs as a result of being washed clean through the process of salvation rendered through Christ Jesus, and because the Spirit of the True God, or the Holy Spirit, becomes fused to and fully activates the human spirit. As a Child of God, the believer is also a spiritual sibling of Jesus and through the Salvation offered by Him receives the eternal life offered by the Father, or Holy God.

At the top is the One True Holy Living God. Because He is Holy, He is the embodiment of non-physical constructs like 'perfection,' 'life,' and 'truth.' These non-physical constructs are themselves associated in a hierarchy of non-physical constructs within which 'Holy' is the apex and 'evil' is the anthesis.

§8:4 What Makes Humans Different

Humans are unique in that they appear in the hierarchy twice. Our composition allows some interesting abilities.

First, we are by default associated with both the material world and the spirit world. This is no different than animals which appear to have a soul. But as discussed, our soul is different in kind and capability as demonstrated by our abilities as thinking beings. Our thoughts are greater than other animate beings.

Second, we have both a body in the material world and a soul in the spirit world. This gives us the ability to conceptualize an idea and put it into action. We have both potentiality (dunamis or potentia) and actuality (entelechy) operating within us and from us. This characteristic is exhibited in a fairly unique way. While animals exercise their will, their focus is on basic constructs. Humans exercise this process at a different level than any other created being.

Third, we have a spirit. This analogue to our material body in the spirit world extends our identity and makes us a three-part being. This characteristic is extremely rare. Animals have a body and a soul, and

spirit beings have a soul and a spirit, or just a soul in the case of disembodied spirits. Humans are created with a body, spirit, and soul in the image of the True God who is a three-part being comprised as the Trinity.

Fourth, we are given authority to make decisions about our alignments to non-physical constructs. The most important of which is our alignment on the 'evil' to 'Holy' continuum. Animals and spirit beings other than the True God are not given this ability to decide. While animals and spirit beings have decisioning power, and can align themselves to various non-physical constructs, and can use these to present themselves to other beings as they choose, they are fixed in their 'evil' to 'Holy' continuum. Humans can also decide about their alignments, but are free to choose about their 'evil' to 'Holy' alignment.

An investigation in the Bible does reveal that when Satan (Azazel) fell to his own pride, his angels under his dominion were also cast down. The difference with humans is that when we fail, we can receive atonement for missing the mark through the salvation of Christ Jesus. This power of salvation is not available to any other beings. Nonetheless, it is still a decision about alignment that we are given the authority to make.

Fifth, we can become Children of God. When we choose salvation through Jesus, our spirit becomes fused to the Holy Spirit of the True God. This salvation brings us into the Kingdom of God, creates us as a 'new being,' and makes us a Child of God. This is a critical distinguishing characteristic of being human. This conversion is not available to any beings other than humans.

§9 An Argument for El Elohim

Given the self-authenticating fruits as a measure for alignments to non-physical constructs and their gradients in the spirit world, we can use things like 'true' and 'false' that are intuitive to us to help understand who God is. When considering absolutes like 'perfection' something is either 'perfect' or it is 'imperfect,' but it cannot be both. Absolutes define ends of a continuum, where something like 'true' is at one end of this continuum. In the case of these continuums, one end like 'true' or 'Holy' must function as absolutes. The other end, in this case 'false' or 'evil,' function as a gradient of things that are at some level not 'true' or 'Holy.' We can apply this to other examples like 'perfect' being the absolute and 'imperfect' being the antithesis functioning in a gradient of not-perfect.

Now let's apply this to El Elohim. For a god to be true, it means they must be absolutely true. There is room for many false gods, each of which presents some version of alignment to things that are not true. But there is only room for One True God, because if there were two it would indicate some flaw in one, the other, or both. This makes the identity of the Trinity difficult for humans to conceptualize. However, looking to our own composition as a multi-part being it doesn't feel awkward that our identity is comprised of more than one part. Identifying ourselves as a model with a body, soul, and spirit, we can see how God Himself is One God with three parts.

This then reveals the answer to the many gods problem. Because there can only be One True God, we should be searching for this God. When searching for the One True God we should consider these self-authenticating truths. As we learn about the alignments various gods have to non-physical constructs, we should be discerning the character of the god. Does the god represent characteristics of 'truth' and 'life' and 'faithfulness?' Does the god have our best interests in mind, or do they defile us in some way?

Delineating our subjectivity in this pursuit is difficult. For example, some people have a hard time following a God who is male, and prefer the idea of a female god. But the attribute of sexuality in a human sense is inappropriate for an Almighty Creator God. In fact, God is described as having both Fatherly and Motherly sides. God is a complex being, greater than our minds are capable of conceptualizing. In the same way that an ant can't think like we do, we are not able to think like God can. Thus, it is important to identify our own mental hang ups as we seek for God.

I bring this example of Fatherly and Motherly sides of God up also to answer part of the "God is a contradiction" argument. Because God is a spiritual parent to us, He wants to raise us up and develop who we are. If we accept the reality of the spirit world, of ourselves as a multi-part being that is created in God's image, then we should be looking in an eternal sense to what God's long-term plan is for us. We get so focused on our life here on Earth, but the reward for the believer is relationship with an eternal God. As we are in an eternal relationship with Him, the question becomes, "what does He have planned for us in the next part of our life?" The Bible talks about the rewards in Heaven, but also says it is hard for us to understand. Even if we don't fully understand this, the model for a believer is to

sacrifice in this part of our life in exchange for reward in the next part. Developing us as a parent would is God's plan, and He does this so that we are prepared for His long-term plan.

§10 Understanding the Character of El Elohim

§10.1 A Study of God's Characteristics

The character of El Elohim is important for us to understand. Ultimately, He wants a relationship with us, and so getting to know Him is a critical step. Many people stop at Jesus. Of course, Jesus is very important because we receive salvation through Him. But Jesus Himself said the way to the Father is through Him. Jesus also said that He would send the Paraclete. These other personalities of the Godhead have been marginalized by followers since the time Christ walked the Earth.

El Elohim is a creator of everything. From His perfection, all of creation is manifest. All the things that are with Him and for Him as well as all the things that are against Him. At first it seems odd that God would manifest and sustain things that are opposed to Him, but it becomes obvious when we see three things. First, that God wants meaningful relationships that are founded on others who choose Him. Second, that in order for this to be possible, there must be other choices than Him. And finally, that God has chosen humanity, who He created in His image, to have a relationship with Him. This is an amazing revelation for those who truly see the reality of God, and what a relationship with Him can mean to the individual.

When we enter into a relationship with El Elohim by receiving salvation through Christ Jesus, we gain an exciting and multifaceted relationship with all of the parts of God. The Holy Spirit fuses Himself to our spirit and becomes our helper in the richness of a Paraclete. Jesus is our Savior, but also our Lord who calls us friend. He walks with us and guides us and His body of disciples. The Father is the head of the Godhead, and oversees all things. He cares for us as His children, and works as a benevolent parent to grow us up in His perfect plan for our lives.

The amazing thing about El Elohim is that He will meet you where you are, and love you. As He explained to Job, the material world is not necessarily a safe place, or a somewhere that is free from hurt and pain. But walking in a faith-based relationship with Him allows us to overcome the challenges He allows in our life. Granted, not all troubles are created equal. Nonetheless, God is with us when we accept Jesus. We become His children, and He becomes our Spiritual Father. It is a direct and immediate relationship that affects every aspect of our life.

When we allow Him to be fully active and working within us, He can activate parts of us we didn't know existed. But this requires us to subjugate our will to His. This isn't a position of slavery to a lesser god, it is a position of childhood to a Father. In one sense, we are expected to wrestle with Him in the same way Jacob did in Genesis. But we are also expected to develop the disciplines over our faculties, as it discusses in the Book of James. To deny God the ability to bless our lives, or to argue against these blessings is to quench His Spirit in our lives. We've already established that we are soul and body pairings. The part of us that resides in the spirit world can be edified by the Spirit of God. He does not impose Himself upon us because He is a loving God who incredibly humbles Himself as He did with

Jacob. If we preach against the way He works because we don't understand or feel uncomfortable with the spiritual and supernatural sides of God, He will respect that. But when we step into a position where we will work with Him, it will be an amazing adventure filled with the Power and Presence of God's Spirit.

The evidence of God's Spirit at work in our lives is the reflection of His character in us. We can consider this from the continuum of non-physical constructs that flow from the 'Holiness' of God. Some examples for what God is include 'living,' 'true,' 'light,' and 'love.' Because God is a living God, we don't need idols or places that become a god. He is alive and is capable of being with us wherever we are. A church building, mosque, shrine, and temple are not God. A priest, rabi, pastor, mullah, and monk are not God. El Elohim is a spirit being that exists in the spirit world, just as our own souls and spirits do, and is someone we can have a relationship with and get to know. He is a True God who represents the ultimate truth. His Truth is not the reason and logic of man, but is beyond our understanding. When we seek to understand, He will enlighten us in the truth. He is capable of doing this, because as a Holy God, the root of truth and light stem from Him. So, we could say that He is 'light' and can 'enlighten.' He is 'truth' and so His 'enlightenment' will always be 'true,' and something we can trust.

You might ask, "why should I trust El Elohim?" The answer is that He is a God of Love. If He were a malicious deity, He could have destroyed us already. He created us, and He could choose to destroy us. But that is not His plan. His goal is a real relationship with us, which requires us to choose Him. Because of this He knew three things would be required. First, that we would fail, but He would have to cover the gap. He solved this by sending Jesus to die for our sins, and when we receive His free gift of salvation, we are saved from the second death in the spirit world. Second, we would need to choose Him instead of other more alluring options. Reality is filled with false gods that promise all sorts of gifts here on Earth, but El Elohim asks us to defer our real rewards to the next life where we will be generously blessed. Finally, that He would need to love us enough to cover the gap and still reward us. Only He is capable of unconditional love, because He is Love. His capacity to love is unimaginable to us. This doesn't mean that we don't hurt God, because like us He feels the sting of betrayal. Nonetheless, His ability to demonstrate mercy to us by not giving us the death we deserve, and then demonstrating grace or the blessings we do not deserve, is only possible for Him. What's more, El Elohim blesses all of humanity, even those who reject and preach against His existence. As Jesus put it, the blessings of the Father fall like rain on all fields.

The qualities and characteristics of El Elohim require a much longer study. But in general, El Elohim is our Heavenly Father who celebrates all who choose to have a relationship Him.

§10.2 Who God Isn't

There are many assaults on the character of God. I am not compelled to defend God, who certainly could defend Himself if He wanted. I also know that I am not going to resolve these points here. However, in my own journey I had to deal not only with who God was, but who He wasn't. There are

more examples than I will cover here, but this is a sampling of some of the issues I struggled with personally.

<u>The Flood, the Canaanites, and Modern Abortion</u>

Why did God exterminate humanity with a flood? Didn't He just create humanity? I'm confused. When we read about the story of Noah it seems like El Elohim is a mean God who wants to wipe out everybody. But think back to His plan for humanity. He is looking for a relationship with us. At that time humans had chosen to worship all sorts of other gods. They were defiling themselves through sex, drugs, slavery, and a wide range of terrible things. It says that Noah walked with God, but as for the rest of humanity, their defilement had reached a threshold beyond which God was not willing to go.

God demonstrated His judgement again when He ordered the extermination of the Canaanites in the Book of Deuteronomy. It actually reads that they should leave no man, woman, child, or beast of the Earth alive. However, there are four important things to emphasize about why God did this.

First, God brought a judgement to the Canaanites through military action. But it is important to understand why. The Canaanites in worship to their god Dagon were sacrificing babies and children. It is critical to know that God takes this very personally. It is a notable threshold with El Elohim. Moreover, it makes me think back to what might have been happening prior to God flooding the Earth to cleanse it. The Bible doesn't tell us, but given that this is an example of something specific that crosses the line with God it makes me wonder.

Second, immediately after the call to war against the Canaanites God begins to give the Israelites laws about not intermarrying with the Canaanites. In other words, the picture of complete destruction of the people is not literal. However, the destruction of their culture, religious practice, and heinous practices of sacrifices is clear.

Third, if a person or culture chooses to defile themselves with sex, power, war, greed, hatred, or the like, God will allow them to do this. Of course, this hurts Him, but out of love and His faithfulness to His covenant with humanity He allows us freedom of choice. He wants us to choose Him, but if He didn't allow us a choice, then our choosing Him wouldn't be a legitimate choice. This is fairly profound, and it demonstrates how despite our shortcomings God desires a real relationship with us.

Fourth, this threshold has been crossed more than once, and God's fury has been kindled and judgement has been delivered. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is a great example where people were treating one another so terribly that God opened the Earth and rained down brimstone and fire to eliminate the problem. Modern culture has been reflecting the same behavior. On one hand taking every opportunity to say the Bible is antiquated, irrelevant, and unnecessary, and on the other our global culture has been progressing to a point where we can define ourselves as we choose, hate those who disagree with one another, and defile each other and ourselves with hate. Our legalization of abortion for example, is not all that different than what the Canaanites were doing, it is simple a

sacrifice to ourselves as a god rather than Dagon. All things considered it seems that our culture has once again eroded beyond what God finds acceptable.

Ultimately, God's justice is not arbitrary. He isn't a vigilante running around randomly inflicting horrors on people. To the contrary, God is love and wants His children to have a relationship with Him. But we can see even in modern times that the progressive, agnostic, and define thyself movements are if anything, anti-god in their nature.

What Is Done in God's Name Is Not God

El Elohim is not a terrorist. He doesn't ask anyone to fly airplanes into buildings, strap on a self-destruct bomb, or kill people because they are worshiping another god. Again, God allows us choice. Lesser people foster hate, covet land and riches, and seek to dominate. Lesser gods will instruct people to exhibit acts of hate and terrorism against others. Even movements that fight for what they would call equality are really a self-defining movement that seeks alignment to their own goals, and hates those who come against them. None of this follows the Golden Rule.

When wars have been waged in the name of God, that isn't God either. The Crusades are a great example. They served a military and cultural purpose for the Europeans of the time. Even though it was done in the name of God it wasn't a commission by El Elohim.

The great commission by Jesus is to go to all people in the nations held hostage by lesser gods with the Gospel of Christ. The great news is that Jesus died for our sins, and through Him we can have a direct relationship with the Father. If we are a disciple of Jesus, we should be demonstrating His love to others by feeding the hungry, helping the poor, reaching out to the lost, and ministering the good news of Christ Jesus.

Unknowable

Some false religions say God isn't knowable. It's an interesting proposition, and alluring to many. If a person believes that gods exist, they must also believe in the spirit world. Otherwise, where would these gods exist. But somewhere these same people accepted a lie that we are not spiritual beings ourselves. Either that, or they believe that our experiences with the spirit world are limited to a few people who hold the power and the truth of religion. But religion is only man's attempt to understand and structure a god, it isn't a god. And it isn't the True God.

This is to say that somewhere between a person's belief that a god exists, and their own personal experiences with the supernatural, information becomes obfuscated. They can't get to an understanding of any god because they themselves don't have the capability or the experiences to learn about anything in the spirit world.

I think this is flawed thinking. I see how natural the interaction between our bodies and souls are, and believe that the problem isn't that we don't have supernatural experiences, but rather that they are so common we've forgotten how supernatural we are. When we see that we exist as both material world bodies and spirit world souls, and that our pairing is an essential design that makes up our identity, then we can see through the flawed thinking.

God wants relationship. Therefore, it wouldn't make sense to create us for that purpose then obfuscate Himself. When we search for Him, He makes Himself findable. This isn't a process of randomly selecting one of the gods on the menu. As I've dealt with the many gods problem, we should be starting with the God that aligns to the non-physical constructs that stem from Holiness, the truths that are self-authenticating, and go from there. Only one God passes that test.

An Angry Judge

Many people think that God is evil because bad things happen to good people, and to them. I've discussed the concept of God as our Spiritual Father, and Mother. I was also influenced to think about this with a metaphor described by Tom Cantor, a pastor from San Diego, California. In one of his radio programs he explains how wine that sits for too long becomes bitter. However, wine that it turned allows the culture to continue to develop. This agitation is necessary for the wine to be healthy.[16]

We are like the wine. If we aren't turned, we will become spoiled, bitter, proud, and terrible. In the material world there are enough troubles to keep us busy and growing. God doesn't create problems for us, but He allows them in our lives. What He does want is for us to trust Him in the midst of our troubles. To forgive those who have come against us, and allow judgement to be His. I failed at this personally for decades and it is what kept me away from God. My anger went deep. But finding and trusting God while we are in a state of anger is impossible. We have to let it go to heal, and when we are ready to heal, the best way is through God.

I want to underscore how 'troubles' sounds like something easy when considering the evil horrors that exist in this world. Simple things in our day-to-day life are troublesome. But real troubles are abuse, torture, genocide, bigotry, and war. There are real adult sized problems out there in the world, and these are the troubles that require us to develop supernatural trust in God in order to deal with.

§10.4 The Blessings on Earth and In Heaven

When considering which god to follow, one of the methodologies is to find a god that delivers blessings here on Earth. The thinking goes something like this. If a god is real, powerful, and they like you, then they will bless you with food, peace, money, power, sex, good looks, a nice car, and whatever you want. Some even promote the prosperity doctrine, which advocates that the Judeo-Christian God blesses here on Earth to demonstrate how He is the best God to follow.

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[16] Tom Cantor, http://www.friendshipwithgod.org/archive.html, show #1132

God's plan is eternal, and we have to look at how He thinks about the purpose of Earth. The environment here is dangerous and challenging by design. It requires trust. It requires relationship with Him in order to develop into what He wants for us. It is not intended to be easy. And El Elohim gives us several examples of this in the Bible that demonstrate this.

First, when we read about the Generations of Esau and Jacob in Genesis. In chapter thirty-six we read about Esau and the worldly success of Edom, which is Esau. Esau develops into a large family with military prowess. He has sons and nephews that are dukes, that lead many men, have many wives, are prosperous with land and animals. They have cities named after them. They have literally made a name for themselves.

In chapter thirty-seven verse two we read about the generations of Jacob, which is Joseph. By comparison, Joseph is a seventeen-year-old boy that we begin to learn about. There is no land, or cities, or military. In other words, the success in generations that comes to Jacob is worked through Joseph as a figure of salvation. In fact, later in Joseph's story he is made second in command of Egypt for the purpose of saving Jacob's family from famine. It is all about salvation, not military, political, social or material conquest.

It turns out that God despises Esau who only has a view of this world. It isn't that God wouldn't have welcomed Esau into His Kingdom, but it required Esau to choose God. A great example of this is Ruth who rejects the Moabite culture of sex and sin and embraces the True God as her God and God's people as her people. This is the kind of commitment God is looking for from Esau, and from us. Joseph demonstrates this well. When Joseph's brothers threw him into a pit, were going to kill him, then sold him into slavery, God was with him. When Joseph served as a slave, was falsely accused of attempted rape, and was thrown in prison, God was with Him. When Joseph was faced with the temptations of pride while serving Potiphar, resisted retaliation when accused by Potiphar's wife, and self-pity while languishing in prison when forgotten by the chief cupbearer. All of these things were God's way of preparing Joseph to step into a role where he commanded all of the logistics in Egypt.

Looking at our own lives, God is allowing us to go through similar trials. But just like Joseph, God is with us. When we remember to look at our troubles as growth experiences, we allow them to be teaching moments. What is God raising us up to do for His Kingdom? What is His eternal plan? With this in mind, it allows us to understand the context for blessings.

Got isn't a lottery ticket. He isn't Santa Clause. He isn't operating a day spa. And He isn't a full-service resort. It isn't that God doesn't want us to have nice things, it is the spirit of it that counts. The blessings brought to us have everything to do with equipping us to serve the Kingdom of God, and little to do with our own success. After all, if you can have a direct relationship with El Elohim today, isn't that the best blessing of all? He has given us all a birthright into His Kingdom, as His children, with the promise of eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven. If the True and Living Creator God is equipping us for eternal life with Him, it only makes sense that He has amazing things for us there. The Eternal Kingdom

is not an eternity of boring church services, but an untold adventure that we are not prepared to fully understand.

Most of the world is not interested in this. Like Esau, they are selling their birthright to satisfy what they view as their immediate needs, the wants and desires of the flesh. These are the things the enemy of God offers as distractions. The enemy takes us off point through temptations using our own hubris, lust, and greed. If God were to bless us with money, good looks, and the lot, it would only feed our fleshly desires. In fact, one of the greatest challenges for those with means is avoiding a spiritual defilement.

The blessings in this world come from Jesus and the Holy Spirit. They are spiritual giftings that manifest in ways we can commonly attribute to personality or soul based, and supernaturally attribute to spiritual or Spirit based gifts. These gifts are designed for glorifying God, loving others, and serving the Kingdom.

§10.5 Coming into Relationship With El Elohim

El Elohim means King of kings, Lord of lords. God is above all other gods, kings, and lords. He created all of reality, both the material and spirit worlds, and persists it out of Himself. He created humanity which rejected Him. But He also gave us a way to restore our relationship with Him, and choose Him as our Heavenly Father.

The only way to the Father is through Jesus. Jesus died for us, and through Him we receive salvation. Accepting this free gift is the only way to establish relationship with our Heavenly Father.

This is an incredible offer, like no other you will receive anywhere else. No other god will or can offer you the same. Jesus meets you where you are, wherever you are. He forgives no matter what you have done or will do, and in fact loved you so much that He died for you knowing all of the sins you have ever and will ever commit. He does this because He loves you so much. He wants to restore a relationship with you, and begin to restore you in His image, into the best you that you can be. His Spirit fuses to you and becomes your helper, and Jesus lives within your heart growing you in His character. Through this new relationship your connection to the Heavenly Father is restored.

§11 The Enemy's End Game

Given what El Elohim wants, the goal of the enemy seems obvious, but it isn't. The Satan (Azazel) is a created being, and was placed in the Garden of God. Its job was to take the glory from God's creation and reflect it and the praises from God's creation back to God. Its initial sin was pride, a lust to become a god and build its thrown above God.

There are parallels in nomenclature used by humanity today. People want to eliminate God, define themselves apart from their design, and through pride elevate themselves to the god of their own life. Because God has created man in His image, and given us dominion over the Earth, which in Scripture is a metaphor for all of the material world, we are able to recreate ourselves through our own speech. Language becomes a powerful weapon. Just as the cliché indicates, "the pen is mightier than the sword." But even more appropriate is the cliché, "your lies become you." The enemy has been influencing humanity for millennia, and through our own pride and lustful desires, we love to follow. As we speak into existence the defiling lies of the enemy, our ears hear and our mind believes.

The tactics of the enemy are telling. He isn't simply after the opposite thing as God. El Elohim desires relationship with us, and is the only God to create a covenant that is free and entirely through grace. The enemy doesn't understand relationship. As a lower being his ability is limited compared to that of El Elohim. Nonetheless, the rage and jealousy burn within Satan and fuel him forward.

The enemy failed at becoming a god. The Most High God placed lesser gods (angels in rebellion) under his command to demonstrate through an exercise in futility that he is incapable. This entourage of spirit beings in rebellion are the fallen administrators of the nations, responsible for the many religions of man, explain the pantheistic religions, answer the many gods problem, and ultimately are all condemned to an eternal death. This kingdom of the enemy has been de-legitimized by the work of Jesus on the cross, and their destruction is guaranteed. Now their best strategy is to delay people from coming into relationship with the Most High by receiving Jesus as their Lord and Savior. They know that when the fullness of the Gentiles comes in King Jesus will return and they will be cast into the Pit, go before Him at the Great White Throne Judgement, and will be cast into the Lake of Fire – the eternal quarantine from God's Good World. They realize that every human that they divide from God delays this reality awaiting them. The method of attacks against humanity are through the temptations of pride, lust, greed and the like. These influences occur in the spirit world using the communication methods that are outside of the common conveyance method that we typically use from one person to another, or from soul to soul. Religion develops loyalty to a lesser belief, and helps the 'delay and stay' strategy of the enemy.

Thus, the actual goal of the enemy is revealed. His objective as a defeated enemy El Elohim is purely to survive as long as possible. This is done through the influence of temptations, and human failure to understand the spiritual reality and align to the One True God through Christ Jesus.

§12 Thoughts Regarding Outcomes for Beliefs and Non-Belief

An outcome of the strategy of the enemy is that many humans will be divided from El Elohim and will be permitted to go with the enemy to eternal damnation. Despite the warnings however, there are many who will not receive the free gift from God, will harden their own heart, and will be forced into a process of atonement in the spirit world.

As believers we are called to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our living fruit isn't just something that we theorize or philosophize, it is something that we've experienced and that we can't be talked out of. It is seed planting in others. That is the calling, that is what we are doing. The soil is the human heart, and the seeds that were sown into us, Jesus has grown into trees, and we are partaking of the fruit of these seeds. Now He is using us to sow the seeds from that fruit into others so that He can do the work of conversion, bringing more people into the Kingdom, and developing them into disciples for Christ.

This process is His work. We shouldn't worry about numbers, Jesus didn't. He is concerned with those who He knows will become disciples – the elect. These hearts are the fertile ground, and yield the best fruit for planting into others. Closing the deal is the job of Jesus, who patiently stands and knocks at the door to everyone's heart. Those who are willing to listen can experience and incredible journey that begins today as they walk with Him in relationship.

It isn't lost on me that all of this requires assumptions that not everyone will be willing to take. Going back to the metaphor of playing chess, these types of concessions are necessary for any practical model of reality. I know how to build a solid philosophical model that holds up, because I've done it. But skepticism about everything got me nowhere. Based on my own experiences and what I can strongly believe to be real, I feel confident in my walk with Jesus, and my relationship to El Elohim. While I might give up a bishop or the queen along the way, you will never get my King.

Bibliography & Additional Editing to Come

Provided as a pre-read.