

*The Destruction of Logic  
from Within*

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Scarborough, Canada

The Destruction of Logic from Within  
*Christian Spiritual Fulfillment as a Function of Conscious Awareness and  
Free Will*

Experiments in Christian Thought, Volume I

Matthew M. Kryzanowski

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*For my wife, I love you.*

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# CONTENTS

Introduction	9
Chapter 1	19
The Marketplace of Spiritual Ideas and the Success of Christianity	19
<i>The Protestant Reformation and the Origins of New World Christianity</i>	19
<i>Toward Spiritual Freedom in the New World</i>	23
Chapter 2	39
New Testament Contentions with Religious Legalism	39
<i>Acceptance of God's Law by Freedom of Conscience</i>	39
Chapter 3	61
The Harms of Religious Dogma: Spiritual Gatekeeping and The Doctrine of Fear	61
<i>Preamble</i>	61
<i>The Void of Being Spiritually Adrift Seeks Fulfillment</i>	62
<i>Religious and Political Hierarchy Derived from Authoritarianism: A Perpetual Problem</i>	66
<i>When Humanist Philosophy Tries to Resolve the Doctrine of Fear: What Happens?</i>	70
<i>The Psychological and Spiritual</i>	75
<i>Checks and Balances: Preventing Ideology Emerging from Fear Dogma</i>	79

Chapter 4	83
Exploration of the Tension Between Predestination and Free Will: Testing Scriptural Coherence	83
<i>Message Inconsistency as a Barrier to Acceptance of the Christian Faith</i>	83
<i>Christian Scriptural Coherence: Examining the Bible with the Tools of Rationalism</i>	90
<i>Is the Destination of the Human Soul Predetermined Whereas the Human Mind Requires Special Consideration?</i>	93
<i>The Earth as the Schoolyard of Human Agency and Free Will</i>	99
<i>Predestination in the Consideration of Heaven and Hell: On Divine Justice and Acts of Free Will in Context and Proportion</i>	104
<i>On the Erroneous Choice of Mathematics to Measure the Infinite Love of God</i>	109
<i>Finding Meaning and Purpose in the Context of Predestination: Jesus Leads the Way</i>	114
∞ <i>Jesus Teaches that Doing What is Right because it is the Right Thing to Do is the Work of the Christian</i> ∞	116
<i>The Work of the Christian &amp; The Wonder of Creation</i>	120
<i>Is it Time to Pause the Predestination vs. Free Will Debate and Shift the Focus?</i>	122
<i>Conclusions Drawn from Chapter 4</i>	124
Chapter 5	129
Enter Kurt Gödel: The Limitation of Logic is that Logic is Parametric. The Breakdown of Finite Logical Coherence in an Infinite Universe.	129
<i>Preamble and Introduction to Chapter 5</i>	129

<i>Experimentation with the Limits of Logic in Political and Social Science</i>	136
<i>Experimentation with the Limits of Logic in 'Hard' Science</i>	154
<i>Experimentation with Limits of Moral Logic</i>	171
Chapter 6	177
Potential Criticisms Arising and Defense of the Ideas Presented	177
<i>Defense from External Philosophical and Scientific Criticism</i>	178
<i>Defense from External Religious Criticism</i>	182
<i>Defense from Internal Christian Criticism</i>	185
Chapter 7	189
Break Free from Religious Axiom and Ritualism to Experience Spiritual Fulfillment	189
Appendix I	197
<i>A Practical Proposal for the Ideologically Adrift</i>	197
Appendix II	201
<i>Practical Suggestions for Church Communities</i>	201
<i>Christian Spiritual Fulfillment as a Function of Conscious Practice of Free Will</i>	201
<i>For Congregations</i>	202
<i>For Church Leadership (Including Musicians)</i>	203
Works Cited	209
<i>Further Reading</i>	213

Glossary	219
Historical/Political/Economic/Social Terminology	219
Philosophical Terminology	222
Philosophy of Mathematics Terminology	223
Theological/Religious/Spiritual Terminology	224
Compossible/Impossible Substance and Ideas	225
Standard and Expanded Use Compossible/Impossible in the Destruction of Logic from Within	225
Theological/Religious/Spiritual Terminology Continued	226
Supplemental Practical Material	229
<i>An Example of Formal Logic Procedure</i>	229
<i>A Quick Glance at Kurt Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems</i> <i>(1931)</i>	231
<i>Theorem 1</i>	233
<i>Theorem 2</i>	235
About the Series	238
More Titles Coming Soon from Idea Factory Press!	240
About the Author	242
About Idea Factory Press	243

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THE DESTRUCTION OF LOGIC FROM  
WITHIN

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## Introduction

The limitations of logic in the pursuit of a deeper understanding of the nature of reality has been met by philosophers, mathematicians, scientists, theologians, psychologists, and by people from any field of study, or walk of life, no matter their religious, political, or intellectual affiliation or belief.

Any curious and thinking person who engages with abstract thought, the material world, or the nature of the cosmos, inevitably runs up against the limitations of the ability for reason and logic, and additionally scientific observation and method, to explain, interact with, and understand the mysteries of the universe.

In the attempt to offer a fresh perspective on the nature and limitations of logic as a way of understanding the world, this book will apply the lens of the ‘impossible’ to logic to show that ‘truth’ expressed as axiom and process, and in its limits as a finite tool in an infinite universe, people must therefore turn to alternate channels of thought to fully and more deeply understand the nature and reality of the universe and God.

In theological usage, ‘impossible’ is a term used to describe a substance or idea that contains properties of internal contradiction. Philosophers have proposed that

these substances and ideas are tools available to God to use in His creation. Although impossible substance and ideas are conceivable, God does not choose to create the universe from impossible constructs. He does not, it has been argued historically, because impossible constructs are of such inadequate quality that they are incompatible with the goodness of His creation.

The term was brought into standard philosophical and theological usage by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716). G.W. Leibniz was a German Enlightenment Mathematician and Philosopher. Although there are examples of usage of the term and in contrast: 'compossibility' prior to G.W. Leibniz' deployment of it, Leibniz is attributed with bringing the concept into philosophical and theological prominence.

As the term might suggest, 'compossible' substances and ideas can be considered substances and ideas of such optimal quality that they are highly compatible with the goodness of God's creation. God therefore chooses from compossible things to be used exclusively as part of the goodness of His creation. Compossible substances and ideas as universal constructs are therefore thought to have no internally contradictory properties.

The terminology of the compossible/impossible paradigm will be adapted and loosened for the purposes of this book. The usage of the compossible/impossible paradigm will still retain philosophical and theological character. However, it will be deployed from time to time in a more flexible way to describe acts of free will carried out by human beings, which are either compatible or incompatible with God's

creation and its goodness. Further, it will be employed as a tool of assessment and analysis of seemingly paradoxical concepts and points of contention in the Christian message. When used in this way, the compossible/impossible paradigm will be applied to clarify points of seeming incoherence in biblical scripture because they are thought to hold internal contradiction, and therefore viewed by people as being a barrier to accepting the Christian story and message who do not yet do so.

In proposing that logic is a limited tool of thought, yet paradoxically might contain within it the ability to surpass its own limitations, is not meant to say that logic itself is impossible with the goodness of creation. But rather, is to say that just as biblical scripture is thought to have internal contradiction, logic as well can reach a point of internal breakdown and incoherence.

In exploring the idea that the internal breakdown and destabilization of logic will be a logically useful tool itself for people to achieve a greater conscious understanding and greater awareness of the nature of reality, is to suggest that therein lies an opportunity to accept the assurance of God's limitless goodness, lovingness, and understanding. This being in acknowledgement and understanding of limited human knowledge and wisdom.

In doing so, the rationalist, the agnostic, the atheist, the spiritually questioning, or the otherwise inclined person, will have a strengthened understanding of the Christian pathway to a greater spiritual awareness of the human place and purpose in the universe. Through conscious understanding and acceptance of finite and

rational human limitations, the proposal will be made that to freely choose a personal spiritual relationship with God offers the optimal opportunity to transcend human misery, suffering and death.

The book builds on itself chapter by chapter. Chapter One contains a brief history of religious persecution in pre-Enlightenment era Europe. It will tell the story of the consequent influx to North America by those with deeply held religious convictions during the Protestant Reformation. This mass departure from Europe brought with it the Reformation's emerging freedom of thought and freedom of expression ethos to religious life in the New World. This being with an emphasis on personal responsibility for spiritual development and growth.

Chapters Two and Three will discuss the problems with humanmade religious codification and dogma. These chapters will expose the errors and limitations of excessive adherence to strict religious customary law and the problems with the ritualization of spiritual practices.

From a scriptural and philosophical perspective, it will be argued how these kinds of faulty constructs act as an encumbrance to the pursuit of free spiritual awareness and experience. This will be examined in the Christian sense, and briefly touched upon in a more general way with respect to religious traditions and experiences throughout history and across the world into present times.

For the rationalist skeptic, Chapter Four will put the scripture of Christian Faith under scrutiny for its logical coherence. A seeming internal contradiction arises in the Bible from the New Testament insistence that Jesus' offers humanity the choice to freely accept

God and His love, and additionally that Jesus' message for humanity to do right by each other by way of freedom of conscience is considered in contrast to the view that human life is Predetermined and Predestined by the biblical assertion that God in the Christian sense has all knowledge of the past, present, and future, and is at the same time is an all-powerful and supreme being. This problem of seeming inconsistency in the document that Christians consider to be the inerrant Word of God, will be taken apart and analyzed to assess the validity of its message.

Chapter Four will seek to offer and clarify the tension between the concepts of Free Will and Predestination, and show how such paradoxes and problems of limited human understanding can be useful to reflect and to deepen individual spiritual awareness, understanding, and fulfillment when contemplated.

Chapter Five forms the focal point of the book as described above. In this part, the idea that axiomatic logic and formal methods and processes of logical understanding are thought to contain universal properties of truth, or that they can solely and fully reveal what is universally 'true', will be put under scrutiny for logical coherence and internal contradiction.

Kurt Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems (1931) will be deployed for this purpose by way of using them for thought experimentation from the perspective of various domains of human understanding. This will be done to show the nature of universal 'truth' is undecidable when approached solely by way of logical understanding.

The idea that truth as axiom will be shown to be an erroneous concept, in the absence of a point of reference. It will also hopefully be demonstrated that formal logic as a methodical process is finite (by its own definition), therefore contains limitations, and will break down under the weight of its own parameters. That logical axiom, logical scientific processes and logical formalism can very often create a reasonable degree of assurance that there is universal 'certainty' is plausible. Yet, although these are powerful and successful tools of the rational human mind, they cannot fully or completely provide a complete and absolute understanding of the immense proportionality of the infinite universe, or the why of its existence on their own.

Jesus' unprecedented upset to the existing pre-Messianic dogmatic concepts of God's law, religious legalism, and how to be seen as acceptable in the eyes of God, will be viewed as an infusion of the 'Paradox of Undecidability' into the Mediterranean standard of human morality and understanding of the nature of God at that time, and going forward.

The definition of the Paradox of Undecidability, as it will be further described below, will be shown to be very much compatible with Jesus' message to humanity by Jesus' dismantlement and overturning of previously held 'truths' about the nature of God.

By being thought of this way, the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus, show that in breaking free from the logic of axiomatic religious 'truism', and ritualism, as can be viewed as a process of logical formalism, the spiritually seeking individual will open

their mind to a pathway of understanding that God's love for His creation is limitless and incalculable.

With regard to the tremendous historical significance of Kurt Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems (1931), and drawn from within them the Paradox of Undecidability demonstrated to be found in mathematical logic and coherence, and although mathematics and mathematical philosophy is very much foundational to human thought and understanding, and as well, foundational to the very success and prosperity of humanity, the created upheaval and turmoil with respect to the challenge of ideas that were perhaps once thought to be readily accepted with a presupposed degree of certainty in the 'hard' sciences, Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems opened up the opportunity for new channels of logical understanding in their prompting of the development of new ways to think about and to approach logical methods of perception and research.

Historically, the most demonstrative example of the impact that Gödel's work has had, and that which best characterizes the impact the Incompleteness Theorems have had on the development of modern logic, is in the upset they caused to the painstaking work of Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) and Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) in their three-volume work *Principia Mathematica* (1910).

Bertrand Russell and Alfred North Whitehead had attempted to thoroughly validate, and at the same time, sought to as best as possible clarify and definitively strengthen the connection between mathematics and logic. By way of trying to at least minimize the use of axiom as truth in mathematical theory, in doing so,

they thought that streamlining and simplifying the use of symbols as a tool of representation of ideas would help to resolve or to at least minimize the problems of paradox that were being called into question as inconsistencies in the use of and organization of sets of logical symbols.

With mathematics being a field of study primed for the use of symbols of representation as a form of axiomatic thought, and as well with its reliance on the use of ordered sets like ordinal numbers for example, as an area of foundational human knowledge and wisdom, mathematics was and is very much embedded with symbols as axioms of 'truth'.

That symbols and ordering as a tool mathematics were and are often presupposed to contain certain properties of elemental 'truth', without challenge to the very premise that symbols represent truth, or that they are guaranteed to contain properties of certainty, the Russell-Whitehead work had recognized this problem, yet did not meet its objective to rectify the problem.

In the crisis that was beginning to manifest in mathematic as an established pillar of foundational human knowledge and wisdom, the early 20<sup>th</sup> century efforts to create Principia Mathematica of Russell and Whitehead itself succumbed to foundational incoherence and was made discreditable by undecidability under the Gödel Theorems at its very premise in seeking assurance of logical constancy in mathematics.

Chapter Five, as with the rest of the book, will serve as a form of apologetics. In an effort to uphold the strength and immeasurable value of the Christian message from what will hopefully be viewed in ways

that might appeal to rational skeptics. It is hoped that the reader will come to view the impact the Incompleteness Theorems have had on rationalism as a source of wisdom long unchallenged as a way of seeing truth, particularly in modern Western civilization. In this, it is hoped that the reader will seek to at least minimally breach the limits of logical understanding and find opportunity to seek spiritual development, knowledge, awareness, and fulfillment.

In overlaying Kurt Gödel's work in his destabilization of human intellectual foundations with the expanded and more flexible theological usage of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz' compossibility/impossibility theory of God's infinite creative abilities, it is intended that this book will provide a channel to Christian thought as a pathway to spiritual growth. It is hoped the familiar ways of accepting Christian Faith will be defended and upheld through expressing them from what may be seen as a fresh perspective additionally.

Also, this offering will seek to demonstrate that rationalism is not incompatible with spirituality, but rather, can enjoy a complementary relationship in the human psyche. Readers of any background or religious affiliation or spiritual inclination may hopefully find this work appealing to their mindset.

Chapter Six defends the concepts in this book against anticipated criticism that may arise. This part will include defense from points of perceived inaccuracies in adherence to Christian exegetical standards. As well, religious, spiritual, and theological criticism external to Christian theology and belief will be addressed, as will expected rationalist philosophical

criticisms arising from challenges to scientific method and logical formalism.

Chapter Seven provides something of a conclusion and the Appendices are more practical in nature and may provide uses for the ideas presented in this volume that may or may not apply to a range of individuals from various backgrounds.

# Chapter 1

## The Marketplace of Spiritual Ideas and the Success of Christianity

### The Protestant Reformation and the Origins of New World Christianity

Why do Christian activities generally thrive more so in the United States while they are in greater decline in other parts of the Western World?

The success of Christianity in the United States is thanks to the idea of openness and exchange that since colonial times, the settlers who arrived seeking a better life for themselves brought with them.

While many colonists came from Europe to the North American continent seeking their fortune, many people who came were misunderstood, or worse, perceived as a threat to pre-established order in their country of origin. The latter often departed under duress, fleeing Europe under the threat of persecution on religious grounds. From at least the early 17th century onward if not earlier, Christians from Protestant and certain Catholic backgrounds alike fled from various corners of Europe under threat of violence and death, to practice their religious beliefs as they felt their conscience guided them to do. (Seymour, 1997, pp. 19-20)

With the earlier development of the printing press, improvements in literacy, and proliferation of religious materials across Europe during this period, it was

becoming clear to those holding power in monarchical Europe that attempts to uphold the religious hierarchies of society were beginning to falter. (Chadwick, 1988, p. 24)

One of the ways those who were holding absolutist power responded to the social upheaval resulting from the transition of Europe toward the Enlightenment era was by enforcement of social cohesion. Religion was of much greater consideration to people at that time than in the Europe of today. As such, for monarchies to enforce social cohesion and try to uphold the existing European hierarchies, the lever of religious persecution was very much used as a tool of coercion. (Chadwick, 1988, pp. 125,153,365)

The age of absolutism in Europe was struggling to survive, and the Enlightenment era was emerging. By insisting that those who were deemed religiously nonconformist or religious dissenters must adhere to customary religious societal norms and laws imposed by monarchy, or face persecution and death, the age of absolutism was grasping to maintain supreme authority over society. Progress in philosophical, economic, and scientific areas of study, and with the improvement and advancement of understanding in any number of intellectual activities and enterprises, the progress made began to lead to tangible improvements in the material conditions of ordinary people. (Chadwick, 1988, pp. 29-30)

For the spiritually minded, the benefit of this transitional period in European history was an abundance of religious literary materials that were becoming available to the individual person. (Chadwick, 1988, p. 29) Thus, to keep people of lower strata in

check, it became more difficult for monarchists, and the church as complicit in attempting to uphold state authority, to maintain a grasp on religious narratives as a form of gatekeeping.

For example, it was becoming questionable as to why it was necessary to hear the Gospel spoken solely in Liturgical Latin, given that the language of scholarship in other fields was beginning to shift toward the vernacular. (Chadwick, 1988, pp. 298-299) That a person could hear the gospel and even read it in one's own language meant that scripture was demystified, more relatable, and less in need of clerical intermediary interpretation. The effect being one of destabilization of the Roman Catholic Church's authority on matters and affairs governing people's eternal wellbeing.

At the time, there were influential figures who had begun to pop up around Europe and were questioning Roman Catholic doctrine. Among them, Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) of Switzerland, John Calvin (1509-1564) of France, Jacques Lefèvre (1450-1536) of France, William Tyndale (c.1490-1536) of England, and Patrick Hamilton (1504-1528) of Scotland. Additionally, the merchants of the Hanseatic League brought the idea of religious reformation to the northern reaches of Europe to Scandinavia during their commercial travels and affairs. (Dunstan, 1961, pp. 15-22)

The movement toward religious reform in this era was likely somewhat a decentralized and organic process, although reformers began to influence each other and discover their commonalities in thinking.

Perhaps among the most well-known and influential figures of the Protestant Reformation was Martin Luther (1483-1586) of Germany. He was ordained to the

Catholic Church in 1507, despite his many misgivings about Church doctrine. Between 1517-1522, by his own choice, Martin Luther's was motivated by his contempt for Church practices and was moved to harshly and outwardly criticize the Roman Catholic Church. He had composed the Ninety-Five Theses (1517), in which he was critical of Catholic Church administration, arguing that elements of Church affairs coming into practice (indulgences) were rife with abuse and being used as a tool for personal gain by those seeking influence within the Church. (Walker, 1970, pp. 302-305)

Originally composed in Latin, Luther sent his Ninety-Five Theses in a letter to the Archbishop of Mainz, and as well, posted copies on the doors of various churches around Wittenberg Germany on All Saints Day in 1517. In this act of provocation, the Protestant Reformation began to gain influence. (Walker, 1970, p. 305)

The movement toward individual spirituality and to thus, bypass the priesthood as an intermediary between the individual and God was becoming an acceptable viewpoint. It was becoming not only possible, but acceptable for the average person to dare to reflect freely upon all things pertaining to their spiritual well-being, and to question Roman Catholic interpretation of scripture and practices.

For Protestant across Europe, the belief that it was scripture itself that was the source of Christian authority and not the Church was becoming entrenched. (Reese, 1999, p. 614)

## Toward Spiritual Freedom in the New World

In his work, Martin Luther had outlined in the Ninety-Five Theses that the Catholic Church was offering false salvation in its practices. Luther came to be seen as among those who named above, and others additionally, who were leading the challenge to actively call into question the supreme authority of the Catholic Church on matters of spiritual and religious affairs. (Walker, 1970, pp. 312-316)

The spirit of the Reformation was not one of questioning God or calling God into question. Although Humanism as a school of thought had begun to develop as well under Desiderius Erasmus (1467-1536) (Reese, 1999, p. 316) Humanism at that time was distinct from the Humanism in the current modern era, in that it did not mean that the development of human morality was possible in the absence of God, but rather, it was one of returning to traditional forms of Greek logic and inquiry. (Reese, 1999, pp. 316-317)

The humanist movement therefore was in support of the spirit of the Reformation in the sense of moving toward genuine permissibility to question church authorities on matters of scriptural interpretation. (Reese, 1999, pp. 316-317) To propose that the individual was capable enough to bypass religious intermediaries as interpreters of scripture, and to advocate for the formation of a personal relationship with God was a revolutionary shift in thinking at that time. The possibilities of new ways of relating to God gained traction across Europe at a speed with which the Roman Catholic Church was woefully unprepared.

Unsurprisingly, bloodshed by way of conflict, revolt, uprisings, and even war were the result of the shift in spiritual mindset during the Reformation. By 1648 the European continent was turning out to be religiously divided from top to bottom. The northern portions of Europe tilted toward Protestantism, while the southern regions of Europe were maintaining their Catholic religious character. Meanwhile, many states were as yet unresolved in their leanings amidst the turmoil and upset. (Chadwick, 1988, p. 366)

Because many Europeans were beginning to put into practice the idea that they were free to contemplate all things pertaining to their personal salvation, to eternal life, and to the nature and understanding of God, this resulted in the development of many new ways of practicing Christianity in the centuries to follow, including many new branches of Christian practice and organization with various interpretations of the bible, spiritual life, and religious doctrine.

In response to state-supported persecution of those in Europe who refused to adhere to their state-sponsored religious doctrine sought out the shores of the New World. Among those who departed Europe to carry out and to practice their deeply held spiritual convictions, were anti-Catholic English Protestants known as Puritans. They arrived in North America as early as 1630. Eventually joining them were Mennonites, Huguenots, Jesuits, Lutherans, Irish Catholics, Congregationalists, Calvinists, Baptists, as well as other 'non-conforming' Christian believers who fled Europe during this phase of the European

Reformation.

(<https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/index.html>, 2024)

After this precedent was established, during the subsequent centuries, those with a broad range of religious conscience gradually and continually left many regions of Europe. Eventually, those from other parts of the world who were persecuted for their religious and spiritual practices came to North America as well. They too came seeking freedom from religious persecution and duress, and the freedom to practice their beliefs undisturbed. (<https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/index.html>, 2024)

It was strongly debated as to what degree religion should play in the character of the colonies, and in the development of the United States as an independent nation. Yet, the aspiration toward a society built on freedom of conscience was becoming accepted on its merits as a way for the newly emerging nation to manage its affairs. (Seymour, 1997, p. 20)

It should be noted that during the transition to the Enlightenment era that followed from the Reformation, often by way of being resolved through brutality and bloodshed that Protestantism gradually came to be accepted or, at least conceded to be a valid approach to Christian thought and practice in Europe by state authorities. Although this was the case, Europeans continued to depart for the New World for reasons of improved spiritual opportunity and prospects well into the 19th century while the conflation of state and religion remained intertwined in Europe. (Seymour, 1997, pp. 19-21)

The claim to improvements in spiritual well-being, along with improvements to material well-being in the

United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were documented in the observations and research carried out by German Sociologist (and the person considered to be the founder of modern Social Science), Max Weber (1864-1920) in his work: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905).

Based on his visit to the United States in 1904, his observations and research from a 'Social Science' perspective attributed the rise in material prosperity in the United States in large part to what he described as the 'Protestant Ethic'. It should be noted however, that direct credit of a 'Protestant Ethic' as being the sole source of rising American prosperity is very much a topic in dispute. (Harrington, 1987, pp. 240-241) Also, the methodology Weber used in the newly emerging field of Sociology was in contention, even shortly after Weber's work was published. For further discussion and analysis see: (Green, 1959).

Yet, even prior to Weber's observations and research, early French Sociologist and Journalist, Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) in his two-volume work: *Democracy in America* (1835-1840) had outlined his similar observations upon visiting the United States as well. De Tocqueville's observations were comparable to Weber's in highlighting the association between rising material prosperity, the democratic ethos, the autonomy of individual agency in managing one's own affairs, and free market idealism. Also compatible with Weber's perspective, de Tocqueville highlighted the benefits the young nation was experiencing from having decoupled government and religion. See: (Tocqueville, 2004).

In returning to Europe to report their findings, both of these early Social Scientists no doubt would be considered today to have used flawed research methods in reporting their findings, and in being unaware of the types of cognitive biases they may have been confirming, or the cognitive biases through which they may have been seeing things in other ways. Nevertheless, upon carrying out their work as first-hand documentation of 19th century and early 20th century American life, positive conclusions can be drawn from their efforts in the success of the American model of government and life during that time and preceding was having for the American citizen. De Tocqueville's work had additionally researched farther back to the origins of American ideals, but again, to be taken for what it is and what it is not.

What the work of both men showed to scholars and other interested parties on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean was that a correlation existed between democratic ideals, freedom to pursue personal interests, the ideal of the material marketplace, and by extension, the benefit of having a relaxed marketplace of ideas, with minimal interference or excessive management by authoritative levers. What Weber's and de Tocqueville's studies of the situation in the United States at that time offered affirmation of the credibility of merit-based approaches to attain societal prosperity and well-being.

With respect to divergence in religious and spiritual practices from the European tradition, under the development of the American Constitution, the attempt for any sort of formation of a national religious system established by government was ineffectual. (Seymour, 1997, p. 54)

As early as the time of the American Revolution, the desire for ways of doing things British or continental European was being viewed with skepticism and being rejected by design in the United States. However, the interplay between religion and state was a hotly debated point of controversy before and during those times, and remains very much so in American political discourse to this day. For a more comprehensive viewpoint on that matter, please see: (Wills, 2008)

Between 1787-1789, the United States Constitution was drawn up, ratified, and put into place as the official and irrefutable law. In it, there was no pretense that religious custom of any sort must be adhered to, nor would any such custom be imposed onto the people by the government at all. Whether it was characterized as governmental indifference to religious affairs, (Wills, 2008, p. 234) or alternatively, if it has been viewed as a move toward an aspirational ideal, the development of the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights has had a central role in shaping the spiritual and religious character of the United States.

The First Amendment of the Bill of Rights contained in the United States Constitution says:

*“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”*

Sourced from: (The Constitution: A Collection of Historically Important Communications of the United States of America. 1776-1963, 2014, p. 31)

Through the ratification of the Constitution (1788), and the ratification of the Bill of Rights (1791) the development and ratification of American law had made it clear that the European way was not the will of the American. The United States came to be viewed as, in aspiration at least, or at most, actively sought to become the land of freedom of conscience, of freedom of expression, and of freedom to pursue one's own way of life as one sees fit. (Seymour, 1997, p. 20)

If not always carried out necessarily in the use and implementation thereafter, the Constitution excused the American citizenry from the burden of pretense of interference by state authority and meddling in personal affairs. It is clear in the founding documents that under the American structure of government, the concept of the nation was one of being built on the premise that government was there to facilitate the interests of the people, and not the other way around.

For example, unlike the way procedural functions of European parliamentary democracies are carried out, the American model of hands-off governance by premise will likely not as easily result in state mandates to seek to optimize individual outcomes. Whether this results in better or worse collective or individual outcomes for society, the opportunity to pursue personal ambition and interest, and in doing so, thereby moving the individual to seek to create the outcome they desire for themselves and their family (spiritual or otherwise)

sparks questions, concerns, and debate that persist to this day. (Seymour, 1997, p. 19)

The gains in prosperity found by having a ‘hands-off’ government were, as observed by de Tocqueville and Weber, seen in agriculture, commerce, technology, science, literature, art, medicine, and other intellectual, artistic, and spiritual pursuits, including developments in religion. For further reading and analysis on the subject of American well-being and prosperity, please see: (Gordon, 2016) (Greenspan & Wooldridge, 2018) (Kirk, 1992) (Seymour, 1997) That there are benefits or theoretical drawbacks to a merit based free-market economy of goods, services, and ideas remains a point of lively discussion, debate, and contention in present times as mentioned previously. In the present time, discussion on these matters is often underwritten by political interest groups and well-funded organizations supporting and bolstering their own political agendas.

Nonetheless, the United States of America has been demonstrated to be a world-leader in material prosperity innovation and well-being on many fronts for much of its existence. This being despite an indifference to or lack of assurance of individual outcomes from government. The shouldering of personal responsibility on the individual directly is quite disproportionate when viewed in contrast to the promises made by many nation-states that are likewise industrialized, yet, perhaps built upon models of governance lending themselves to require more collective responsibility for individual well-being and outcome. Notably, many of the improvements to the standard of living for Americans from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century are argued to have been unprecedented, and as

such not likely repeatable as to the level of prosperity created by such innovation going forward. (Gordon, 2016, p. 17)

On matters of spiritual well-being and finding innovative ways to help fulfill the need for spiritual nourishment, the United States has historically led the way on that front as well during the last several centuries. Because the American model of government is premised on the opportunity to seek personal growth and societal prosperity and fulfillment through self-directed interest and personal responsibility, therein is implied tremendous belief in and respect for (or by contrastive perspective, indifference to) the capability of the individual citizen to manage his or her own affairs.

The way of the New World was a jarring yet positive departure from, and relaxation of government overreach, in contrast to the European manner of governance.

A laissez-faire approach to economics and life meant that commerce, inventions, and ideas, would need to all be put to the test of market forces to survive and to be considered useful or credible. Christianity and other forms of religious activities were no exception. Under this framework, Christian theology had to compete in the 'marketplace of spiritual ideas'.

Since religious affairs were not funded by government through taxation or mandatory religious tithing, nor were religious practices in any way endorsed by government, Christian thought and Christian practices had to be perpetuated and sustained by the strengths of their own merit. This was

similar to any other idea proposed that might be of benefit to others.

With no state-sponsored or state-enforced religious customary practices that needed to be adhered to or practiced by law, it was therefore not in any way mandatory for individuals to provide funding to one or another religious organization. For example, tithes provided to churches would have been and still is a personal choice. It can be done if or when one feels it to be done so by voluntary will to do so. Or, if a person sought or seeks to be more formally involved with a particular religious organization, they could have or can arrange tithing at regular intervals or through freely choosing to specify a term or predictable sum to pass along to the organization.

To build a church edifice for example, money would have to be freely given to a Christian group. As well, the physical materials, efforts, and investment of time by volunteers or interested parties would and will need to be freely given to a Christian organization to have it constructed, otherwise, the organization would or will be required to find other ways to fundraise to meet their aims. (Seymour, 1997, p. 19)

On the merits of their ideas, by persuading those skeptical to the benefits of what they were going to be doing, and then by providing the anticipated results, a Christian organization would live and thrive, or falter by the interest it sustained in the marketplace of spiritual ideas. This was in the early nationhood of the United States, as it is in the United States of today.

In the late 20th and the early 21st century, funding for Christian organizations and affairs has taken on a different kind of character, however. This may be

because organic citizen based self-organization have given way to agenda-driven sponsors, that might be fronted by charismatic ‘mega-church’ leadership figures for example, and sponsored perhaps with deep pockets and political clout.

Despite general governmental indifference to, and legal protection from government involvement in religious mandates, as Russell Kirk pointed out, most of the Founding Fathers, with minimal difference in viewpoint from Thomas Jefferson or Benjamin Franklin, maintained that the Christian framework ought to be the basis of morality in American society, lest, as John Adams pointed out “it would be far better to turn back to the gods of the Greeks, than to endure a government of atheists.” (Kirk, 1992)

It will be pointed out that because the legal system in the United States was developed upon a largely Christian foundation, as a matter of course then, that would have given Christianity a head-start in the marketplace of spiritual ideas. What is more important here though is the significance that to have the freedom to debate, oppose, and respectfully disagree with others on matters of conscience is a foundational premise in American society. To have the freedom to disseminate one’s religious and spiritual ideas freely without fear of reprisal had supplanted the concept of mandatory participation in customary religious practices as a general societal norm. Built into the character of the United States from the outset this mindset is in contrast to the European experience historically. (Seymour, 1997, pp. 62-63)

It was not until the 20th century that the acceptance of the decline of the Judeo-Christian tradition of ethics

and conscience began to accelerate in the United States. (Harrington, 1987, p. 11) (Seymour, 1997, pp. 269-270) Perhaps once again, influential interests have found this as reason to become involved, both contrary to and in favor of Judeo-Christian values. Despite this unravelling of moral character in the United States, curiosity about, and proliferation of various forms of Judeo-Christian thinking and experience have fared better in the United States than in Europe into the 21st century. (Pew Research Center, 2011) As Christianity was and has been put to the test in the marketplace of spiritual ideas, it has not only survived, but it has thrived and flourished greatly in the United States for much of American History. With the government being perhaps only minimally concerned with the individual's spiritual well-being, people have thus had to take on the personal responsibility to develop and form their own sense of spiritual maturity, character, and morality, in addition to bearing the personal responsibility of attaining a level material comfort to the degree that a person desires.

That is to say people were and are on their own to attend to their personal spiritual affairs. Thus, the American person who finds themselves concerned with spiritual matters sought and still seeks the answers pertaining to their spiritual understanding and betterment in the marketplace of spiritual ideas.

Since its early colonial history, the centuries to follow, and remarkably still in the early 21st century era of lowered standards of personal ethics and morality, Christianity remains influential in the United States as this century approaches its quarter century mark.

However, it can be blatantly observed Christian influence has waned, is showing foundational cracks, and experiencing message distortion. As well, it can be seen in the present day that the gravity of Christian morality is faltering in its societal emphasis and importance. (Seymour, 1997, pp. 269-270)

For people who would be intentionally politically, economically or spiritually motivated to try to usurp the Judeo-Christian framework of morality in the United States, it ought to be pointed out once again that they have had the benefit of living in a system where legal and individual freedoms and responsibilities have been modeled on Old and New Testament Biblical principles.

Nonetheless, in returning to the matter of Christian influence in the United States during the nation's history, in the marketplace of spiritual ideas, Americans have been at the forefront of developing new ways of interacting with the divine, and new ways of thinking about and experiencing all things spiritual. This can be evidenced by the number of seminaries, theological, spiritual and religious programs of study and research institutions available to attend in the United States. (Clarke, 2018) With some institutions being of a more dubious nature than others, many programs are well established and administered by institutions with a reputable history and purpose, and of high exegetical standards, with the recognized accreditations. (Clarke, 2018) Many new spiritual ideas have been robustly debated and come and gone, while many innovative ideas have been treated in the same way but remained and become influential. As well,

many old-world ideas about Christianity have been upheld and respected as well.

In the United States, additionally, and particularly since the 20th century, methods of transmitting Christian ideas have been done by capitalizing on technological innovation. See: (Hayes, 2007) and (Vogt, 2011) for examples of recent iterations. With the freedom for people to be able to develop their own spiritual mindset, character, and affiliations, (no matter how the First Amendment became law), in the time since its inception, the United States has become among the most, if not the most influential nation in its way of approaching and seeking to fulfill the Christian message. (Seymour, 1997, p. 19)

While the role and importance the Christian message does appears to be generally declining in North America and Europe in recent decades, more data from Pew Research Center suggests that the United States is faring much better than Europe in terms of those who practice it regularly. This includes people who practice Christianity in both Catholic and Protestant traditions, and by those who practice through other denominational affiliations. (Pew Research Center, 2011) It should also be pointed out that another recent Pew Research Center survey on the lifetime spiritual development appears to improve and grow for Americans as they age. (Pew Research Center, 2024) At the same time, even though many still identify as Christian in Western Europe in the current period, there is a stronger trend there toward secularization. Many who have been baptized into various European traditions at the present time, are choosing to 'opt out' of 'church taxes' or have 'gradually drifted away from

religion', for various political reasons, and the reason for general Christian apathy being 'nothing in particular'. (Pew Research Center, 2018)

This divergence in mindset separated by the Atlantic Ocean, does appear to help to sustain the case that where religious belief does not have a tradition of being embedded into state operations, and if particular religious practice is not endorsed by one's customary culture, or where people are not necessarily 'born into' a religious tradition, nor even bound to one by family ties and obligations, then perhaps people will become drawn to fulfill their spiritual needs by coming to terms with them on their own.

Despite the established acceptance of Protestantism in Europe, in the current period, general American skepticism toward the idea of governmental intrusion into the lives of its citizenry is much stronger observably as compared to European nations. (Seymour, 1997, p. 19)

Perhaps the reason for the broader degree of continued success of Christianity in the United States bears some relation to the continued encouragement of emphasis on independence from government as a desirable character trait and way of life.

While democratic statism has long since displaced absolutism in Europe, there still are remnants of sentimentality as well as enthusiasm for monarchy in various European nations. This would include the continued practice of embedding symbolic monarchism in national affairs.

Perhaps due to this contrast in mindset and way of viewing authority, the understanding and experience of the nature of personal spirituality has a much stronger

root embedded into the American cultural character and psyche. If Christianity has been demonstrated to be capable of holding its own where the marketplace of spiritual ideas enables religious and spiritual practices to stand on their own merits, then that is to say that perhaps there is a well-earned and enduring quality to the Christian way of life.

It might even be concluded then that on these grounds, Christianity is an excellent place for a spiritually questioning person to consciously begin their quest for seeking a higher purpose and spiritual fulfillment.

## Chapter 2

# New Testament Contentions with Religious Legalism

### Acceptance of God's Law by Freedom of Conscience

The benefit of accepting Christian ideals by freedom of conscience has been established by historical argument in the previous chapter. In this chapter, the teachings of Jesus, and more specifically, the Pauline Epistle to the Romans will be drawn on from the New Testament to establish a biblical argument of the benefit of freely accepting by conscience the Christian ideal of the love of God. By showing that in the absence of freely accepting God's love by faith, the alternative way of relating to God is to inevitably be bound by customary laws of ritualized practice and habit most often out of superstition and fear of divine reprisal. The supporting and commentary and insights provided will offer scriptural clarity pertaining to the overall premise of this book. Also, in this chapter, the Book of Acts from the New Testament will be used as a contributing source of historical documentation of the life of Paul.

The Epistle to the Romans is a type of letter of Christian testimony. It contextualizes the teachings of Jesus and offers to both the Jewish and Gentiles of Rome a logical and persuasive presentation of how to

best relate to God. The Epistle was written by Paul the Apostle (c. 4BCE–c.65CE) before his conversion to Christianity, Paul was known as Saul of Tarsus. The Book of Romans and other Pauline Epistles were regarded by Protestant Reformers Martin Luther and John Calvin to reflect a high standard of expression of the Christian life as it ought to be fulfilled, despite what came to be their firmly held viewpoints regarding Predestination. (Walker,1970, pp. 315,351,355,397-401)

The Book of Romans outlines the standards for Christian morality, how to keep the law of God, and through Jesus how to accept the love of God by faith. Paul the Apostle is thought to be the authentic author of the Epistle to the Romans. (Tabor, 2012, p. 227) Among six other New Testament Epistles that are generally accepted as such. (Tabor, 2012, p. 228) However, there remain differences of opinion regarding the authorship of the six remaining New Testament Epistles that are attributed to Paul, and the Acts of the Apostles additionally. (Tabor, 2012, p. 228)

The Epistle to the Romans was likely written in the context of preceding a journey to Rome to evangelize and as well to reaffirm the Christian message to those who already had accepted it in Rome. As mentioned, for the purposes of this book, the scripture chosen will be examined to point out the degree to which strict adherence to the rituals of religious law in the Jewish tradition were in contrast to the free acceptance of God's law and offer of love for humanity in the Christian sense. The free choice to accept both are central to the Christian message.

Exegetical meaning and context will be practiced as best as possible in the exploration of scripture

applicable to the arguments presented. Numerous New Testament books advise on how to fulfill God's law and how to accept His love. Quite obviously, in terms of importance, the teachings and life of Jesus as the son of God directly are the most important way to understand how to fulfill the Christian message.

The Gospels in the New Testament focus on the ministry of Jesus and how he interacted with people to share his message of the love of God. Of secondary consideration, the Acts and Letters (Epistles) of the Apostles in the New Testament support Jesus' message for humanity and helped to ensure that Jesus' teachings would be planted and endure.

It is disputed as to whether or not Paul the Apostle had any direct contact with Jesus. He was educated in the Pharisaic tradition of Judaism and as such, practiced customary Jewish religious law with great zeal. Paul has been documented as and has confessed in the New Testament to have persecuted Christians mercilessly for their beliefs prior to his conversion. (Acts 9:1-2 NLT) (Pferdehirt, Trimiew, Troyer-Shank, & Vander Hook, 1997, p. 421)

He is thought to have renounced his disdain for Christians after a personal spiritual vision of Jesus while travelling (to Damascus) and quickly converted to Christianity after this occurred. (Acts 9:4-19 NLT) (Pferdehirt, Trimiew, Troyer-Shank, & Vander Hook, 1997, p. 422)

It is believed that for him, the vision was so profound and thus life-changing that he chose to alter the trajectory of his life, seeking to travel the Mediterranean world and testify to God's love, spread the Christian message, and evangelize those who were

not yet accepting of Christianity. (Acts 9:20-22 NLT) (Pferdehirt, Trimiew, Troyer-Shank, & VanderHook, 1997, p. 423) Additionally, it has been understood that he approached the newfound purpose for his life with such enthusiasm and such great fervor. Using the terminology introduced in Chapter One, he would have done so very much in the context of an extremely harsh and unforgiving 1<sup>st</sup> century marketplace of spiritual ideas. (Acts 9:20-22 NLT) (Pferdehirt, Trimiew, Troyer-Shank, & Vander Hook, 1997, p. 423) Because it was the case that the reception in the 1st century marketplace of spiritual ideas was hostile and unforgiving, Paul was often met with skepticism and ridicule regarding his conversion. He was frequently imprisoned, subjected to violence, and conspired against his views. (Acts 9:23 NLT) (Pferdehirt, Trimiew, Troyer-Shank, & Vander Hook, 1997, pp. 422-425)

In spite of this cruelty, Paul continued to readily and unreservedly take his newfound faith directly to those who were actively hostile and aggressive toward the establishment of the Christian Church. (Acts 9:28 NLT) (Pferdehirt, Trimiew, Troyer-Shank, & Vander Hook, 1997, pp. 422-425) Paul's letter to the Romans is an example of his efforts, and reflects his deep commitment and convictions of conscience to his faith.

In the letter, Paul goes to great lengths to teach his audience the difference between keeping the law and fulfilling the spirit of God's law. Paul's letter to the Romans called into question the benefits and necessity of adhering strictly to pre-Christian religious laws and customary practices. Through Paul's testimony in the Book of Romans, his profession of the benefits of faith, and by his skillfully constructed logical and persuasive

writing directed toward a disinterested audience, Paul sought to offer a new channel of approach in order for greater understanding of the nature of God as Jesus taught.

Paul presents a compelling argument in the letter to the Romans about the problem of rigid adherence to religious customary law and ritualized behavior premised upon the fear of God's punishment, in the absence of faith in God's love. As Jesus taught, living according to laws founded on the fear of God was the ill-found 'old way' of understanding God. It was the way of life of misery that Jesus sought to dismantle, overturn, and from which to free humanity. (Matthew 9:17 NLT) In the letter, Paul makes the distinction between living by law and faith clear. The central argument of the letter can be seen below, as Paul warns against the dangers of seeking righteousness through simply acting to keep God's law advises that even those who do not have any written access to God's law are seen to be righteous (acting with good nature and integrity acceptable to God) if they:

*“know his law when they instinctively obey it, even without having heard it. They demonstrate that God’s law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right.”* (Romans 2:13-15, NLT)

The idea that the law of God is something that is felt and understood intuitively and not something to be necessarily understood as intellectual knowledge is on

the balance a great distinction between Old and New Testament scripture.

Paul goes on to argue that when God's law is carried out by way of the heart, God will see the goodness and integrity of the person who carries His law that way. This, whether those who do so have heard Jesus' message or not. Those who live this way Paul argues, are seen to be 'righteous' in the eyes of God.

To a person hearing this kind of messaging for the first time, more than two thousand years ago, it would likely have been interpreted as a bold, controversial, and even provocative statement. It would have certainly been in great contrast to the customary habits, religious experiences, and practice at the time.

In the Roman Empire, there was a firmly established pre-existing tradition of rigorous intellectual scholarship on matters of God, morality, and ethics. Additionally, in the Hebrew tradition of scholarship in the regions far from the empire's epicenter in Rome, it was the same. Taking this into consideration, it is likely that the craftsmanship and style of writing and the structure of argumentation in the Epistle to the Romans had been taken into consideration when it was composed.

Given that Paul was jailed frequently and met with violence so often, speaks to the controversial nature that such ideas would have been understood to be at the time. That abiding by God's law and living ethically would be a matter of heart and not intellect, would likely have been viewed by many as audacious and subversive at minimum, and punishable by death as heresy at the other extreme. Those who upheld religious customary stricture prior to hearing the

Christian message, would likely have perceived such thinking as a threat to their claim to religious authority and autonomy as well.

In the Mediterranean world of two thousand years ago, in the Roman religious diaspora, performing acts of ritual and obedience to religious law to appease God, to earn divine favor from a deity or various deities, or even to find approval and favor from Roman leadership, many of whom would have come to consider themselves, or to convince others that they were of divine origin, would have been quite characteristic of religious practices at the turn of the previous millennium.

For many of these ritualized behaviors, such ritualism would have been carried out from a place of fear of divine or just as sadly from even a place of fear of political retribution. The comingling and conflation between religion and politics was already very much a force at play in the form of religious and political practice and education prior to Jesus' resurrection.

Notably, while Judaism is thought to be among the earliest of monotheistic traditions, Jewish scholarship does not reference God as being an all-loving entity (Jacobs, 1984, pp. 10-18) even though it does contend that God is all-knowing and all-powerful (Jacobs, 1984, pp. 10-18). When speaking and appealing particularly to the Jewish citizens of Rome in his Epistle to Romans, Paul constructs his argument for conversion to Christianity for them by emphasis on and the recharacterization of what it means to follow the law of God. On this point, Paul's argument centers on the idea that there would be no need for faith in God, if it were simply the case that only those who act under direct or literal obedience

to God's law were to alone receive his mercy. (Romans 3:19, 4:13-15, NLT)

While it is a document and collection of works Jewish religious beliefs, practices, customs, and scholarship, the Old Testament has been canonized into the Holy Bible as document of official Christian testimony as well. In its structure and content, the Old Testament generally tells the story of how spiritual life was lived before Jesus' time and it contains prophecy that a Messiah will come to overturn humanity's ill-found ways. (Wright, 1989)

In the spiritual sense, the Old Testament generally focuses on the historically tumultuous relationship between God and His creation. (Wright, 1989)

In the way of description above, the Old Testament therefore generally characterizes God's love His people as conditional upon offerings and acts of obedience from His creation. In contrast, the characterization of God in the New Testament teaches that the life, the teachings, the death, and the resurrection from death of Jesus can be seen as a freely given offer from God to all humanity to express His love for His creation.

While it is a document of spiritual affairs, focused very much on human-divine interactions, the Old Testament in this sense, can be seen as, among other ways of understanding it, a body of historical scholarship that documents how God was viewed from humanity's perspective before Jesus' time. That the Old Testament is included in the Holy Bible as an article of Christian testimony, in functionality, it can be thought from a Christian perspective to act as a record of the world in which Jesus came to deliver his message to

humanity about the nature of God as people had come to misunderstand.

The theological distinction between the two parts of the Bible, it can therefore be suggested, is that the New Testament characterization of God presupposes that God loves His creation without limitation, in contrast to the idea that God's love must be earned to be sustained in the Old Testament. This overarching contradiction in the Holy Bible can most likely be attributed to being a function of human misunderstanding in documenting human-God relations prior to Jesus' time on earth, as stated above. As such, Jesus' life and time on earth and his teachings as documented in the New Testament, are the very premise for accepting God's love on faith.

If it is true as Paul argued above that there would be no need for faith, if only those people who live by adherence and obedience to customary religious law will experience favor from God, then humanity's choice to freely accept Jesus' offer of God's love through him and by faith would be of little consequence:

*“Clearly, God’s promise to give the whole earth to Abraham and his descendants was based not on his obedience to God’s law, but on a right relationship with God that comes by faith. If God’s promise is only for those who obey the law, then faith is not necessary and the promise is pointless. For the law always brings punishment on those who try to obey it. (The only way to avoid breaking the law is to have no law to break!)”* (Romans 4:13-15, NLT)

On the latter point, Paul is not saying that under God there is no law in literal terms, as the last verse of

the above passage might initially suggest, but rather, that the approach to God's law is not meant to be based on intellectual or scholarly understanding. Likely, to appeal to the yet undecided Jewish people in Rome on this point, Paul questions, even provokes reflection on Pharisaic scholarship by proposing that people have latitude under Christianity to freely choose to accept God's promise and assurance like Abraham did, as "the founder of our Jewish nation" (Romans 4:1 NLT). Yet, whether one starts out obeying God's law "like Moses" did, or whether one accepts it and lives it in faith "like Abraham" did as a way to receive it (Romans 4:16 NLT) as Paul presents to the Jews and Gentiles of Rome alike that those who do live 'according to law' like Moses, are still freely offered to accept God's love nonetheless. (Romans 4:16 NLT) This is in addition to people who have already accepted God's law 'on faith'. (Romans 4:16 NLT)

Paul assures the readers of his epistle that God's love is always freely available and a free gift to all to accept on faith, and it is and will be available to anyone who is receptive to receive it. (Romans 10: 1-21 NLT) (Romans 11: 1-36 NLT)

It is, in the act of accepting the way to God out of one's own free will to do so, and on faith, Paul states that through Jesus' death we:

*"have been made right in God's sight by faith ... we can confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory ... So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God."* (Romans 5: 1-11 NLT)

With such a well-constructed and coherent line of reasoning, and in firmly understanding the mindset of his reader, the Pauline argument in Romans for acceptance of Jesus' message questions the value of simply adhering to God's law for its own sake. If one simply chooses to be obedient to God and simply from fear of punishment for not conforming to his law for the law's sake, then faith that God is merciful and loving is not actually what is being practiced.

Instead, the perception and belief that the practice of rigid adherence to the Law of God is in actuality then it might be proposed, a block to the religious legalist adherent's ability to finding and understanding fulfillment in their relations to and relationship with God. The spiritual legalist is merely acting under duress for fear of punishment and reprisal.

When religious legalism is an entrenched customary practiced in any age or manner (as in strict axiomatic and therefore rigid adherence to systems dogmatic humanmade rules) there isn't really any trust in God at all. In such practice there is no faith or belief that God loves humanity to be found. From such an utterly hopelessly isolating and lonely perspective, there can certainly be no free will either, nor freedom from leading oneself away from, or being led to wrongdoing.

As a matter of course then, religious practice is perhaps reduced to preoccupation with feelings that one is somehow spiritually 'impure' or perhaps 'morally deficient' until externally validated as otherwise. The anxiety with how a person believes they are seen by God, and the spiritual void that is unfilled by superstitious offerings to gain God's favor, typically

expressed as ritual customs, actions, or offerings, can be seen to be premised upon quite a dismal outlook, and as a way of managing one's spiritual affairs in this sense, quite burdensome. The person in such customary belief systems is obeying the law of God because they feel compelled to do so at the heavy hand of what is unknown. In the human desire to gain agency in a world of (by people) unforeseeable outcome, such burdensome acts, are of restrictive to actually offer freedom to the human concern and desire for agency. Ritual acts might help to relieve feelings of anxiety derived from hardship and strife in the short term, however the outlook in the lifecycle of such a person who submits their Will to such obsession with 'getting it just right', in effect then has become obstructed and even divorced from experiencing the nature of divine love as taught by Jesus. This has been the very problem with religious thought pre-Christianity, and in religious traditions around the world in times since. Sadly, the implementation and practice of Christian life is often tragically carried out this way as well. As such, people miss consciously experiencing the wonders of life right in front of them, when such preoccupations prevail.

The underlying problem is lack of conscious spiritual awareness, absence of ability for inner reflection and contemplation, stunted spiritual growth and formation that has instead been overridden by the force of fearful superstition in the absence longsighted agency, external assurance, and personal felt affirmation. People have been motivated to act (even contrary to their own conscience), by the sharp sting of the harsh stick of fear the world over in any time and place.

To resort to acting out of pessimism, superstition, and fear is a strong human sentiment and is abundance in human nature left to its own devices. Therefore, to practice spirituality, religion, and then additionally, for humanity to regress into carrying out political affairs this way, it will be seen that such practices have and will inevitably lead to quite negative and damaging outcomes for humanity. This would be both on a personal level, and at the societal level.

If this case has been successfully presented, then the Christian way of approaching God, as expressed in the New Testament: to seek a personal relationship with God, to freely choose to trust in Him, to have faith that one is spiritually affirmed by God's loves, is perhaps then an optimized way to become spiritually healthy in people during their walk-through life. To be free from spiritual fear is to unburden the weary soul, while at the same time to be spiritually content and assured, is to open the mind toward growth, health, and prosperity in all facets of life. The freedom found by the premise of love leads toward the betterment of the human condition as a whole.

In this revolutionary concept that Jesus brought to humanity and that Paul fervently testified to, the idea that God loves each and every one personally, can only mean the highest standard of spiritual comfort and assurance. As an individual, to presuppose that one is loved in simply being part of the created world, has the potential to inspire and unleash the best standard of ethics and morality under which humanity can employ free will to thrive and to coexist.

These benefits, even in terms of material prosperity and innovation can be seen in societies in which people

have had and have free agency to choose or not to choose to accept the love of God, generally free from cultural and political constraints.

The teachings of Jesus make it clear that this standard of interaction among people is one of God's largest priorities for humanity while walking the journey through the physical world. In demonstrating the highest standard of ethics and to provide the template for human interaction, Jesus is God's example.

In one instance in his ministry, Jesus was presented with a question by Pharisees, whose tradition Paul adhered to before his vision of Jesus, and consequent conversion to Christian faith. The Pharisaic tradition of scholarship was one particularly concerned with Jesus' upset to customary religious scholarship, laws, and practices. In one encounter during Jesus' travels, he was asked by Pharisaic scholars a question about which of God's commandments was the greatest.

Jesus replied to them:

*“You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind”. This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: Love your neighbor as yourself’. The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”*

(Matthew 22:34-40)

As such, being in ‘good standing’ with God (in archaic religious terms perhaps ‘righteous’ or ‘virtuous’ in the eyes of God) by way of acting with integrity

toward others does not mean it is desirable to simply live from law to law, as though each law is a prescribed act or axiom.

God's Law is there, as Paul supports Jesus in the Book of Romans, to simply demonstrate the ill-found ways of humanity when the laws are not accepted. (Romans 3:19 NLT) In freely accepting then that God's law is to be 'written on your heart, and in faith' (Romans 2: 15 NLT), a person can entrust their physical life and eternal spirit to God's guiding hand.

The person who accepts the God of love this way, Paul reasons, understands that he or she is then freed from humanity's ugly ways of transgression and consequent misery. This can hopefully be seen to be at the very least, an improvement from being preoccupied in perpetuity with the 'old ways' of superstitious fear of the divine, or other supernatural punishment and reprisal for breaking with something of 'law'. Whether one lives by law but not in the spirit of it, as professed by Paul and articulated above, God's offer of love is still and always will be freely available to all. (Romans 11: 1-36 NLT)

The idea that a 'good' Christian is one who does one thing or another a certain way, or the mindset of 'don't do this/don't do that' is a highly problematic realization of the word of God. It does not truly reflect the essence of the Christian message. Unfortunately, to carry out Christian life in that way, and as other faiths are capable to do the same in their own traditions, translates to living according to 'axiom' (by 'rule' in this sense). The consequent fallout for humanity in perpetually approaching moral and universal spiritual

law this way, is the central problem addressed in this volume, as sustained by scriptural support.

The definition in this volume of: “living by axiom” or living ‘axiomatically’ is to live by set (any set) of intellectualized (often culturally customary) religious (or political) rules that are seen to be articles of truth, or ‘divine’ truth.

Dogma in religious form like this (and touched upon in this book as well when found in political form) is typically rules and conduct seen as mandatory, and to be accepted as unquestionable, and therefore to be accepted uncritically. The stick of fear is used to sustain these types of axiomatic laws, to have them be lived by and carried out with all the problems that entails for the free will and human psyche, when people become subjected to, or surrendered to such systems of dogma.

In carrying out rigid religious behavior and ritual through unquestioning acceptance of what is deemed to be ‘truth’, the negative effect for humanity is as described the obstruction of free agency. This can be observed, particularly when done under compulsion from religious ‘authority’. The inevitable consequence is that under the fear of what the law of God is perceived to be, the religious legalist practitioner is impeded from living in God’s image and likeness as God intends. It is the Bible that contains the Word of God, and not the person holding it.

If the framework of one’s spiritual belief system is restricted under a ‘don’t do this/don’t do that’ paradigm for fear of supernatural punishment, once again, in the Christian sense, the essence and intent of seeking God is not really being carried out well or lived well at all.

The lack of fulfillment for a person's spiritual side is the most important distinction between living by the letter of God's law and living in the Spirit contained in God's law. (Romans 7: 6)

Certainly, as Paul outlined in the first epistle written to Timothy, observing good judgment and not reflecting poorly on the Christian Faith by one's actions and demeanor is important for Christians. See: 1 Timothy in its entirety. Modesty helps to establish and to maintain credibility when modelling the standard of morality to those who seek the Christian life. Sound judgment, mindfulness, and understanding of others' perspectives in interaction with other Christians and non-Christians alike, will help to sustain and to perpetuate the benefits of Christian path to knowing God. For people to 'not practice what they preach', Christian or otherwise, of course is well established as a discreditable habit in any way of life. In addition to the conduct of the Christian, the work of the Christian is modelled by the very acts of the Apostles as documented in the Book of Acts itself in the New Testament.

During the establishment of the Church itself in its earliest days and formation, the necessity of the first Christian believers was, through little choice, to subject Christianity to an unreceptive marketplace of spiritual ideas. This would have been at least partially because the unprecedented events of Jesus' life took place in such a fringe region of the Roman Empire, that for the early Christians to testify to their witnessing of such events, would have been met with much ridicule and disbelief by premise.

In the face of indifference and contempt, the need to fervently document, profess, argue for, persuade, and spread the Christian story of what happened in the region of what is today called Palestine, would have been necessary for it to not be forgotten or suppressed at the outset.

It is notable that the Apostles were concerned so greatly for humanity to be won over from their ills by accepting the love of God into their hearts, at a time so close to the witnessing of Jesus' life, crucifixion, death, and resurrection, that it warrants a deeper look into the Christian story by the yet unconvinced. Paul and the Apostles adamantly and deeply believed in what they were offering to those whose ear they had. This was despite such a hostile market for their ideas. Yet, they went ahead and delivered their message anyway.

To put oneself at risk to the same degree the Apostles went to in their time is certainly neither necessary nor recommended at all for the Christian in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To go to the same extreme to maintain and perpetuate the Christian belief or way of life in today's era, would be destructive to personal agency, and be another form of ideology or 'ism' put ahead of personal well-being. The rule of law in many but not all countries the world over in the 21<sup>st</sup> century affords protection from persecution, harm, and reprisal for the expression of one's beliefs, religious or otherwise. Additionally, that the benefit of the Christian message holds its own on its merits in the marketplace of spiritual ideas has been argued here. God's offer of love for his creation is there for the taking by anyone who chooses to accept it.

To the skeptic unpersuaded that there is any value in the Christian message, it is Jesus who points the way to living with character and integrity through his teachings and example when the New Testament scripture is given sincere consideration. The Old and New Testaments can do this even more so when access to the Bible is in the hands of anyone who consciously seeks greater meaning and greater personal spiritual fulfillment, and when the Bible is not shrouded with an air of mystery and awe for their own sake. An example of this might be when it is turned over to the hands of an opaque and thus meaning a non-transparent religious expert, intermediary, or interpreter. Instead, when the Bible is premised to be a document of historical significance, this ensures it can be attended to with robust scholarship and freedom to debate its merits. If thought of as testimony to, or perhaps even simply as a guidebook to what it means to live well and why, it becomes even more accessible and presents as less threatening and easily decipherable to anyone whose hands it will be placed into.

The work of the Protestant Reformation and its positive implications for spiritually minded people to contemplate and question the nature of God this way, has carried on from the spirit of the Apostolic era. In both the post-resurrection testimony of the Apostles in trying to establish the Church itself, and through the advocacy for personal Christian faith as established in the Protestant Reformation, the impact and influence of the Christian message has been made clear. The significance of Jesus' teachings that if humanity will come to know and understand God's love, and thus be

saved from ill-found ways and transgression, when grasped fully, the importance of such a message and its gravity have the potential to unleash the best in people who seek to live in such a way.

Paul's message of God's law being "written", perhaps even captured through a more literary method of expression: *'inscribed'* onto the hearts of those seeking spiritual nourishment, it has been argued in this chapter that it will drastically improve the opportunity for those who seek it to become spiritually fulfilled.

The Western world has found its capacity for spiritual maturation during the process from the Apostolic era witness and testimony to the renewed understanding in the Reformation of the meaning of what it is to be a Christian, and beyond. The dissemination of Christian ideas by those of free conscience seeking out the New World to live to carry out their own practices of faith speaks further to the transformative impact the Christian message.

In a world filled with distorted philosophies, false teachings, ills, and vice, in a world full of competing ideologies and 'isms', 'isms' often promoted by those in state-held power to be on equal footing, no matter their underlying purpose, functions, or internal incoherence, the enduring Christian message is still very much relevant to this day. In the global marketplace of ideas and perspectives, the draw to the Christian message holds its own. The quality of the Christian way of thought and life in its unburdening of the heavy heart, and in its offer to freely act by personal conviction and conscience, remains as applicable today as in days gone by.

Sadly, the problem of fear and the compulsion toward carrying out spiritual life by axiomatic law has been shown throughout history to be at the core of the very problem with most ways of trying to fulfill spiritual needs.

Being bound by customary religious adherence to dogma has many harmful and spiritually stunting drawbacks. The potential for unchallenged dogma to easily and quickly result in chaos and barbarism when inevitably, those in authority on such matters are challenged hangs perpetually over such systems of rule and 'order', especially when religious dogma is commingled with political agenda.

Once again in the Book of Romans, the tremendous efforts of Paul the Apostle is an example of the efforts of many since then to provide assurance to humanity that the promise of God's boundless love is still and always will be freely available through Jesus.

In accepting Jesus' resurrection from the dead as God's son, and in seeing it as an act of God's love for His creation to demonstrate His unfailing love, one becomes spiritually unburdened by freely choosing to live by faith.

Hopefully, it has been successfully argued here that New Testament scripture presents the case for spiritual relief when consciously choosing to be free from fear and the errors of evil, suffering, harm, and wrongdoing.



## Chapter 3

# The Harms of Religious Dogma: Spiritual Gatekeeping and The Doctrine of Fear

### Preamble

This chapter will examine the spiritual and psychological effects when the religious character of a person and society is infused with the doctrine of fear (religious and political or some combination of both) as a tool of coercion and compliance.

This expository chapter will try to persuade the reader that harm to the spiritual health and well-being of a person or society subjected to rigid forms of religious/political authoritarianism is by extension the logical consequence of doctrine built on a foundation of fear.

It will be posited that invoking the fear of the supernatural in the name of higher purpose is an impossible construct with the Christian viewpoint of God's love for creation. The resultant effect of fear dogma is an antihuman tendency toward willful barbarism and destruction of individual agency by those who perpetuate such systems of societal order. The suggestion that fear-based ideological '-isms', whether based upon religious, philosophical, or political elements, are individually and collectively, spiritually

and psychologically damaging to those subjected to such forms of strict yet chaotic hierarchy.

This will hopefully be found to be viewed as a plausible conclusion drawn from this exposition, despite its application of a hypothetical way of presenting the ideas in this chapter. Hypothetical demonstration will be deployed in order to not center out any specific faith group, religion, national, or political cause. As such, the doctrine of fear will be discussed with minimal reference to any particular group, and be avoided as best as possible. This chapter is written this way in order to acknowledge that hierarchies built on fear and coercion are a structure found in any human society, and can manifest in any time or place, and is found universally in human nature, as an erroneous way in to create and maintain cohesion and order.

## The Void of Being Spiritually Adrift Seeks Fulfillment

In the absence of faith, freedom of conscience, and spiritual free will, enter the spiritual intermediary to fill the void caused by internal anxiety and lack of moral assurance.

The spiritual expert or intermediary presents in any number of ways in any number of spiritual traditions. For example, he or she could be a fortuneteller, an interpreter, a priest, a sage, a knowledge-keeper, a self-proclaimed prophet, a charismatic, a medicine-man, a wellness coach, or perhaps some kind of 'guru'. There are any number of people who will happily lay claim to 'extra' insight, to 'extra' knowledge, or they might even

lay claim to 'extra' authority on the nature of the supernatural. Enter the 'expert'.

Under such claimed 'expertise', perhaps they lay claim to it, by having earned through great study, through unprecedented personal strife, an extraordinary experience from which they have overcome and received redemption. Or, perhaps, they have received something of official credentialism to substantiate and bolster their claim to 'extra' spiritual authority.

Such people likely feel inclined, emboldened, or mandated to decide upon and advise others who fall under their spiritual guidance as to what the 'rules' of spirituality will be. For those with dubious intent, they may set the method by which the spiritual 'game' will be 'played' so to speak. At that point, the promise of helping to fulfill the spiritual longings sought by others gets turned into an act of living out a codified system. It becomes religion. The 'expert(s)' will insist and decide upon the codification of 'rules' that are to be adhered to, or the 'doctrine' of their religion. In this kind of scenario, the doctrine must be kept by the spiritually seeking individual. The spiritual 'expert' will decide for them when some sort of divine favor or perhaps approval has been granted.

The so-called 'expert(s)' claim to have an intermediary relationship between people and God, and through them, the invoked deity will provide spiritual fulfillment, always seemingly just a little farther along, yet always it seems to be in sight.

The very idea of material-spiritual relations in this hypothetical situation has become foggy, and in this

type of relatable scenario, the ruse of offering false salvation and redemption begins.

People in such circumstances do not see that the codification of religious articles has the potential to create a mandate to pursue 'good standing' with God, or with any kind of deity or deities. This is all of course subject to certain conditions of the codified doctrine being fulfilled. The exercise of futility to pursue 'divine favor' is analogous to 'hoop jumping'. In order to gain some kind of fulfillment of internal spiritual longing, little short-term acts must be attended to resulting in temporary appeasement of the deity(s).

When one's perceived 'impurities' or 'deficits', are attempted to be balanced through action and offering, they will be then tallied, accounted for, and added up for assessment. The perceived stored up claim to 'divine credit', to prove worth to, or favor from the supernatural realm reflects a lack of trust and faith in higher universal goodness, but instead seeks to lay a claim to compensation from a supernatural source.

Of course, the intermediary asserts the benefits of such adherence to the scorekeeping doctrine. For the adherent, the terms of the doctrine are conducted as a function of superstitious fear. Unfortunately, this type of spiritual pursuit amounts to nothing more than vacuous religiosity.

When God's law, or any type of religious practice, custom, or doctrine are turned into a formal system of how to specifically 'act' or how to 'behave', they have become 'axiomatic' law by those who lay claim to religious or spiritual authority. Axiom again being unquestionable and self-evident 'truth' in this context. When religious doctrine is insisted upon being upheld

as unquestionable 'truth', the channels to pursue acts of free conscience and understanding are impeded. As such then, the pathway toward God's love is going to be stunted and blocked. Even worse, the practical aspects of such courses of performative religious and 'spiritual' operations reduce spirituality to acts of mindless ritualism. Simply repeating something for an extended period of time does not make it 'truth', if at the outset the premise is faulty.

Borne from the mandate to maintain traditionally held order and dogma, under such compunction, the wonder of experiencing God's creation sadly has the potential to become a dismal and dulling affair for the senses by those involved. When spiritual life becomes operative repetition, people will quite likely internalize the message and descend into restrictive personal behavior and conduct as a result of the abuse to their psyche. Repetition in this sense is the route to stagnation and decline. Adherents may begin to believe and act as though self-deprivation is something of a virtue due to the downward trajectory that follows from the stagnation and decline.

To act contrary to the customary religious law of one's community may result in the adherent to such customs conforming to the custom only for fear of the punishment that may ensue from breaking tradition. This may even be preceded by any awareness that cultural reprisal is something different from any cultural belief system surrounding divine reprisal.

He or she who breaks with tradition, or breaches the parameters of the closed system of belief, then has put themselves at risk of becoming ostracized or exiled from their community for experimenting with spiritual ideas

that stray too far from the cultural or family system of religious customs of belief and practice.

As such, it needs to be asked: when an order of religious hierarchy is established, who then is it among the practitioners that will benefit from such systems of religious doctrine?

Or it may also be said, who benefits from religious *indoctrination*, and additionally from the following line of extension: *political indoctrination*?

## Religious and Political Hierarchy Derived from Authoritarianism: A Perpetual Problem

The turmoil, social upheaval, persecution, and even outright war resulting from the upset to established religious order during the Protestant Reformation speaks to who benefits from established and entrenched religious hierarchy.

Yet, during the Reformation, under the willingness of those who would take on the risk of voicing dissent to challenge church authorities, new possibilities of how to understand God emerged. If the Reformists' efforts have been beneficial in their outspokenness, then to seek the love of God, freely offered, has been, and will continue to be a significant threat to established religious, societal, and political hierarchies built on a foundation of fear. As has often been shown throughout much of history, those who claim authority over spiritual and political matters become threatened when access to material and ideas that challenge their practices and narratives become available and take hold.

For governance to perpetuate itself, in some Christian denominations, it has been standard practice to appoint leadership based on the premise of a particular historical precedent dating from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. The leadership in such religious organizations will go as far as to appoint positions of religious authority and governance based on claimed heritability dating to the Apostles themselves. (MacCulloch, 2009, pp. 132-133)

For many people, the concept of the Episcopate or Apostolic succession for example is quite contentious. The leadership of some Christian denominations pass church governance on, by way of this system, and do so, despite such principles of leadership not being strongly supported by biblical scripture.

Ignatius of Antioch (d. ca. 107-148), himself a bishop, was an enthusiastic advocate for the perpetuation of this type of church governance. (MacCulloch, 2009, p. 133) The series of epistles attributed to him, and notably not part of the New Testament, include a doctrine of apostolic succession that reads:

“You must follow the Bishop as Jesus Christ followed the Father ... Let no one do anything apart from the bishop that has anything to do with the Church. Let that be regarded as a valid Eucharist which is held under the bishop or to whomever he entrusts it. Wherever the bishop appears, there let the congregation be; just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the whole Church.” (MacCulloch, 2009, p. 133)

Laying claim to spiritual leadership by heritable succession to the apostles as a provable concept is

dubious at best as an endeavor in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. That such doctrine is not included in the biblical canon, and thus non-essential to Christian faith, the granting of such power to leadership by leadership in religious traditions in which this practice is upheld, is primed toward entitlement and abuse of authority. That a bishop or person of religious authority would be required to be treated as part 'divine', is a very brazen example of the 'expert' or intermediary gatekeeper archetype built into religious organization, and all the problems that come with it.

As the Protestant Reformation demonstrated, those in power, the 'rule makers', the 'gatekeepers' tend to lash out quite viciously when their claimed authority is genuinely and even meritoriously questioned or challenged. The idea that one must live rule to rule, ritual to ritual, axiom to axiom will inevitably become even more rigid under threats to this kind of hierarchical doctrine, especially as the threats rise and accelerate. Even worse, when religious 'authorities' are aligned with political authoritarianism, repeatedly, spiritual practice will become reduced to the threat of 'if you don't do *x*, then *y* will happen'. This is the very nature of 'religiosity'.

The compliance with such strict systems of dogma and tightly held leadership, by force or voluntarily, is sadly not at all a credible way of being faithful to God. This would include participation both by authorities and adherents.

Not divinely inspired, the practice of such inflexible ways is in the end, simply a method of becoming conditioned to keep a mental scorecard of acts and deeds. This, out of the erroneous belief it will grant

favorability with God. 'Divine compensation' lays just beyond the material world and will be the 'reward' for the adherent who agrees to sacrifice themselves to the greatest degree of restriction or deprivation.

Perhaps intermediary gatekeepers may declare reward on occasion to maintain authoritative status. Lacking in an understanding of the abundance of God's goodness, the substitution of faith in God is always the fear of God, or at least, the fear of religious authority.

If someone is non-monotheistic in their religious custom, under such schemes, the mechanism of fear can be easily at the source of, and the perpetuation of, the force and maintenance of the spiritual custom. The favor of the god(s) must be earned for good fortune or to experience divine approval or love.

The manifestation of superstition is not limited to non-Abrahamic approaches to spirituality and God. The Jewish, Islamic, and Christian traditions have all succumbed to religiosity and superstition at various times and in various places throughout the ages. That Christians often erroneously approach religious belief this way is well documented throughout history. Sadly, as a distortion of the Christian message, these practices remain extensively in Church communities around the world.

Those who claim special divine knowledge, those who claim to hold the keys to understanding the nature of life eternal, those who dangle 'divine compensation' over their adherents, Christian, Muslim, Jewish, non-Abrahamic, non-monotheistic, or otherwise inclined do so through infusion of fear into religious belief systems.

When living by such restrictive axiomatics and accompanying rituals, as they are enforced by ‘expert’ intermediaries who function as spiritual gatekeepers, the result is harm to the adherents’ freedom of conscience and spiritual free will. To be spiritually healthy, and to avoid descent into obsessive-compulsive superstition, the awareness and active avoidance of such fear-based religious doctrines and practice of hierarchy are of significant importance.

## When Humanist Philosophy Tries to Resolve the Doctrine of Fear: What Happens?

When humanist and political philosophy get infused with formal doctrines of belief, or if the rationalist philosopher attempts to devise a moral system that avoids deism and its problems, the consequent ideology created may not necessarily be on solid footing either. It might be, but most likely not.

A fitting quotation from the influential American Professor of Political Science Michael Harrington (1928-1989) from his book called *The Politics at God's Funeral* resonates here:

“God is dead— long live God!” (Harrington, 1987, p. 4)

This is a play on and extension of the quotation of German Philosopher Frederich Nietzsche (1844-1900):

“God is Dead” found in *The Gay Science* (1882).

When a civilization overturns its tradition of the supernatural; then through religious, philosophical, or

political means, the civilization will unavoidably find another altar at which to worship.

In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche's full quote on the death of God is not an optimistic view of the coming modernism of the 20th century, and reads as follows:

*“God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it?”*

(Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 1882)

Vacuous idolatry and the replacement of idol accompanying societal dissatisfaction, is a function of the substitution of superstitious practices for one another, when what is being sought instead is certainty in the love of God.

People need to serve a higher purpose; it is built into human DNA. When civilizations get plundered and deities get toppled, the deities simply become replaced with new ones in the absence of assurance of protection from, or belief in the current idol.

Even more decrepit as a result, the standard of human interaction and morality become immensely degraded where the political discourse and ideologies of barbarism are endorsed through citing an alleged

'higher purpose'. Persecution and terror of those thrust upon those who dissent become the normalized practice in such societies.

Sadly, a person's indoctrination into a culture built on the foundation of a false 'higher purpose' miserably leads to the ostracization of, harm toward, and attempt to dehumanize or to even eliminate a community or group who presents as somehow not meeting the level of 'purity' required by the enforced ideology of those in charge. The scapegoating resulting from this type of 'in the name of' belief system in any form, political, philosophical, or religious in nature, amounts to nothing more than mere pathetic tribalism.

The decimation of the groups perceived with disdain or even disgust, and as somehow 'flawed', 'impure', even 'sub-human' will be used as a scapegoat due to their lack of conformity to whatever the desired acceptable trait is claimed to be.

At this point in the societal fervor, the disdain for those denounced in such a way morphs into action taken against the group. These false 'in the name of a higher purpose' ideologies are of course anti-human. They are stripped and devoid of spirituality, or, if a supernatural being or impetus is invoked, or is alleged to be in support of these ways, then so much the worse furthermore.

The infliction of harm and malice onto others through such justifications is the manifestation of the worst possible type of ideological false belief system and is completely impossible with the goodness and love in God's creation.

Humanity's misuse of free will to coerce and destroy the human experience and to crush its soul, is the topic

of numerous works of history, politics, philosophy, and theology. Specific examples will not be covered in detail here, except to express that this is and has been the logical extension of, and outcome for any fear-based system of belief when carried out to its extreme form.

This is the case whether it involves a political, philosophical, or religious mandate or at absolute worst; combined all together. World history is littered with chaos and annihilation caused by such treacherous 'in the name of' ideologies.

The problems for those who are seeking spiritual answers to material scarcity or life's uncertainties often become the entrenchment of the above-mentioned 'expert(s)' into their lives. Perhaps, at the worst end of the 'enter the expert' scheme is the stand-alone charismatic demagogue figure.

When the 'expert' becomes sole-source intermediary and interpreter of the divine nature of the universe, and uses such claim for the coercive purposes above as rendered upon those who are already primed for seeking answers to life, and by extension here 'solutions' to their problems (including other people(s); therein lies divorce from God.

The divorce from God will be especially harmful for those who are held back from seeking spiritual growth and fulfillment and nourishment through their 'in the name of' cause. The carrot of 'divine compensation' that lays 'just beyond' is backstopped by the stick of ritualized adherence to dogma. Including rationalist philosophers and political demagogues, those who misuse their innate charisma, or scholarly study of political or spiritual matters, whether a priest, mullah, bishop, imam, rabbi, guru, self-proclaimed prophet,

knowledge keeper, self-help wellness coach, the political charismatic, or anyone else who claims or exerts 'special' spiritual or ideological authority, will have a special and unique agency over those seeking spiritual growth. This is especially the case when the gatekeeper is endorsed or backed by state law.

However well 'educated' on things worldly or eternal, those who exert such influence hold the potential to distort or deter the spiritual maturity of others, even unintentionally.

People in such positions indeed ought to use their abilities of charisma with due caution. Spiritual, and additionally political leaders may perhaps indeed have the best intentions. Religious and political leaders may genuinely believe they are acting in the best interest of those for whom they counsel, or for those for whom they create worldly laws. Perhaps spiritual, philosophical, and political leaders are indeed scholarly, learned, and may be motivated to genuinely care for people.

However, the problem lies in the notion of keeping score and gatekeeping by infusing guilt into, or implying and willing internalized deficiency into the believer's character. The effects of such abuse of the psyche for those subjected to it or under the influence of such kind of authoritarianism, leads to personal dehumanization and group dehumanization through scapegoating. The human psyche is then primed toward negative action and destruction. Please see: (Montreal Holocaust Museum, 2024)

## The Psychological and Spiritual Consequences of the Doctrine of Fear

Unfortunately, for the central nervous system, human stress mechanisms are easily activated when a person's conscientiousness is exploited by being subjected to external claims of guilt or character deficiency. The believer under such circumstances, especially when cut off from any other point of reference, may feel compelled to act or to speak in certain ways contrary to their own conscience. This, all sadly under the duress of spiritual coercion, political coercion, or demanded self-sacrifice toward the greater 'good'.

Although presented hypothetically here, outcomes from similar situations are well documented in Yale University researcher Stanley Milgram's experiments in obedience to authority that took place in the 1960s.

It can be subtle or overt, but if spiritual customs have been practiced in the way of a falsely codified doctrine, the practice becomes dogma, it becomes habit, it becomes compunction, it becomes compulsion. If spiritual belief and spiritual behavior is reduced to mere perfunctory acts of superstitious appeasement and self-sacrifice under the fear of punishment, then the practice of spiritual life is simply reduced a method of conditioning in the manner of behavioral psychology.

The problematic use of behavioral psychology as a method to induce desired outcome of actions, is that it ignores internal cognitive and spiritual well-being completely in those who are subjected to it as a 'learning' method. With focus on training subjects to perform desired behavioral outcomes, even if 'good' or

‘moral’ actions would be intended to be ‘taught’ in such a way, the matter of goodness being ‘*written on one’s heart*’ aspect of morality as taught by Paul the Apostle in the Book of Romans would be severely lacking.

The nature of intermittent behavioral reinforcement when people are subjected to it, is the afflicted would simply be reduced to trying to mentally account for or to guess if he or she has earned something of a ‘credit’ or ‘reward’, ‘divine’ or otherwise.

The sought after external approval for acts of ‘good behavior’ is not the Christian standard or even a high standard of any system of ethic or morality.

Spiritual life practiced this way would neither be a pleasant experience nor even really a spiritual experience at all. It would be completely empty and would completely ignore the internal state of a person’s well-being.

There would be no room to consciously contemplate or to freely express one’s own personal spirituality or relationship with God under such schemes.

As Paul the Apostle taught that for those even in the absence of knowledge of God’s law:

*“...God’s law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right.”* (Romans 2:15-16 NLT)

People being afraid to ‘step out of line’, to ask questions, and to seek truth, once again, sadly and regrettably, has been very much the way religion has been erroneously carried out through most of human history.

Activating the mechanism of guilt or implying a moral deficit is the oldest and perhaps most effective

tool of coercion and inducement of fear in the 'expert' playbook.

The 'expert' has the answers and is the gatekeeper; or so such a person professes. Mechanisms are put into place that need to be performed. Operative acts are enforced and must be upheld. Performative and ritualistic, superstitious appeasement becomes a false binding force and tool of coercion for those who, when born into such practice of habit, or who fall prey to spiritual things this way, attempt to make themselves 'right' in some way. Lest they be seen as less virtuous or undeserving of superstitious 'divine favor' in their customary system of religious belief.

Since the self-referential 'rules are the rules', and 'dogma is dogma' according to the scheme, if a person engages in prayer any number of prescribed times a day, and at prescribed times, or engages in certain dietary restrictions, wears one's clothes a certain way, or even makes a customary offering or sacrifice of some sort of compelled will to do so, then perhaps when everything is found to be 'just so', perhaps the hopeful believer will then gain 'divine' favor!

Perhaps not.

Compound this obsessive-compulsive behavior and mindset with state-enforced backing, and people are further restricted and deprived spiritually and morally, lacking in the ability to exercise free conscience and free will.

When a person is compelled to act by arbitrary law or face consequences, with no belief or even hope that what they believe in their own conscience or by their own conviction, then indeed faith would not be necessary as Paul described. The obedience to external

authority has overtaken the capacity for development of internalized ethical and moral understanding. The result being that in practical situations of absence of any kind of authority to look to, those who have been ‘trained’, ‘taught’, or conditioned as such, will be sorely lacking in sound judgment when they find themselves required to make an ethical decision in an ethically undecidable situation.

If a religious adherent accepts the idea that they are in effect not to be trusted with their own spirituality or morality, then the adherent has lost the awareness that within their customary practices, they have not actually put their trust and faith toward God at all. Instead, they have merely entrusted their spirit and system of morality into the hands of the false idol of the ‘expert’.

Of course, divine law should supersede earthly law, not the other way around. However, the hierarchy of laws gets lived out in an inversion to this when gatekeeper(s) have codified the doctrine of law into state law that must be observed or vice versa.

Fortunately, ideology, dogma, -isms, and hierarchies built on a foundation of fear have a habit of collapsing under their own built-in stress put upon those who live under such oppressive circumstances.

Jesus was sent to overturn and disrupt these old ways that were as present more than 2000 years ago; as remain today.

For humanity to freely act by conscious awareness, conscience, free will, and conviction was, and still is, indeed consistent with and central to the Christian message.

## Checks and Balances: Preventing Ideology Emerging from Fear Dogma

The American model of separation of church and state shows strength here. That the performative and axiomatic approach to matters of eternity has sadly been the story of humanity's relationship with spirituality and matters of conscience, indeed has very much to do with why so many people sought out and still seek out the New World.

When religiosity becomes law, when one is unable to question so-called 'experts' on the issues of divine providence, when one is persecuted for their belief and concern for not conforming to collective religious norms, then to turn toward seeking personal relations with the divine seems to be a way to internally shield oneself from the treacherous ways by which people have found themselves living.

The Protestant Reformers created a paradigm shift by pointing a different way to exercise spiritual life in emphasizing a personal channel to Christian experience.

By emboldening those with questions about the nature of God to seek the answers in their own way, without obstruction, has been a great advancement for humanity.

To freely discuss spiritual ideas and to actively and consciously discuss matters of conscience through free association among individuals, humanity has been able to bring great ideas together that have advanced understanding of the nature of reality and God. Whether people understand it or not, to have exposed the problems with spiritual gatekeeping when seeking

God, it can be seen that it is indeed possible and can be very much beneficial to 'bypass the middleman' so to speak, in matters of faith and conscience.

As a point of support against religious hierarchy, many Christian groups with demonstrated credibility and mainstream acceptance will often refer to the elders and those in some form of administration or pastoral 'authority' in their church as 'brother' or 'sister'.

There are New Testament references the support this practice (The Book of James in English NLT translation provides beautifully expressed examples of this type of reference to fellow Christians).

As a stereotype, such usages of language in church settings are often perceived as comical or portrayed as such in popular media. However, when not used in a casual, colloquial, jovial, or elevated way, but rather, to respectfully indicate a degree of sameness under God, such references offer checks and balances against the risk of religious hierarchy. This is supported by scripture in that "*we are all children of God in His eyes*". (1 John 3: 2-8 NASB).

While other faith traditions do the same, and whether Christian or not, if there is a self-identification component of 'brother' or 'sister' that lends itself to this method of address to be credible. Freely choosing to self-reference avoids depersonalization, or lest this type of referencing of people be misused to label or vet others as nonbelievers, or to presume higher standing over those who do not agree to use such language.

In further support of the idea of all being equal under God, even if one has no formal 'expertise' on matters of Christian spirituality, anybody can guide

others and share their personal testimony. This is an encouraged practice in most credible Christian denominations, and reputable organizations that claim Christianity as their approach to spirituality.

Jesus sought fishermen, tax collectors, and other 'regular' sort of people to be his disciples for this very reason. These were people with no particularly special spiritual understanding. However, the disciples as ordinary people were special indeed. This, because they were brave enough to walk in the way of Jesus and to learn, follow, and share his teachings. It is in this way as Jesus teaches, all can become "*Fishers of Men*" (Matt. 4:19 KJV) because all can offer personal experience. In being "*fishers of men*" the 'ordinary' Christian can make known that in faith that "there is no need to fear, for God's love is stronger than our fear" (*Matt. 14:27-32 NLT*).

The 'ordinary' person can make known that God's love is freely available to all, even to those who live to be performative of His law and are not yet guided by faith. God's love of course, can be shared with those who have not yet found their footing on any sort of spiritual path. Paul of Tarsus, who himself was born into the Pharisaic tradition of Judaism, once again has been documented to have persecuted Christians before his own personal vision leading to his conversion to the Faith. Paul outlined the reason for God's law creation as follows, again taken from Romans:

*"...It was recorded for our benefit, too, assuring us that God will also count us as righteous if we believe in him, the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead."* (Romans 4 :22-24 NLT)



## Chapter 4

# Exploration of the Tension Between Predestination and Free Will: Testing Scriptural Coherence

### Message Inconsistency as a Barrier to Acceptance of the Christian Faith

The Protestant Reformation brought about an acceptance of personal and free inquiry into the nature of God. This included the freedom to pursue one's own spiritual convictions, and additionally the freedom to develop one's own spiritual character. All of this, without necessarily requiring an individual to seek intermediary counseling to find one's spiritual way.

It is striking to point out then, that although leading Protestant Reformation thought leaders premised their belief on the authority of scripture, advocated fully for individual engagement with scripture, and advocated for personal attention to spiritual self-contemplation, it might seem peculiar that in the development of various Protestant doctrines of faith that prominent theologians such as Martin Luther concluded that much, if not all human activity is premised upon Predestination. (Walker, 1970, pp. 315,389)

Reformer John Calvin was a foremost subscriber to the Predestination doctrine. (Walker, 1970, pp. 399-

400) For the Protestant movement itself, this was one of the most divisive issues, points of contention and divergence. The Lutheran and Calvinist versions of Protestantism agreed on Predestination as valid theology, yet diverged in their belief in the way that it functions and exists.

In the Lutheran theology that was developed, the viewpoint on Predestination tilted toward building the church from the ground up, as the trajectory of person-by-person acceptance of the absolute nature of God was and is contemplated and acknowledged. (Dunstan, 1961, pp. 79-80)

In contrast, a very top-down picture of the supreme nature of God, and the irrefutable Word of God as final authority on matters of the destiny of the soul emerged under Calvinist theology. (Dunstan, 1961, pp. 79-80)

In the Calvinist viewpoint on Predestination, the Kingdom of God will be fulfilled regardless of human involvement or attention to the Christian message. (Dunstan, 1961, pp. 80-82)

Predestination itself is characterized by the idea that God has absolute foreknowledge, and has already decided what the outcome for every individual and for humanity will be. Typically, Predestination in the Christian sense is taken into consideration with respect to who will be granted entry into Heaven upon physical death, or receive 'salvation' in traditional Christian terminology. (Reese, 1999, pp. 602-603)

Predestination is supported by scriptural assurance in that God is all-powerful and all-knowing. However, in contention with the concept of Predestination then it could be a point of consideration that the third

assurance of the Christian message (that God is all-loving), would perhaps be false.

In Lutheran and Calvinist divergence in perspective on the concept of Predestination, the very question of individual Free Will lies at the heart of the disagreement.

Lutheranism tilts toward the *free agency of the individual to choose to accept or not to accept Christ to gain salvation.* (Reese, 1999, p. 602)

By distinction, the Calvinist viewpoint on the agency of freedom is that *a person earns freedom as a form of salvation for accepting Christ.* (Reese, 1999, p. 602)

This chapter will attempt to avoid direct evaluation of, or advocacy for the benefits and/or drawbacks of any particular established viewpoint on the matter of Free Will and Predestination. Citing reasons such as the historical devastation and destruction caused by the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) as one of religious rigidity, intolerance, and infusion of political ideology. Differing Christian perspectives, including that of the nature of free will were emerging at that time, and differing religious perspectives certainly factored into the reordering of various nations as a function of the war.

Tragically, the Thirty Years' War was another example of human acts of impossibility with the goodness of God's creation. Unfortunately, for those who lived through it, it was yet another 'in the name of' event of sheer misery and suffering in human history. Because of such differences of viewpoint within Protestantism and among Catholic, Orthodox, and various Philosophical perspectives, this chapter will seek to shift the discussion of Free Will and

Determinism away from overly simplistic and direct argumentation that the two concepts are in full and complete opposition to one another.

Also, the contents of this chapter offer argument that the proportional weight of the tension between the two concepts is not quite what it seems upon reflexive reaction. When the problem of Predestination versus Free Will in the Bible is encountered, it will be proposed that *individual acts and deeds of Free Will play a much less significant role as a Christian pathway to spiritual fulfillment* than people might be inclined to think. Yet, at the same time, acts and deeds of Free Will *are of tremendous significance as a Christian pathway to spiritual fulfillment* in ways that are not immediately considered.

As to the extent to which Max Weber's claim that material well-being and prosperity rose in the United States as a function of the 'Protestant Work Ethic', the question under consideration in the tension between Predestination and Free Will arises of the extent to which the work and deed of the Christian will influence what happens when the human spirit passes into God's hands in eternity. This concern of acts of human agency will form the central purpose from which this chapter is intended to offer the relief to those preoccupied with such matters.

Weber claimed that the 'Protestant Work Ethic' was a core character of the American ethos in his observations of society in the United States. Yet, given the viewpoint of many Protestant groups that God has already decided who is predestined to enter Heaven, why would the work of the Christian then even really matter? If the preceding chapters have established a scriptural basis

for Free Will, then assessing the biblical legitimacy of Determinism warrants a thorough examination.

In consideration of the totality of Predestination as a concept, then does it matter how human Free Will would be used? Surely the idea that peoples' lives have a predetermined outcome is at odds with any notion of the personal agency of Free Will. Confusingly, the Bible makes references to both Free Will and Predestination, granting both concepts status of validity for Christian belief.

As such, natural skepticism of Christianity on philosophical grounds justifiably arises in the rationalist mindset. As well, the agnostic or atheist would likely find Christian belief discreditable on these grounds, citing biblical and scriptural inconsistency, internal message incoherence and contradiction. Similar confusion when engaging with scripture might lead a Christian believer to dismiss their belief if they become convinced that the message is unreliable.

From Leibniz' theory that God created the universe using compossible substance and ideas, then under the application of that viewpoint as a philosophical perspective, the appearance of spiritual contradiction in the Bible would be understandable grounds for the skeptic to dismantle the Bible as itself impossible with God's creation.

Impossibility, oddly enough, could be viewed as a charge against the Bible because the Word of God itself then spiritually contains internal contradiction. This despite the assertion by most Christian denominations that the Bible forms the inerrant Word of God. The jarring contrast between Predestination and Free Will contained in the Bible appears to be a standout example

of such types of internal contradiction expressed in its pages.

Observably, people tend to pessimistically lean toward a belief in a lack of autonomy in their life. Greek and Roman literature such as the *Odyssey* of Homer and Virgil's *Iliad* emphasized the futility of human agency. In classical literature, the fate of the mortals was viewed as being in the hands of a chaotic supernatural world consisting of polytheistic forces at odds with each other and humanity. Yet, in the logic of the Apostle Paul in the *Epistle to the Romans* then: without free will, what is the point of faith?

If it is the case as well then that only certain people are 'predestined' toward God's favor in the Kingdom of Heaven, then why wouldn't the concept of Free Will simply come to mean that the 'predestined' people would have a 'free license' to act and to do as they please?

Similarly, if it is thought that a person is not predestined to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, why would they too not have 'free license' then to use their agency to do as they please?

'Antinomianism' takes on various meaning in the theological sense. In the way characterized above, it can be seen as the idea that those who consider themselves predestined by God to be saved from Hell, and thus favored to enter the Kingdom of Heaven exclusively, would therefore have no reason to uphold moral law, or act according to it.

To those skeptical of Christian belief, this might seem entirely plausible. No doubt, Predestination and Free Will appear to be contradictory and logically paradoxical concepts and carry a tremendous amount of theological baggage, so to speak historically.

In trying to motivate Agnostics or Atheists to direct their intellect toward Christian understanding and wisdom, these types of perceived inconsistencies present barriers to dialogue and engagement with the Christian message. Indeed, among thinking Christians as well, they are long-standing problems of contention and clarification in scripture.

In asking the logical mind to accept on faith what is seemingly incomprehensible and implausible is quite understandable. In the hopes that the skeptic might come to accept by freedom of conscience the love of God through Jesus, but at the same time for the Christian to profess that much, if not every part of human existence has been decided already, then what would be the compelling reason to accept the offer of God's love through faith?

Rightfully, this criticism has been, and will continue to be posited by those who already lean toward disregard of Christianity and its coherence. For the rationalist mind, the absurd contrast between Predestination and Free Will highlights the seeming futility of seeking divine understanding.

Yet, those who are skeptical, agnostic, atheist, or those who 'trust science' can at least agree that given the cognitive capacities and conscious perceptions available to the individual by way of the extraordinary agency of the human mind, as 'free thinking individuals', what is there to lose by at least trying to engage with Christian thought?

## Christian Scriptural Coherence: Examining the Bible with the Tools of Rationalism

Despite what the chapter heading suggests, the Predestination versus Free Will paradox it can be argued is not really a lag on Christian thought at all.

Predestination, the idea that all that we do has been already decided and is known to God is very much implied in the Old Testament and is also to a degree emphasized in the Acts and Epistles of the Apostles in the New Testament.

In the New Testament Gospel accounts of Jesus, it can be argued that even though Predestination is addressed, Jesus himself minimizes the idea in favor of guiding people toward living by his teachings as the model for ethical and compassionate interaction with others.

Whatever the complexities, the balancing scale of Free Will contrasted by a predetermined and divine plan for humanity are competing biblical concepts. However, whether thought of being done through Free Will or by Predestination, the focus on choosing to fulfill the will and work of God through Christian work and life is the emphasis of the Synoptic Gospels, the Gospel of John, and in the Acts and Letters of the Apostles altogether.

By Predestination or by Free Will, or somehow a combination of both, what really ought to be of concern in the work of the Christian is *to “seek and fulfill the Kingdom of God”*. (Matthew 6:33 NLT, NASB), (Mark 1:15 NLT, NASB) (Luke 22:16 NLT, NASB) (John 18:36) NLT, NASB)

Perhaps as a function of a secularized Western modern culture, the underlying assumption made by the modern rational mindset is perhaps that Free Will is a concept that is in its totality synonymous with self-interest. The reasoned Christian ought to respond on that matter that the Law of God is the boundary of permissibility under which a person may exercise Free Will.

For that purpose, the Christian could cite that *responsible usage* of Free Will is granted under the two most important of the commandments (Matthew 22:34-40).

Therefore, for the Christian life, one ought to act for the betterment of the state of humanity regardless of God's foreknowledge, humanity's estimation of God's plan, or regardless of the degree to which it is believed 'divine compensation' such as being granted entry into Heaven upon passing is thought of as the goal and reward for fulfilling acts of good deed. Under this characterization of Christian life, doing the work of God simply because it is the right thing can minimize the Predestination/Free Will debate in Christian theology.

## The Purpose of Entrusting Humanity to Govern the Affairs of Earth

What is the erroneously human made concept of 'divine compensation' if not a construct of putting faith misguidedly into one's own actions to demonstrate 'worth' to God?

Similarly, to try to will divine favor shows an inherent self-interested mind-set and a lack of trust in God.

Contrary to the Christian message, however competent, capable, or intelligent humans might think themselves to be, faith residing in personal abilities alone discredits the belief that faith belongs in God, and God alone.

Working for the betterment of oneself and society, and the earth but in not feeling compelled to 'earn' one's way to divine favor, additionally supports the case for the freedom found in living by faith in God, over relying solely on intellectual understanding of God's law and a 'best guess' at His will for creation, or how it ought to be carried out.

It is accepted by science and religion alike that humans have greater 'cognitive capacity' of the mind compared to the cognitive capacities of other species. No doubt, people are distinct from the other species, whether one observes that from a scientific or theological viewpoint.

In the Book of Genesis God entrusts humanity with the responsibility to govern the affairs of the earth and its creatures. (Genesis 1:26-28) The differentiation

between people and the animal kingdom is made clear from this scriptural understanding.

It ought to be pointed out here that the work of the environmental scientist correlates to scripture this way, whether the environmental scientist accepts the biblical message or not.

In terms of human cognitive capacity and agency, people can ponder the nature of their own existence. People can look at the stars and wonder. People have the capacity internally to freely reason and to freely engage in abstract thought.

## Is the Destination of the Human Soul Predetermined Whereas the Human Mind Requires Special Consideration?

In theories of the mind, with support from cognitive research, it can be posited that human consciousness contains self-awareness and the capacity to self-observe while engaging with the world external to the mind. The technical term in the study of the mind for such ability is called 'Pre-reflective Self-consciousness'. (Zahavi, 2006 12(2), p. 6) (Restak, 2012, pp. 106-108)

That humans are self-aware of personal existence happens independently from interaction with the external physical world, and independently of the effort to try or to try not, begs the question of the degree to which Predeterminism and the development of mind require the input of stimulus from the external world.

The life of Helen Keller, who became blind and deaf at a young age, and therefore blocked to a large degree from external input from physical existence, may offer

the cognitive scientist and as well the theologian insight into this question.

Her biography, detailing how she eventually learned to communicate her ideas and the thoughts of her inner mind, would certainly offer a glimpse into the degree to which the human mind develops independently from the physical world. This, while the human brain as physical matter is thought to be from where the human mind emerges and where it resides.

That Determinism may be proposed to be limited to physical and spiritual experience and outcome, might suggest that the mind is the governing domain of Free Will, warrants investigation by citing the life and experience of Helen Keller.

This proposition would be premised on the grounds that activities of the mind seem to carry on in the absence of external and worldly input, as suggested by her experiences. Yet at the same time, her existing rich internal world was documented in her biography, upon finding a way to interact with the external world through the miraculous efforts of her caregiver and teacher Anne Mansfield Sullivan. Thanks to this incredible story of discovery, patience, and perseverance, through the work of her teacher, Ms. Keller was able to make others aware of what it was like to not be able to experience the sounds and sights of the world directly.

From a theological perspective, that the story of Helen Keller would pertain to the idea of mind as a predetermined entity, what would the circumstances of Helen Keller's life reveal about such a theory? As well then, what does the circumstance of Helen Keller say

about the degree to which acts and deeds in the physical world matter in relation to Free Will?

In developing a theory of mind on these grounds, to note that there likely exists interaction between the mind and the physical world, the intents of the mind when converted to action of course can influence the physical world. Reciprocally, the experience of the physical world can influence the mind in its response to inputs from the world outside itself.

More interestingly, when examining the experiences of Helen Keller who although had some external experience with the world of sight and sound prior to becoming ill at a young age, there is a deeper story to be told to mind theorists about what the implications are from positing that awareness of personal selfhood and activities of the mind may occur in the absence of reference to externality.

Citing Helen Keller's story, the mind then could quite conceivably construct meaning and ideas independent from the sensory input from the external world to inform it, and for the external world to be of influence on its development.

Of theological significance, this would suggest that the human mind has particularly unique properties and that it may contain within it something not of the physical world directly, but rather, that the mind might have something of properties of divine character. This in light of its ability to function in the absence of awareness of the physical world.

If the human mind can function independently from, and without awareness of the properties and inputs of the physical world, does that lend itself to the human mind originating from somewhere external to the

physical world? By extension, would the mind be an entity external to the physical universe? Or, if the mind exists externally from the physical world as a separate entity, then would its location as an entity reside outside the domain of the physical universe?

At this point, if the preceding line of questioning is coherent, plausible or even as a consistent set, then, when considering Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems (please see the Supplemental Practical Material in the back matter), if the line of reasoning contained in the preceding set of questions is thought contain validity, then can the human mind be considered non-self-referential proof of the existence and reality of the universe?

Also, if the mind contains within its properties the possibility to exist as axiom, and being an entity external to the physical world, or even the universe similarly, what would that say about the consistency of the systems of mind, and whether its independent operations are with or without internal contradiction?

Does this support the idea that the human mind, and in its degree of sentience in disproportion greater to the creatures of the animal kingdom, provides greater substantiation for the Book of Genesis?

The capability of humanity to manage the affairs of the earth suggests the human mind is a tool of such unique quality on earth, that it lends itself to being applied to the good despite capabilities to freely choose to do otherwise. If capable of being applied to the good, this would suggest then, there is no reason for the human mind and free will to be nothing if not of 'good substance' in creation.

Despite somehow being a part of creation, it does appear that in some ways it is also apart from the created physical world. If the human mind is compossible with the goodness of God's creation, whether the individual human life is predestined or not, why should humanity not try to use the mind to seek greater understanding of what is yet unknown?

Extraordinarily, people are capable of using the mind to conceive of things that don't already physically exist. Often such conceptions can occur spontaneously in the mind. Why would it be the case then that free capacities to think and to reason in such ways would not be a desirable human attribute? Assuming the creations that human beings make from their ideas will be of benefit to humanity?

What does all of this imply for the degree to which there are *predetermined inputs* into the mind? Given its capacities to conceive of and to infuse new ideas and creations into the world, what does that imply about the mind as an entity on a divergent path from a *predestined outcome*?

Further to this point, and so as not to overestimate human abilities, although it is possible for people to *conceive of* ideas that are internally contradictory (as in impossible constructs created in the mind), people can *only make or create* physical objects (in the sense of bringing them into existence), if they contain no internal contradictions, and are therefore compossible with the understood laws of physics. For example, to manually draw a circle and a triangle independently of each other is quite conceivable and achievable, because the properties of each by definition do not contain

contradiction when considered and constructed separately.

In contrast, the human mind can conceive of ideas that are inherently contradictory, such as a 'circle that has three corners.' (As an experiment, it might be proposed to try to physically create or represent such a contradictory concept of mind). Yet, despite best efforts to will such a thing into physical existence, the likelihood for it to be produced by human hand due to natural impossibility with the physical world, is severely limited. That is, in its conception and relation to the physical world it would contain too much internal contradiction in the physical expression of its properties to be made by a person.

Perhaps in being 'created in God's image and likeness' (Genesis 1:26) the human mind contains Godlike properties to some degree on these grounds. This is plausible because as shown, the human mind is thought to contain similarities as per the Biblical understanding of God's powers of creation. In its ability to conceive of ideas and things that do not presently exist, the human mind can indeed conceive of what is impossible.

However, people are limited by the laws of physics as currently understood to be able to construct or will into existence anything impossible with physics as was demonstrated by the circular triangle proposition.

If the human mind contains something of Godlike attributes in this way, perhaps the above is evidence to support the idea that the human 'image of God' falls short in creative abilities. God is limitless in his powers to create whereas the powers for humans to create are bound by the logic of physics.

Inadequacies in the expression of ideas, acts of immorality, ways of spiritual immaturity, and countless additional examples of the extraordinary misuse of whatever minimal Godlike attributes the human mind might contain, all can be cited as reason that the human likeness of God dramatically, even laughably falls immeasurably short. Clarity on the self-referential perception of human self-achievement in proportion to God's limitless capacity will be examined in further sections.

It will be restated that the nature of the human mind collectively and individually, pre-meditatively or pre-reflectively, is easily capable of destructive action in ways of cognition as applied to the physical and spiritual realms of being. Acts of impossibility with the goodness of God's creation are quite easily able to be carried out from the ideations of the human mind.

Perhaps these questions of human agency of mind and action are better left for cognitive psychologists and scientists to explore more methodically with greater expertise and methodology in greater depth.

## The Earth as the Schoolyard of Human Agency and Free Will

Directing focus toward the purpose of people's earthly tenure in light of the predestination/free will confound, it was stated that human beings can see the physical world as it is, and yet, humans can also see the physical world for what it can potentially become. This is how civilizations and improvement in humanity's well-being develop and flourish as is quite easy to demonstrate.

At the same time, humanity is demonstrably capable of high degrees of barbarism, destruction, and ill intent. From a Christian perspective, despite human flaws, and capacity to cause chaos and destruction, God has entrusted people with the agency of free will.

Yet, if human nature is such that it is primed for, and can be infused with malice and evil, then from a pre-determinist perspective, why has God made such ways permissible for people? If people are made 'in God's image and likeness' as from the Book of Genesis, what would that imply about the nature of God, and by extension, how is the permissibility of the human will to cause chaos and destruction reconcilable with the Christian belief that God loves His creation? This in the context of a seeming absent lack of response?

Specific theological problems then can be seen to arise from the misuse of Free Will, like the problem of evil and suffering found within the Christian message for example.

Citing the goodness of God would imply that in granting people the will to have agency over their own thoughts and actions, then that would suggest that such freedoms should endeavor to be used for the purposes of improvement to the human condition, to understanding divine law and love, and to contemplate the nature of spirituality and faith, and then to reflect these all back to God in the best possible light.

Best possible intent, responsible and honest usage of Free Will would greatly enhance humanity's prospect for understanding God and human relations with Him.

A distinction ought to be made here however with respect to the nature of God expressed in the paragraph above. That is, many Christian Theologians emphasize

God's *permissibility of suffering* in the world, but under absolution theology *do not* draw the conclusion that human *suffering is caused by* God.<sup>1</sup> There are dramatic differences in the characterization of God between Old and New Testament Theology, and reasons for them which factor into absolution theology.

If the purpose of free will is to improve the human condition spiritually and materially through God's guidance, then can it be proposed that in using conscious capacities to think and act freely, humanity can live and experiment in the physical world to discover how to best be true to God's image and likeness?

Analogous to the way God created the heavens and earth, humans have very likely been entrusted in God's image and likeness to conduct His will on earth by managing the affairs of earth as in:

*"May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."*  
(Matt. 6:10, NLT)

The reason 'why' to accept the responsibility to carry out God's Will through human agency is sustained by the above scripture passage. Interestingly, to act to fulfill God's Will for the above reason why, interacts well with the description of how to use human free will as in Jesus' description of the most important commandments taught to the Pharisees:

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<sup>1</sup> This topic will be examined in greater detail in Volume 2.

*“Thou shalt love thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Matt. 22: 37-39 NLT)*

Under such immense responsibility placed upon the shoulders of humanity this way, people inevitably will fall short of being in the likeness of God’s image. That human agency is finite and God is omniscient makes this appear obvious. However, perhaps the idea that humanity has some latitude and grace, as guided in and by God’s love, the earth is available for use as a starting place to explore and interact in and by God’s love.

The latitude of at least minimal free will to experiment with the physical world would offer at least some minimal prospect to enhance understanding of God’s nature and the nature of the universe.

Being entrusted with managing and governing the matters of the earth in and by God’s love, while an extraordinary and even impossible responsibility to fulfill, is it simply that humanity is predestined for purpose but not outcome?

In this, certainly there is some presumed anticipation through Christian work toward preparing for the afterlife. On this point, the idea of free will in Christian theology is supported by scripture, and on the balance is beginning to demonstrate its ‘why’ and its merits. Free Will as a compossible construct with God’s creation, even if God, in His unlimited foreknowledge and unlimited power is of course equipped to set and determine outcomes as necessary.

An all-knowing and all-powerful God of course then has the capacity to include what the outcome will be

when people pass into the world beyond. If God is all powerful, He has the agency to will the outcomes for humanity, yet, with grace and under God's loving eye, God might perhaps watch silently to see how closely the will of human activity is aligned with His plan for His will to be carried out.

If humanity can accept that "*we are all God's children*" (1 John 3:1), then the responsibility of human stewardship of the physical world can be seen as akin to the child's acts of play in testing limits on the school playground. If the schoolyard is thought of a size infinitesimally smaller scale in proportion to size of the city and even country in which it is located, then the human responsibility to govern the affairs of earth might be seen as analogous in proportion to the management of universal affairs as God's responsibility.

Furthermore, the claim that a specific group of people are 'favored' by God for Heaven over others is diminished under 1 John 3:1. As mentioned in the Book of Romans, God's love is freely available to all who seek it. If this forms a composite picture of humanity's place in the eyes of God, perhaps then humanity's own sense of proportionality is distorted from humanity's own erroneous perspective.

For example, if the human responsibility to tend to the limited physical world is as much as humanity is entrusted by God to manage, then just as children gain greater responsibility from their teacher at school for more responsibility as they become more knowledgeable, aware, and capable, so too do humans attain greater spiritual maturity by being entrusted to manage the affairs of the earth while God guides and watches on.

## Predestination in the Consideration of Heaven and Hell: On Divine Justice and Acts of Free Will in Context and Proportion

If the limit is the physical world for humanity's entrusted responsibility, perhaps then, people might come to believe that using free will in the best possible way will have given sufficient demonstration of the goodness of individual and collective human acts?

This might be presumed to be beneficial to offer to God to appeal to His mercy and grace. With respect to what happens to the human spirit when a person's physical end arrives, the contentious term 'divine compensation' surfaces. Divine compensation can be perhaps thought of as the human spirit's reward for the physical person's work and suffering during time on earth. Some kind of eternal reward is anticipated by those who believe in such accounting schemes. Under such schemes, to be awarded on the balance of individual good deeds and work is thought to be evaluated by God, in contrast to individual transgressions during the time spent on earth. The hopeful believer in such a system would offer the sum total of their 'worth' to God as a measure of 'spiritual merit' upon physical passing.

This is as though individual good deeds are a method by which one could influence God toward the individual receiving something of a 'deserved' 'eternal payment'. In presenting their case, the believer in the rewards of divine compensation would hope to persuade God that their acts and worth are sufficient to grant them

something of an experience of the sublime nature of Heaven. Satirically, perhaps there would be an 'accounts payable' desk in Heaven to settle what the believer of the scheme maintains is they are owed.

Conversely then, and with a more serious tone and gravity, in terms of barbarous acts of free will, perhaps 'hell' in this sense is reserved for those who are deemed by God to be the worst by deed among humanity. For those whom there would be no redemption is for God, and God alone to decide.

This is where a sense of proportion matters deeply if the idea of 'divine compensation' or 'just compensation' as it is also termed, is in any sense valid. For example, perhaps for the worst of humanity, the anti-human, the most wicked, for people in that circumstance, God would decide for such people to know hell. Those would be people who have committed such extreme harm against humanity, such malice, such evil, such destruction, and therefore have inflicted such suffering against their fellow person, that their heinous acts are completely impossible with the goodness of God's creation. As well, in having done so with flagrant disregard for God's law, perhaps God would consider in foreknowledge a reserved spot for such people in a such a place as hell. Various 20th century despots might fit the requirement for the necessity of hell; that is for God to decide.

For the rest of humanity, under 'divine' or 'just compensation' belief, if it is such a thing at all, many errors of humanity's ways would indeed be forgivable by God's grace through Jesus, as according to Christian scripture. Who among humanity has not made transgression? Has had a lapse in judgement? Has

broken a commandment? Thus, have wronged or harmed another? It is in the question of magnitude, the act of acknowledging the wrongdoing and then making proper restitution, that the significance of the proportion of the deed matters.

In acknowledgment of one's errors, and in seeking forgiveness, perhaps it is likely that most people that walk the earth would be allowed to enter the Kingdom of Heaven so to speak anyway. This being supported by the sense of the law of God being 'inscribed on their hearts', as per Romans.

Important here is in the choice to freely accept the love of God. For in being part of God's creation, people are indeed compossible with God's nature, even if having misused free will. Transgression is limited at this point to the physical world. Perhaps such transgressions (but not too many) are perhaps to be seen as an opportunity for spiritual growth in moving toward spiritual understanding and maturity. This being analogous to the earlier school yard example.

Analogous reasoning can further show that most people with good intent, acting in good faith, and acknowledging when they have wronged another, and in seeking forgiveness, will feel assured that their spirit will experience something of the sublime in the inevitable event of passing into eternity. The comparison drawn below illustrates the point that much of what good people freely choose to do is forgivable in the event that it causes harm:

In the Western tradition of law, most legal matters fall into something resembling 'civil' law, and 'criminal' law. In civil law, under which a harm or transgression

has been made, the restitution for wrongdoing is decided on a balance of probabilities.

That is to say that both parties involved in a dispute, might have had some culpability, or even if only one of the parties solely committed harm against the other, the Judge would use a balance of probabilities to decide the wronged party's 'just compensation' proportionally to what happened. The offending party would then have to make appropriate restitution on the balance of what is determined to be sufficient.

In God's eyes, perhaps, for most people, as simple sinners and in having broken faith with Him, would be capable of redemption through righting the wrong. In reaffirming acceptance of Jesus into their hearts, surely, it can be proposed that for most generally good-natured people, what has been done is forgivable under God's compassionate mercy and grace.

In contrast, using any of the perpetrators of 20th century acts of genocide as an example, perhaps in those situations for people who carried out such heinous anti-God, anti-human acts would be evaluated under some sort of 'criminal law' framework as mentioned above.

Regarding their spirit upon physical end and perhaps in God's eyes, simply in their guilt or perhaps in what little there would be to redeem of their spirit due to having inflicted such atrocity, perhaps God would decide their eternal 'compensation' very differently, and have them put to a very different outcome. This would be God's decision alone.

For the rest of humanity, there is perhaps not much to be concerned about in this regard. Other than to genuinely and freely choose to act in the best possible

way to live in the teachings of Jesus in interactions with each other, and of relatable concern would include aspiring to act toward the best possible human-divine relations. Relating back to Paul and his letter to Romans once again, God's offer to accept Him by faith is free no matter if we live by the literal law, or have it "inscribed on our hearts".

## On the Erroneous Choice of Mathematics to Measure the Infinite Love of God

Inasmuch as humans can harm each other, humanity has been entrusted with free will while on earth, but only limited to material affairs. That is to say while humans are certainly capable of warring and murderous ways, the human spirit upon encountering or acting out such worldly harm or good belongs to God to manage when it is passed on from its time on earth.

In this way, the nature of Faith is to trust in God and be accepted by His grace. As shown above, hopefully for humanity, assurance of being received well upon spiritual passing is such a tremendous act of faith, in light of what God may have decided as predetermined or in light of what a person believes about God's regard for their experiences and acts during their time spent on earth.

More questions arise then, with respect to living out the Christian life. For example, if Free Will is thought to form at least part of the earthly experience and is desired by God for humanity to carry out, then, in the context of predestination, to what degree is it important to live *for this world*? If this world is a place to prepare for what comes next when the human body fails but the spirit passes on, to accept the offer of God's love on faith, then, is to know God's love after material death contingent in any way at all upon the quality of deeds while on earth?

At least then, antinomianism is discreditable under the granting of and fulfillment of the expression of Free

Will. Additionally, under the divine compensation proposition, the experience of sublime eternity being premised on the degree to which divine favor can be bargained for might be of little importance. Yet perhaps, if God's offer of love remains freely available to all, whether it is accepted or not, why would there be any real reason to fulfill the Christian love for God and their fellow man?

The prospect of reward for fulfilling God's work, unsurprisingly does not come from the work of human labor or intellect. But rather, and oddly, faith in God can be revealed to be profoundly, yet sensibly justifiable in a mathematical sense to understand what is to be received upon physical passing, but perhaps not so in the usual way of thinking about mathematics.

*The Accountant: Estimating, Adding  
and Subtracting*

A calculating person might suppose to intentionally wait until one's own physical end is foreseeable, to wait to accept God's offer of love, because God's love will be available at that time anyway.

Questions of technicality arise then about Free Will in relation to how to be accepted after the event of physical end. From this perspective, the problems of free will usage resurface in terms again of *authentic acts* of conscience. Nonetheless, it can hopefully be seen that human free will is not of the magnitude or importance that people might think it to be. This, as mentioned, except perhaps in the extraordinary cases where the teachings of Jesus and the fulfillment of

God's law have been disregarded so very reprehensibly and contrary to Jesus' teachings to be no longer compossible in substance or idea with the goodness of creation. Again, God would decide.

In the mental accounting games people play with respect to deeds, for this, and for various other reasons, as in the example above of a scheme of calculated self-interest, there appears to be an overestimation of the understanding of numeration and number sense in humanity at play.

*The Gambler: Rolling the Dice with Finite Probability to take a Chance with Infinite Wisdom*

The misinterpretation and over-estimation of the degree to which people resemble God, could be analogous to gamblers who go to the casino to 'win big' or even to 'beat the house'.

Sadly, for such people, the cards are not stacked in their favor. Also, the owner of the house has already predetermined that gamblers on the balance of probability will lose. Human-Divine relations matter in terms of best intent.

With humility providing clarity, it can hopefully be seen that much of humanity, in simply acting with the best possible good will be well received by God in the inevitable event of spiritual departure from the physical world.

In the casino analogy, it is not possible to use finite mathematics to 'game' infinite understanding or infinite possibilities. The self-misinterpretation and over-estimation of the degree to which people to which humanity resembles God, could be analogous to overly

confident gamblers who go to the casino to 'win big' or even to 'beat the house'. It is simply not possible to use limited human understanding of mathematics to 'game' infinite mathematical understanding and infinity of God Himself.

*The Scientist: Measurement, Data,  
Geometry, and Spatial Sense can  
Evaluate Universal Properties but not  
Understand Universal Purpose*

Returning to God's Omniscient abilities, to assume that as mere people who have been created 'in God's image and likeness' that it means closeness to God in terms of magnitude of human ability is naïve.

As well, to assume too much as to the degree to which people bear resemblance to God, it is not really possibly measurable. Except for people to humbly and begrudgingly realize that human capabilities are immeasurably in diminution to God's limitless ability.

God may be chuckling at humanity's unconsidered pride in the embarrassingly minuscule sense of what is understood about the universe. How much is really known? Including the size of the universe, how it came into being, and the nature of reality?

That is to say that humans can continue to measure, to map, and to describe the properties of the universe that are observable. However, for the universe to have been created from a limitless source implies that the universe is quite possibly limitless or possible to be limitless as well.

Thus, to observe, measure, compile data, map, and graph what is created from a source of infinitely conceivable possibilities (including knowledge of how to create both compossible and impossible resources) is proportionally a task that human life in a finite physical existence will have great difficulty in comprehending the totality of creative work that would be involved.

## Finding Meaning and Purpose in the Context of Predestination: Jesus Leads the Way

### *On Existentialism, Nihilism, and Absurdism in Relation to Determinism*

If the list of those who will enter the gates of Heaven has already been decided, neither faith in God, nor God's law, would matter at all. If the limitations of human suffering stops at physical death, then the commandments pointing to not harming each other wouldn't matter either. Such is the problem with predestination then.

Does nothing of what people do on earth really matter, or does it? If determinism is proportionally of vastly greater importance in a person's existence and spiritual outcome, then the lack of personal agency implied would subject human motivation and will to futility. Fatalism would be the human view of the divine much like in Greek and Roman literary heritage.

Finding meaning in existence is of tremendous concern for people from many walks of life. This includes adherents to many systems of spiritual or rational belief that contradict each other, and to those who put their trust into the political 'isms'. To believe that determinism is a dominant universal existential reality would make the search for purpose an absurd prospect.

Acts of Free Will perhaps do not matter to God to the degree to which might be thought, although they would perhaps be important to Him. With exception to acts

that are impossible with the goodness as described above.

As mentioned, Free Will is not the same as 'free license'. Antinomianism was deployed previously on this point. People simply may not do what they please when it negatively affects others. May it be presented then that the tension between Predestination and Free Will is more easily reconcilable than people might come to believe.

Perhaps it is in simply striving to be more like God that people have the responsibility to do what simply that which is right. That is, to act with justice, mercy, and compassion toward fellow men and women, even in morally ambiguous situations.

To do that which is 'right', (despite the intentional avoidance in this book to avoid using axioms as a form of understanding) to intentionally and overtly axiomatize that which is 'right' and to thus intend to express it as a property of universal and moral truth, is to imply that morality is not a relative term.

Therefore, for a person to do what is right with disregard for any anticipation of compensation, or with disregard in the expectation of reward for goodwill from deeds, or to do right even if one assumes they already have been predestined for Heaven, is to exert *human will* as a force of not only acts of good, but would be *to will greatness* upon the universe. Such an exertion of will would be the best possible approach to God's purpose for the use of Free Will.

The vignette on the next page seeks to illustrate how in simple terms, Jesus powerfully renders the debate over Predestination and Free Will moot.

∞ Jesus Teaches that Doing What is Right  
because it is the Right Thing to Do is the  
Work of the Christian ∞

For some, there is a glaring lack of insight into the nature of infinite love with respect to the expectation of divine reward. The same lack of insight exists in the belief of having been chosen exclusively and distinctively over others to receive divine favor, as it does in those who believe they must earn it. How God answers the question of what it means to fulfill the Christian message is perhaps illustrated quite well in the following parable of Jesus:

The Parable of the Vineyard Workers  
(Matthew 20 1:16)



*Jesus teaches his disciples that “the Kingdom of Heaven is like the landowner who went out early one morning to hire workers for his vineyard.”*

The essence of the parable is paraphrased and quoted here:

Through the course of the day on which the parable takes place, the landowner first finds men ready to work at the earliest part of the day and hires them for the usual sum. He returns a little bit later to where workers usually gather. Upon each visit the landowner takes to finding more workers. He finds and hires more workers to come to the vineyard to work. It is getting later and later in the day. Yet, there are still new workers who arrive and are standing around seeking purpose by looking for work. They too are invited to come to work in the vineyard. Over the course of the day, the earliest of the workers begin to worry if they have made a good decision to work for the landowner. They start assessing and mentally calculating, or perhaps grumbling to each other about the situation of seeming unfairness while they work. Human nature being what it is, they have concerns. They have toiled, perhaps in the hot sun all day. They have labored the longest in their day as well. As such, perhaps from their perspective and understanding, they are justifiably concerned about the proportion of money that will be given to them at the end of the day. In the earthly world, compensation is typically granted as such. That is, payment is received based upon the number of hours worked, efforts, and the quality of labor. In human affairs, pre-arranged and agreed written contracts are formed to clearly outline the terms of compensation for work. That is all understandable since in worldly ways, wages are drawn

from finite resources. As such, when competing for scarce material resources, people tend to be curious about what others have received for their toil as well. At the end of the day's duties, the workers line up to receive what they have earned. To those who started first, the landowner makes what seems to them to be an unfair and incomprehensible decision. He decides to pay the workers who arrived later to the vineyard later in the day first! Not only this, but the landowner also decides to pay them the same sum as those who started earliest! That is, a full and complete day's wage! This is the very same compensation that the earliest and most eager of the workers agreed to receive, and perhaps they thought they would be entitled to special consideration due to being chosen first by the landowner. The first workers understandably feel quite put off. They are frustrated. Perhaps even feeling enraged. So, they complain. They question the landowner's decision, for they were indeed expecting something more. Something more in fact than to what they themselves had initially agreed. From one of those disputing the landowner: *"Those people" (the last to arrive) "worked only one hour, and yet you've paid them just as much as you paid us who worked all day in the scorching heat."* (Matthew 20:12 NLT) The landowner promptly and firmly replied to the man: *"Friend, I haven't been unfair! Didn't you agree to work all day for the usual wage? Take your money and go. I wanted to pay the last worker the same as you. Is it against the law for me to do what I want with my money? Should you be jealous because I am kind to others?"* (Matthew 20:15 NLT)

*Determining what Constitutes Justice and Fairness in  
Fulfilling the Work of God: Contextualizing Matthew  
20:15*

There are several components to unpack in the parable for those critical of this seemingly unfair and unjust way that God has compensated those carrying out His work.

The first being the ability to distinguish between material compensation and divine compensation. The former kind of compensation is drawn from finite resources, is scarce and uncertain. The latter kind of 'compensation' is quite different, it is drawn from an all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving source. That is, God's goodness and grace as boundless, infinite and unlimited!

The sheer futility and absurdity of mere men trying to calculate, or in any way understand the idea of what divine compensation really means is shown here. On this point, humanity is blinded by the material world as a reference point. This, even though people are capable of abstract reasoning and imagination, and have the capacity to conceive of things that are not of a physical nature.

Nonetheless, the idea that divine compensation is a scarce and limited resource has likely emerged out of scarcity of material resources in the physical world.

Drawing from an infinite source means of course however that there is enough of God's love for all to enjoy. The extraordinary courage it takes to put one's spirit to faith in God, without any expectation, or without seeking special consideration, to simply have faith that what God does with your spirit upon passing is his Will, is to be freed from the burden of working to

earn a place in Heaven. This, if Free Will is thought of as an absolute. Whereas to do what is right whether entry into Heaven is thought to have a predetermined favorability of outcome or not, is to additionally be freed by faith in God and his grace.

## The Work of the Christian & The Wonder of Creation

Is Christian life to be one of work alone? What about using free will to not only work but what about to experience joy?

In an overly pessimistic mindset, perhaps people seeking out what the work of the Christian ought to be, may forget to consciously seek out wonder in the world, and to take conscious joy in experiencing God's creation.

The work of the Christian is certainly not meant to be implied to be drudgery at all. The joy of being alive is all around. The boundless joys and wonders to consciously experience in the material world and beyond surely are limitless. If a person is attuned to the miracle that is life itself.

Under such a viewpoint, the idea of limiting free will to look for 'just compensation' either materially or spiritually becomes quite evidently and extraordinarily laughable. When pessimistically trying to 'calculate' what proportion of divine compensation to which one can lay claim amounts to an exercise in comical absurdity. As though human scorekeeping or mental accounting can even begin to understand the limitless nature of divine 'compensation'.

Due to ignorance and lack of faith, it is as though the infinite richness of God's love is somehow a scarce and finite resource.

How confused the human mind is to have made such a logical fallacy. As usual, human understanding is confused. That the human viewpoint is quite pessimistic and on the matter of compensation, is biased toward how affairs in the physical world are typically undertaken in this regard.

Humanity may have come to believe in having developed a high degree of mathematical prowess, for example. People may believe it to be possible to tally up the sum of personal worth to the divine, or worse, in the negative, perceived lack thereof in God's eyes.

Yet, the sum of mathematical abilities as mere humans undoubtedly will fall immeasurably short of completing the task of measuring the omniscience of God. In consciously experiencing in awe and with humility and thankfulness, the wonders and beauty of the miracle that is God's universe true compensation enough and uncountable.

## Is it Time to Pause the Predestination vs. Free Will Debate and Shift the Focus?

*An Alternate Proposal:  
Convergence/Divergence Theory of  
Body and Spiritual Experience and  
Outcome*

For a person to be spiritually and corporeally fulfilled, it is necessary to acknowledge there is more than there seems to be to the tension between free will and determinism. Perhaps, to minimize the theological concerns around the determinism vs. free will as a paradox would likely be of benefit to advance more pertinent concerns of spiritual and physical outcomes for humanity.

To fully comprehend the nature of how the spiritual and physical selves are related to each other and are integrated, and thus to look at the determinist/free will paradigm on a deeper plane, it is likely necessary to attune to moments where spiritual and physical existence converge and diverge.

Examples of spiritual and physical convergence may include realizing that a child has been conceived, Additionally, at the moment of birth of the new life, spiritual and physical ~ convergence and divergence theory surfaces.

As well then, in returning to God at the event of physical death would be a moment and example of physical and spiritual divergence.

All that happens before a person was born, during a person's time on earth, and their experiences and acts on earth, as well as what happens after a person's spirit makes its departure from its physical self at death would be beneficial to consider in terms of the degree of integration between spiritual and physical existence in human ~ divine relations.

To supplant the Predestination vs. Free Will debate with an exploration of the nature of Spiritual/Physical ~ Convergence/Divergence would perhaps be of more benefit in understanding the nature of human purpose and experience, and to better attend to spiritual and physical outcomes.

Shifting the focus of interest away from Predestination/Free Will as a function of personal agency in contrast to personal alignment with God's foreknowledge and will, would offer greater clarity on many of concerns of human ~ divine relations.

## Conclusions Drawn from Chapter 4

### *Scripture can be more Accessible by De-emphasizing the Tension Between Predestination and Free Will: Changing the Discussion of Human-Divine Relations*

It is simply not possible to calculate or to use mathematics alone to understand the immense and infinite proportion of the scale of God's divine nature and capabilities. Additionally, it is not even possible really in human understanding to know the immense and infinite proportion of what constitutes the nature of the 'physical' universe. That people believe in human capability to that degree in the current period of human history, suggests more so of a 'mathematical' measure of humanity's arrogance, pride, and ignorance.

There is no logical capability yet developed by humanity to carry out such a task as to determine what infinite abundance really means. Perhaps because of material advancements in the 21st century many people have come to believe that they have little use for a spiritual relationship with God. In the West, many people have become decoupled from the spiritual part of existence. A contributing factor in the decline of spiritual contemplation would likely be the seemingly unlimited abundance of advanced material prosperity.

That humanity has improved in the ability to fulfill material needs through yielding increasingly more from the finite world, many people perhaps then erroneously believe it would follow that a spiritual relationship with God is irrelevant. This messaging perhaps often trickles

down from the 'sages' in the silos of higher education, and through popular and politicized discouragement. Of course, such material improvements are a reflection and testament to the inventive human ability to create and fulfill an elevated level of material comfort and nourishment, yet this wonderful accomplishment does not imply that spiritual fulfillment and nourishment are no longer necessary.

As such, the West, and in many places in the world rightly aspiring to high levels of material prosperity, spiritual fulfillment is being neglected.

Neglected both by people not being able to contemplate their own spirituality at all, and in not fulfilling the Word and Law of God, and therefore not finding fulfillment within themselves. Perhaps in being materially fulfilled, people have become so detached from their internal spiritual life that many are not even consciously aware of the idea of a spiritual self.

The vacuous way in which a lack of spiritual connection to God has a detrimental effect on personal health and wellbeing of the individual and society is astounding to observe.

Examples can be found easily in the degree to which people in the West zealously jump at the opportunity to seek fulfillment of self in the 'isms' of politics and ideology. An argument could be made that in the West, many of such political movements are morphing from the political sphere into the sphere of religiosity and then taking on dogmatic character in their absence of meaningful spiritual fulfillment.

Erroneously, when people do accept spirituality as part of their experience, many have drawn the connection that finite material satisfaction is somehow

extended to being owed divine compensation by seeking spiritual satisfaction. The idea that specific mathematical laws can be found, and mathematical measurements can be calculated to understand the role of predestination versus the idea of having to earn divine favor, is in conclusion here thought to be a completely and thoroughly discreditable theory, serving no degree of importance in sight of the idea that trying to tabulate what is 'owed' from God is a preposterous notion.

Also, to foolishly live only for the preparation of the afterlife on the balance of good deeds is as faulty a line of reasoning as living by axiomatic indoctrination to strive toward ritualistic 'purity'. Both are simply faulty beliefs that divine favor can be willed by those who try to do so.

Being an accountant of what will be sufficient payment to lay claim to something of 'spiritual worth' is but merely another form of ritualistic behavior. It is another manifestation of the superstitious and obsessive-compulsive mindset based in the fear of uncertainty of the unknown.

The only math minimally needed for one's spiritual preparation for physical end is perhaps to simply know there are two spiritual laws that guide free will: 1. Love God and 2. Love humanity. In terms of free will then, it can be reduced to the idea that one's own good nature (after all, humanity was created from substance that God deemed compossible with His goodness) will have but a minimal impact on God.

Why? Because God created you! He already knows all about you! Have faith in that! Find freedom in that! God

created *you!* He chose you to be a desirable part His creation, and God creates from a place of goodness!

Therefore, no matter what you think of yourself or if you believe you have or have not earned divine favor, your spiritual well-being rest assured is going to be well cared for by God in His intended purpose.

The only math needed is to simply be able count to two and remember to carry out activities in a way that is compatible with, and more to the point, not contrary to the most important commandments.

To be consciously mindful to choose to do what is right, whether it will be pleasing to God or whether a person feels exclusively chosen to do so, is to freely fulfill the self spiritually, and to fulfill the predetermination of God's Will for the individual self.

Perhaps doing Right because it is Right to do so, and for that reason alone, helps answer something of the why of the created universe, and why it is that human free will exists in the omniscience of God and His created universe.

Predestination? Yes! God already knows all about every person.

Free will? Yes! Making a difference for humanity is the right thing to do.



## Chapter 5

# Enter Kurt Gödel: The Limitation of Logic is that Logic is Parametric. The Breakdown of Finite Logical Coherence in an Infinite Universe.

### Preamble and Introduction to Chapter 5

*“Axiomatic truth is truth by declaration”*

(Kryzanowski, 2024)

The above statement as a stand-alone axiom, is of course self-referential, and can therefore be viewed as discreditable as absolute ‘truth’.

In isolation, problems with the above statement would include the absence of a point of comparison, a lack of any sort of further clarification, no examples to in any way support its validity, and in its isolation, nor would there be any external way to verify its properties of ‘truth’.

While seemingly self-evident, the contents of the statement perhaps make it entirely plausible as a stand-alone claim, given that the practical application of the statement above might, as a concept, have practical uses in a variety of circumstances.

Yet, as a statement in isolation, there are limitations therefore in the capacity for it to be provable. This would be the case unless it can interact with other ideas. For example, by deductive observation, to know that something is ‘*green*’ in color, a person must know

what the color green does *not* look like as a point of reference.

For moral truth, as in, to know right from wrong, one must know something of what is 'wrong' to understand what it is that is 'right'; and how to act accordingly.

In mathematical terms, it is much the same. Like the written word, without a system to distinguish one mathematical symbol from another, the individual would become lost in a world of meaningless scratches and marks.

Similarly, in the absence of spoken communication, gestural references, or communication in any form, there can be no understanding or agreement among people as to the very nature and properties of 'truth'.

While agreement among people as to what truth is does not necessarily make something truth, questions arise surrounding whether truth is something absolute as a universal property, or if truth is more a function of human-made construction.

Willing truth into existence by consensus, through repetition, even sloganeering is tantamount to creating or (expressed in a more modern and industrialized way) 'manufacturing' truth. If truth is considered to be something that contains within it properties of absolute universality, then truth does not require belief in it for it to be truth.

Is truth formed from meaning that is constructed from perceptual inputs, observation and experiences that create *understanding* of truth? Or is the nature of 'truth' as an absolute universal property something quite different?

The greatest tool a person has available to them for the evaluation of 'truth' is the mind. To know something of the difference between a 'good' idea and a 'bad' idea,

and to be equipped to discern between what is morally 'right' or 'wrong' is available through channels of intellectual method for those who are willing and able to seek truth that way. The rich tradition of Greek, Roman, Hebrew, and Mediterranean scholarship prior to Jesus' time testifies to the merits of developing rational and intellectual understandings and philosophies.

The Christian who lives morally by way of heart, would benefit from backstopping their conviction of conscience, with firm grounding in rigorous intellectual scholarship, lest they find their heart swayed by uncritically accepting false belief.

To understand the properties and qualities of the physical 'matter' of the universe (in this case, to understand 'truth' such that the physical 'reality' of the universe has 'truth' contained in its reality), the human mind gives people the capacity to come to agreement or disagreement through the intersubjective experience, perceptions and conclusions drawn that can independently verify and substantiate to some degree reality as truth. Again, though to simply agree with others that something is truth does not make it so.

To be able to independently substantiate universal 'reality' as a form of 'truth', for people to have the conscious wherewithal to contemplate that although themselves contain properties and concept of 'self', to be able to understand that other people are real, and equipped in much the same way, and therefore form reality as well, the human being is well-equipped with the agency of mind to discern falsehood from reality as to what is truth. The degree to which creatures of the animal kingdom may have similar capabilities offers a point of comparison. To the extent that other species

can know something of the same, or may vary in the degree to which they have capacity to know, points to the unique properties of the human mind and its ability to use logic and other tools of perception to understand and contemplate the nature of the real (physical) universe.

This agency of human mind has such tremendous capability whether God is accepted as a universal constancy, a universal creator, or whether He is not. If it is found to be the case that on the balance, much of human free will is a function of mind, then so much more likely is it the case that God does not require belief in His existence to for God to exist.

As characterized under the framework of Kurt Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems (1931), and through them, the tool of the 'Paradox of Undecidability' as understood, are applicable as a tool logic to question the stability of the nature of logic itself. The very self-referential nature of the logic of the Incompleteness Theorems in that they offer substantiation that logic is unstable, as a logical system itself, the Theorems demonstrate the ways in which logical approaches to understanding can easily become befuddled in self-contradiction and lacking in consistency.

If the principles of mathematics are thought to be axioms of foundational universal property, and as well, if mathematical processes lend themselves well to be used as tools of operative procedures performed upon the principles of mathematics (*organizing of sets of symbols and then performing various operations using the organized sets*), for mathematics as a way to examine coherence and incoherence in thinking, the breakdown of mathematical thinking as a form of logical understanding will likely crumble or perhaps, as

the title of this book somewhat audaciously suggests, will destruct from within itself, as the process of logical formalism will be seen to succumb to its own internal tension between organizing symbols into sets  $\sim$  and confining the sets of symbols by defined parameters.

If mathematical logic is one of binding collections of symbols together, and in doing so, restricting the set of symbols as best as possible by finite parameters, in order to say test a set of axioms for provability, or something of containing properties of truth, (done by way of measuring, or comparing, or inserting variability into the parameters and onto the set), the incompleteness of this way of understanding the universe this way for the mind tilted toward spiritualism becomes apparent because finite understanding cannot reasonably be used to understand fully the nature of infinite properties of the universe.

The effort of this chapter will be to demonstrate that logical reasoning, formal scientific methods, and rationalism as guiding thought processes, and even as mandate and ethos of intellectual scholarship, while incredibly valuable, can be seen to have a unstable a more unstable foundation than many people seem to believe.

To the staunchest of believers in the triumph of logical understanding as absolute and complete in the face of spiritualist argument to the contrary, this chapter may hopefully induce something of an existential crisis and internal examination in those who hold steadfast in the belief in the Gospel of Science.

The viewpoint of the author of this volume is that to create separate encampments of logic and spirituality, as an absolute split between rationalism and

spiritualism is not optimal for understanding the physical nature of the universe to begin with. As well, for the yet undecided, if a person chooses to seek further understanding, then it is helpful to use rationalism to help internally clarify personal spiritual belief about God.

The idea of the separation of church and state has been demonstrated to be of tremendous benefit for society this way. Between material wellbeing and spiritual wellbeing, the latter has often become ignored despite the potential for reciprocity between both has gone unnoticed. Under such characterization, the detachment from spiritual engagement has been an unintended consequence of the separation of the church involvement in state affairs, as a result.

Freedom of conscience in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has morphed, has become quite distorted, and often resulted in grotesque manifestations of the concept.

A basic example of free will as a concept having become distorted is the subtle change in language use, as it suits a particular situation.

This example illuminates the point: The drift in popular media into discourse using expressions such as 'my truth' and 'your truth' to supplant the language of 'my opinion' and 'your opinion' is troublesome in this regard.

Who can respectfully disagree, argue respectfully, and argue without elevated language, when a claimed absolute (albeit closed loop authority) on issues or in circumstances arise where such language is deployed?

Basic agreement on facts would offer something of a minimum baseline of what something of truth is when such terminology of 'my truth' and 'your truth' is invoked. For people who speak this way, absent is the

realization that truth is not creatable, and claiming it as 'one's own' does not support the pursuit of truth, because absolute truth would have no owner. Claim to absolute truth would further put the onus on the 'owner' to such a claim to present their case for claim to ownership of it, such that it may be subjected to scrutiny, validation, or ignored and laughed off as discreditable.

In light of the divorce of spiritual and rational philosophy that appears to leave the 21<sup>st</sup> century person adrift and confused, that Kurt Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems exist as a tool of logical rationalism that can demonstrate the limits of human logical rationalism, is seemingly quite odd, and perhaps appear as further confoundment.

The Incompleteness Theorems provide an opportunity to challenge the acceptance of logic as supreme authority in human understanding.

In the passage of time of two-thousand years since the life and teachings of Christ overturned the fallacy of relying solely on intellectualism as a way of understanding the world, a bridge between rationalism and spirituality as a freely open back and forth channel, can enhance and support reciprocal gains made in both ways of understanding.

## Experimentation with the Limits of Logic in Political and Social Science

Politics is particularly well known for its appeal to emotional sentiment as well as for its use of 'logic and reason' to develop any number of binding laws, contracts, agreements, declarations, treaties, alliances, and pacts.

The sphere of political logic and its built-in lever of worldly authority and power are often used as a method for groups of all sorts to attain authoritative legitimacy (justifiably or not). Politics contains within its system of logical expression, the backstop of heavy-handed enforcement of the decisions and resolutions that are made by its mechanisms. As well, the properties of political logic have significant influence over people over the course of their life (in both good and bad ways).

Therefore, the sphere of political logic will make for an excellent, and if seen perhaps at the same time (*boldly stated*): 'simple' place to begin experimentation with the idea that 'absolute' logic and the process of formal logic systems and how they interact, show limitations to the coherence of logic.

The built-in tension of rational vs. irrational contrast inherent in political discourse renders its logical foundation perhaps 'self-evidentially' unstable and perhaps 'quite obviously' so to many who are politically enthusiastic. Yet many who will declare their awareness of such problems of political logic and its coherence or lack thereof, themselves may become seduced into professing political dogma as 'truth'. This can and will occur when contemplation of personal assumptions on matters of political belief interacts with

internal wish for a political ideology to be externally confirmed as valid. As well, when the human desire to find community in something that might offer meaning that is greater than personal interests, political dogma can easily offer provisions for such needs.

For an idea to be considered ‘truth’, or at least minimally: ‘provable’, it cannot refer to itself as ‘truth’. A declarative ‘truism’ can be expressed by way of written language among other ways. A linguistic example can be found in the silly declarative axiom at the beginning of the preamble to this Chapter: “axiomatic truth is truth by declaration”. When the content is stripped from the statement, the functions of the content are revealed in the metalanguage of the statement. This way, the axiom can be exposed for its idiocy: “*x is x because it says it is*”.

Now, instead of reconvertng the axiom to its original state, to substitute *x* for another subject, and then to perhaps modify the phraseology for effect will produce another wonderfully pseudo-profound declaration: “A parrot is a parrot because it calls itself one.”

‘Truth’ is often thought to present with greater clarity when expressed through mathematical symbols. Perhaps this is under the assumption that written mathematical expression of ideas will somehow offer greater assurance of clarity. Nonetheless, however an idea is expressed, whether through linguistic symbols or mathematical symbols, the self-referencing nature contained in declarative statements lack provability, and are therefore undecidable as ‘truth’ as per Gödel’s second Incompleteness Theorem, a would require further substantiation. (Crilly, 2011, p. 189)

Please see the section called Supplemental Practical Material at the back of this volume to substantiate the

above declaration, see the section called Works Cited for further information on these problems of logic and mathematics, or read some of the source materials in the Extended Bibliography for further understanding.

At least even minimally, if such type of declaration is to be considered 'valid', in the absence of any external point of reference, even if the internal logic of the statement is somehow consistent, it cannot be certain to be completely consistently free from contradiction across all situations. This is likely the case if it cannot be possible to observe all possible situations. (Crilly, 2011, p. 189). For example, under the "*x is x because it says it is*" formula, perhaps the parrot might say "I'm a parrot in one situation and say "I'm a toucan" in another situation.

The universality of 'truth' is not really approachable as a conclusively declarative concept under the limits of such expressions of logic.

In his Incompleteness Theorems, Gödel was calling into question mathematical 'objects' (axioms), or at least their representation through symbols, as containing absolute form. Then he called into question formal procedures (operations) of manipulation of the symbols in their ability to reveal anything of greater meaning in the truth of the symbols (axioms).

The Incompleteness Theorems do not examine the interaction between human cognitive perception and logic. Although, this adds another layer of complication in trying to understand whether there are universal properties of truth. If any universal properties of mathematics, or by extension, universal properties of material physics, or abstract philosophy or theology exist that might contain absolute truth, would the human ability to understand be limited to cognitive

capacities, or are the limitations presented more so related to a lack of absolutism in properties of the universe?

Before even remotely considering political logic, it will be helpful to deeply consider some core questions that the fallacy of truth by declaration brings out.

To approach anything of absolute truth (if political logic could ever plausibly offer or provide such a thing), questions of importance for consideration are whether it is the case that truth requires perception of it? That is to say, is truth part interaction between people ~ world, people ~ people. Or does truth exist independently of whether it can be observed, experienced, or agreed upon or not? If something is truth, doesn't it mean then, that to know it as truth, then it must have a point of reference? That is, in order to distinguish truth from what is not, then there must be error. At the very least, if everything that exists is true, then there must be things that are of true existence, but are perceived or mischaracterized falsely.

The nature of what is to be considered truth, or what is even to be considered real, then is quite elusive. Given the proposed diminishment of the human ability to know what truth is, is that to say as well then, that truth is a relative concept? If any kind of truth, including whether there are absolute universal mathematical properties, the existence of universal physical properties, or universal existence external to one's own mind, are the limited capabilities of the perceptive mind a factor into what is actually truth? Or merely the perception of truth?

For the agnostic, atheist, humanist, religiously, spiritually, or otherwise inclined, the hope that if there is to be only one kind of universal truth, then it would

at least moral truth, would be helpful for people to be less barbarous and destructive. The use such things as logic for understanding properties of truth then would be tools to become equipped with to understand, and would not necessarily be axiomatically true themselves.

To view moral truth as universal constancy, will hopefully close the door to lines of reasoning that seek give credibility to ideas that moral truth is merely is relative concept (especially from those who propose them with political clout and motivation). What problems would arise if the nature of moral truth was limited by relativism? The history of human political affairs and conduct can answer that question.

The importance of calling into question Political Logic and its foundations, is therefore of great importance as an expression of human morality, whether taken from a philosophical or theological standpoint.

*Political Axiomatic Logic and Its  
Problems in Microcosm*

How often in casual conversation among people ‘old axioms’ tossed around carelessly and definitively?

For example:

- ‘That’s just how it is.’
- ‘You only live once (YOLO).’
- ‘It is what it is.’
- ‘We are all in this together.’
- ‘Live fast and die hard.’
- ‘The rich get richer; the poor get poorer.’
- ‘What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.’
- ‘Time heals all wounds.’
- ‘Birds of a feather flock together.’
- ‘Opposites attract.’
- ‘You can’t teach an old dog new tricks.’
- ‘It’s a long shot.’
- ‘Keeping it real.’
- ‘Surviving.’
- ‘Too chill for that.’
- ‘Stay strong.’
- ‘Hang in there.’
- ‘You’ve got to keep on keeping on.’
- ‘Take things one day at a time.’
- ‘Live day to day.’
- ‘Every cloud has its silver lining.’
- ‘A dollar saved is a dollar earned.’

The above list is but a mere sampling of commonly used and uncritical phrases in circulation among people in and at the time and place of writing.

In surveying this list, several things stand out in terms of commonality among the phrases in their axiomatic properties. One similarity is that by their nature, the above list of axioms summarizes what might otherwise be nuanced experiences of life into simplistic ways to explain such experiences. Another commonality can be observed in their reference to hardship. A third commonality implied in these axioms is perhaps one of attending to matters of hardship with a sense of immediacy, and then underlying their usage is a short-term outlook and single next-step action. A fourth commonality can be seen in the mindset of restriction underlying the sentiment in many of these phrases as well.

Whether the restriction contained within the axioms above is suggested for another person to abide by, or to be taken as a remedy to fix the underlying sentiment toward a problem expressed by the axiomatic utterance, there is a certain 'endure to survive' attitude expressed in the contents of the list above.

For example, to suggest to someone to 'live day to day', or for someone to choose to self-restrict in such axioms as: 'You only live once; right?' Or when asking how someone is doing, the response might be: 'I'm surviving, is it the weekend yet?' Understanding that many of these types of linguistic axiom might simply occur as a function being 'in passing' or while 'on the go', like in a workplace for example, the consistent underlayment this sample set of idioms contains in common is their fixed and rigid way of expressing how to endure hardship.

When the usage becomes ingrained into the character of those who use this kind of axiom, it can become a kind of social currency and exchange.

Unfortunately, deeper risks from their usage are an emergent risk. Meaning that from within the mindset of those who tilt their attitudes toward the habit of expressing these kinds of axiom, the quality of their thought processes degrades into one of 'endure and survive' the 'right nowness'.

Larger problems of society can spiral downward when they are built on a foundation of short-term thinking and negativity as in axiom above. The rigidity of axiom shows its weakness here as a perpetual and almost 'contagious' thought habit.

In brief hypothetical experimentation, the first direction taken to address the limits of logical validity and its breakdown in the sphere of politics, is to point out the reflexive and off-the-cuff usage and proliferation of these types of axioms. Sadly, they often can and do become very deeply ingrained into the customs and social currency of those who deploy these terms. The consequence to the downside is one of attitudes of stagnation and decline in those who parrot the ethos restrictive axiom.

The ethos itself may drive down the climate of a workplace, for example, where the axioms themselves create an excessively negative work-site custom of social culture.

In another direction of more serious consequence, when such axioms become so overused or entrenched into societal mindset, they, or others like them, may then begin to drift from an expression of sentiment and then into ideology. From an ideology, the prospect of greater influence for these kinds of axioms gains momentum in their trajectory. Next, they very quickly become a movement or call toward action.

Often embedded in the mindset of survivalism comes the expression of urgent action to rectify the harm and perceived affliction expressed in the axiom as it is agreed to have been experienced. Fervor and zealotry may take hold as calls of higher purpose are invoked through the validity of the axiom as being a call to action, and by extension, when the axiom becomes further galvanized into unquestionable dogma.

To help discredit any type of 'higher' cause or 'purpose' that might be invoked through political mandate by axiom, the above list of axioms of hardship will be mechanically drawn from to breakdown claims to absolute truth their sentiment might believe to contain. The dubious politics and persuasion by rhetoric that might be invoked or emerge from the list of hard-done-by axioms from above, will be intentionally concocted here, and for use as a method to analyze and refute political dogma that people might encounter.

The method of concoction to take the list as a 'menu' of options from which to create a vacuous and meaningless 'call to action'. Several of the selected axioms from the set will be ordered into a string of dialogue of logical progression.

It will be proposed that depending on how such a dialogue would be presented in isolation to an external observer, the dialogue might be thought to contain coherent meaning that is seen to exist between the chain of selected axioms.

Within the selected axioms presented in dialogue below, there will appear the emergence of a seemingly internally consistent and coherent dialogue containing politicized discussion. Simply by way of having ordered a selection of thoughtless axioms, now ideologically charged, and depending on the tone in which the

dialogue could be read, the dialogue might take on the character of an urgent call to political action.

From simply having drawn from the menu of pre-selected axioms of declarative restriction and woe-is-me-isms, the proposal to act politically on their foundation has been made. The narrative of hardship contained in each axiom and extended on the string of hypothetical conversation reinforces the previous one. The dialogue demonstrates in microcosm the potential contained therein for such mindsets of axiom to become a politically charged move toward action to 'right' whatever the burning issue might be.

Perhaps as a chat among like-minded friends or co-workers, once again arbitrarily strung together as a list of pre-selected dogmatic axioms, could be peppered with variance in phrasing and tone. The tired metalanguage in the dialogue below creates a hypothetical grievance:

*Bill: "The rich keep getting richer!"*

*Frank: "For sure, and the poor, well, they keep getting poorer!"*

*Bob: "Yeah, that's how it is alright!"*

*Frank "I agree with you, birds of a feather! We are all in this together!"*

*Bill: "Well, yeah, you only live once, so we might as well live fast and die-hard!"*

At this point, these simplistic, silly, uncritical, seemingly innocuous axioms, peppered with everyday phraseology, and as used in everyday social interaction in the present time and place, have been composed into such a way that, perhaps from the underlying mindset of restriction and hard-done-by ethos of limitation,

there has emerged something of an ideology and a call to action.

Thinking about the bullet-like 'truth' each one of these micro-messages is believed to contain within it, perhaps then, the move from social banter to a call to political action might not be too far of a leap. Would these axioms or ones like them, not make excellent fodder for sloganeering, and to be written onto signs in a form of political messaging? Would these axioms, when sloganeered and infused into various forms of media and methods of communication, electronic or otherwise, perhaps have the potential to speak to and capture the imagination and agency of those who are in a place of life whereby they might be receptive to a call to action this way?

If the script were read out loud, and read with varying degrees of tone, urgency or fervor, or, if the phrasings were presented with elevated gradations of rigid or inflammatory language, the inclinations for people who are primed toward seeking meaning and purpose in the political 'isms' of the world can very readily be mobilized.

Notice at this point that no specific cause or problem has been asserted or proposed in the dialogue above. If Bill, Bob, and Frank are colleagues in a place of work, the conversation might have been part of an ongoing discussion around their monetary compensation.

Such axioms or ones like them, could quite easily be shouted into a megaphone as bullets of truth, composed into a mantra, or repeated as a chant. As though repeating them over and over again at a louder and louder volume will somehow make the axioms or string of them become 'truth' through such activity.

This scenario becomes more ridiculous further if the premise of claims to hardship are not really in any way valid. The inflexibility of 'truth by axiom' shows its tremendous, even potentially grave weakness, used as a tool of charged politicism.

For example, the original statement in the set of axioms of the 'rich get richer' is likely agreed as a premise by the men as a problem to be resolved. If the rest of the conversation continues uncritically and unquestioningly along the lines of undue hardship, it might make sense to these men for their line of axiomatic reasoning to become a call to action.

If the 'rich' do 'in fact' get 'richer' is accepted as an ingrained 'truth' at the outset, and then accepted as a moral 'wrong' that needs 'righted', and as it is a well-known point of heated contention among many in the current age, this line of thinking is indeed frequently used in the context of speaking about matters of money and what is 'just compensation' ('Fair Wages for All!').

If taken to a level deeper, it can be seen that perhaps the problem is more in poverty of the fixed, rigid, and inflexible mindsets of the fictitious Bill, Bob, and Frank.

None of the gentlemen involved have bothered to find out if their premise is valid. For example, embedded in the axiom of the 'rich get richer and poor get poorer' is the assumption that to be 'rich' (speaking solely in monetary terms), is a fixed way of being. Or that 'the rich' are somehow a static body of people. Similarly, the three men have a fixed perception regarding the condition of those who they deem statically 'poor'.

The men have bonded together in their perception of misery and subsequent agreement about the 'truth' of

'how it is' (whatever that means). Perhaps they are disenfranchised or dissatisfied with their personal situations, which likely tilt toward being less financially well-off. Yet, in this conversational snapshot, they have neglected and denied themselves any prospect or potential for upward economic mobility.

Hopefully, people who are inclined to think this way will find comfort and solace in bonding over the social currency of this sort of shared woe-is-me-ism. This kind of axiomatization of thought, fabricated above from a pre-selected menu, represents the types of sloganeering that perhaps encapsulates the essence and expression of the kind of social cohesion and belonging found in political propaganda. The 'isms' of shared political higher moral purpose is borne from a perceived 'injustice' and 'deficit':

**"Wrongdoing! Hardship! Urgency! Action!"**

If Frank got a promotion, or finds a way to improve his financial situation, perhaps he will be met with social ostracization from Bill and Bob from their lack of success in the same way. Harmful political ideologies seem to spring quite easily from restrictive and rigid habits of pessimistic thought, including or especially envy.

The idea of political axiom as 'truth' (well over-used, and quite easily scientifically systemized as a tool of sloganeering, coercion, and propaganda) as a political call to action, it is often particularly persuasive when used to gain and bolster political support from people with such mindsets of hardship. Often the mindset of hardship comes from felt unjust affliction in the political and economic sense (rightly or wrongly).

Some sort of rectification of the situation must be reconciled by those who are thought to be externally responsible for the wrongdoing. Most often, those who are motivated by such a system of belief, seek to make the situation 'right' by extraction of resources acquired from those who have sought self-improvement, and succeeded in doing so.

Christian political propogandists operate in much the same when scripture is turned into axiom, and then into political dogma similarly.

Stand out scripture passages lend themselves well to sloganeering and propaganda. "Ye Must Be Born Again!" immediately comes to mind. It is as though in bullet form, those who choose to do so believe they can summarize the Christian message into simple axiom and then create the same sense of urgency and call to immediate action. For example, it is not uncommon to walk down the street and encounter people from various organizations under the banner of "Christianity" found with tables set up full of pamphlets and shouting into megaphones. In an effort to call people to urgent and immediate action regarding the state of their soul, with a megaphone to their lips the scripture passages that lend themselves well to bullet point sloganeering are amplified and thrust upon the public.

Often this kind of 'evangelism' will overlay judgment on the people subjected to this version Christianity, while they simply pass by on the street. Oblivious to the street preacher of this kind, is that people passing by might find it off-putting to receive something of what Christian life might be like if the preacher is their example, and the 'Christian' message subjected to is one

full of distortion and a rather grotesque expression of abject doom and hopelessness.

Blasting out dogma in the name of Christianity through the doctrine of fear are the street preachers who do so are seemingly oblivious to their own discrediting. By trying to motivate to action, by way of the threat of imminent doom and the coming hellfire, is not quite as effective a tool of evangelism as such people might think it to be.

The political 'isms' of the world often claim that such doom is imminent and under the framework of 'act now'. This urgency of course, if acted upon, strips the would-be prospect of their own critical lens of contemplation by jumping into 'the cause' without a second sober second thought. The commercial axiom: 'Act now, before the sale ends!' comes to mind.

Whether through initial waiver of personal agency, or of a longing perhaps to find 'acceptance', or whether through worn-down and repeated coercion while affiliated with such a political or religious organization, the logic of: 'wrongdoing -hardship -urgency -action' can be applied as a tool of analysis, when trying to understand various political and religious movements, and what to expect if one chooses to join them in their cause.

If that is the explicit dogma of the organization at the outset, once further involved with the group, the layers of the onion when peeled back will likely reveal much deeper levels of coercion and surrender of personal agency.

If one accepts simple axioms as absolute truths, the person primed to express themselves in such absolutes, is conveying elements of reductionism and restriction in their internal mindset. The person who might be

seeking certainty, order, and constancy, may certainly find some elements of those by joining such political movements. However, have they found 'truth'? The conscript might come to resent the surrender of their own free agency to the 'higher purpose' of the greater good when they come to discover that at the outset, the premise of the political movement was on shaky ground.

There might be logical 'coherence' as described above, in the set of axioms, or in the articles of belief and the mandates of the group. The properties of each article of axiom within the self-contained set of logical 'truisms' may continue from its premise on through something of a continuum of logical process.

In the lack of external verification as to the merits of axioms in the political movement, if there is something of 'truth' in the political 'ism' of the group, perhaps there may very well be. If the axioms agreed upon among the group members are viewed as absolute 'truth', that it might be of an absolute nature is very unlikely.

But, at the point of breakdown and logical uncertainty in the movement's progress and procedures, was the faith the believer had in the original premise of the movement on solid ground? Was the original premise of the system of belief itself on solid ground such that a person will continue to be fulfilled in choosing to freely direct their efforts to it when the logic of the movement falters. Or will the believer in the political 'ism' require the lever of force to be thrust upon them to remain 'faithful' to the movement?

If Bob, Bill, and Frank believe their convictions to be of merit, and seek action based on their premise of their

communally perceived economic hardship, they might very well gain support and find agreement among others who are like-minded. On this point, they might very well find something of external validation of their premise of hardship. Further to this, they might find some success and validation in fulfilling their quest to achieve economic advancement and upward mobility through their doctrine of hardship. However, none of this is the same as saying their declaration of hardship and doctrine of action to rectify their situation is, in the absolute, based in anyway upon a foundation of absolute 'truth'. It is not that the three men were even necessarily seeking to express any concept of absolute 'truth' in their aspirations, much more plainly and simply, in this hypothetical situation, they were likely simply just seeking a pay raise. The hopes that the pay raise would somehow fulfill their monetary hardships going forward may have been resolved upon implementing their call to action, or it might not have been.

However, if the outcome from their efforts to seek economic improvement did result in a pay rise, and they were satisfied that they had received the just compensation they were seeking, the raise in pay will not in itself necessarily provide or guarantee the comfort of assurance and material improvement to their economic situations. This might be a function of their prior monetary habits underscoring their perceived hardship. Perhaps it was the case that those problems were not even necessarily discussed among each other, or even contemplated within themselves, or in honesty in their relationships. Even within their families these kinds of problems might not have been discussed nor even have been transparent. If Bill enjoys a habit of

online sports-betting for example, that might very likely be more of an obstruction to his economic mobility and outcome than his raise in wages will provide for his family and himself. It is very likely the case then, that attaining more money will not be enough to fill the void he is experiencing in his life and seeking to fulfill through online betting.

As for Bob, perhaps, his situation was not as dire as Bill, and maybe he was simply more interested in the comradery he found with his colleagues, or perhaps he has an overarching interest in the well-being of workers as a people in the broader sense.

If Frank took the promotion and found fulfillment that way, as well as received an accompanying raise in pay, perhaps he would have found something of what he was looking for that way.

For New Testament parables that are relatable to the hypothetical situation presented above of Bob, Bill, and Frank above please see:

(Matthew 25: 14-30 NLT, Luke 19: 11-27 NLT)

For relatable context in early Greek philosophy and logic please see:

Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric* (ca. 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE)

## Experimentation with the Limits of Logic in 'Hard' Science

*Is the Universe Parametrically  
Bound? Or is the Universe Infinitely  
Expanding?*

Whether in the field of mathematics, science, moral philosophy, physics, religion, or any other, to seek truth by axiom is the same as the quest for universal constants across all situations. Yet, in order for an axiom to be logically valid, it must be able to stand up to scrutiny. Yet, how long would it take to find out if an axiom is universally true? Is an axiom true across the vastness of the universe itself, or can an axiom even be universal Truth? Is  $4+4$  consistently equal to 8 in all parts of the universe? Do iron, lead, silver, or bromine change in terms of their elemental physical composition in yet unknown regions of space? How would humans as of yet know? How do sound waves function in yet explored or not yet understood regions of the universe? Are physicists agreed that the speed of light is a universal constant?

If light was found to be a universal constant in the way it functions as part of the universe, or for that matter, if iron, silver, or bromine are constant in the same manner of consistent property and character, does that imply that those elements as universal constants can then be declared axiomatically real? In that sense, are constant properties of the universe considered to be "true" if they are considered real? Would universal constants then contain within them "Truth"? Or, in some way do universal constants have knowledge of Truth or can something of universal Truth be learned from them

in short human existence? If, in their universal constancy those properties of the universe are as old as the universe itself, can universal constants then declaratively be considered as such to be axioms themselves? (On this point, perhaps it is more a case of semantic distinction).

If it is possible for people to have such deep and full knowledge of the physical universe, that would make the Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems resolved. Despite not being able to explain or understand the purpose or 'why' of its origin, in terms of the advantage of mindset and outlook, studies and research by rationalist philosophers and scientists demonstrate a quite distinct advantage and lead the way in their method of furthering human understanding in the realm of physical properties of the nature and reality of the universe. This is likely self-evident to most people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and it would be wise of course for religious zealots and even moderate theologians to concede on this point.

It would perhaps again be wise, as mentioned in the introduction of this book, for theologians to shift biblical research and understanding away from an approach of studying paradoxical problems as ones of unresolvable mystery. Also, for theologians to refrain from shrouding paradoxical problems as inexplicable and yet unrevealed or unrevealable phenomenon would be of tremendous benefit and appeal. This would be helpful to attract agnostics and skeptics to attend to better understanding of the Christian message and by extension to their own spiritual well-being.

If this is a receptive message to 21<sup>st</sup> century theologians, the proposal that theologians would benefit tremendously by embracing advancements in scientific

method and new discoveries in physics for example, will hopefully be heard because of the opportunity to include well-educated yet spiritually adrift people to understand the Christian message. Opening the discussion and study of biblical paradoxes and inconsistencies toward a mindset of incompleteness in understanding, citing minimal human capacity for understanding in proportional contrast to the infinite capabilities of an omniscient God is not a proposal to abandon or relax the idea of faith, but rather, it is to have faith that the Christian message holds its own.

These might be harsh words to hear perhaps for many with deeply held convictions of faith. Perhaps, these are not words even necessary as a message for those with deeply held convictions of faith. However, as will be seen in this section, formal logic has a parametric problem. This means that once a barrier or threshold of logical reasoning and ability is surpassed, or an unresolved theorem of some sort gets resolved, the parameter around the resolved logical problem has been surpassed, yet at the same time, it is simply the case that a new and expanded level of understanding reached is yet contained by more parameters. This phenomenon can be thought of as being very much analogous to dismantling and assembling a Matryoshka Doll.

Under the demonstrated success of Christian thought in the marketplace of spiritual ideas foremost, and additionally in the more general and perhaps then, even more competitive marketplace of ideas as a whole, why not subject the Christian message to such rigorous scrutiny in the same way? On the premise of Christian thought being freely offered by God and freely available for acceptance by humanity, there is not really any

existential threat to Christian thought by putting it under a broad range of intense scrutiny.

As much as humanity enthusiastically loves and benefits from a scientific understanding of the world, it is the case that in contrast to God's love, scientific understanding and logical reasoning cannot love humanity in return. Nor can rationalism really explain or describe the nature of experiencing God's love or human love for each other, other than by describing literal physiological reactions. At the same time science takes a double blow at human love, by tending to ignore the idea and study of the human spirit and the necessity of human spiritual nourishment and fulfillment. By way of citing God's offer of love, that it will always be freely available to all who seek to accept it, the theologian who feels some loss of Faith in the Christian message due to scientific advancement can rest assured that God's love holds its own in any age.

However, as a warning to those whether theologian, or otherwise, who may hold to such extreme and harmful concepts as 'faith healing' in the literal and physical sense, perhaps it is best for those who claim to be capable of such skills as well to put them to rest.

The false hope and potential for medical harm toward others due to an absence of intellectual understanding of the functions of the human body, and to insist upon adherence to such false-health schemes in order to become a member of an organization that practices such things, the organization offers a false doctrine containing biblical non-essentialism to their adherents and subscribers.

To put measured trust into a physician licensed to practice medicine who has a measured and deep intellectual understanding and experience with the

functions and qualities of the human body, in contrast to a charlatan who believes they have 'predetermined' power or claims to have been granted 'divine authority' to heal by trusting in them points out the absurdity of the latter.

To profess to have power to simply place a hand on someone who is ill or infirmed and to do so claiming capability to directly and literally cure illness, and then, to declaratively claim the illness has passed, citing higher powers at work through him, the faith 'healer' by freely chosen misuse of his hands and his words has professed to have willed an act of impossibility. Chapter 4 addressed the likelihood that a person can complete an act that is impossible with the understood physical laws of nature as are currently known. Additionally, Chapter 3 explored the harmful effects that dubious claims made by 'spiritual intermediaries' and those who offer 'special' divine insight offer to their clientele can inflict.

If the charismatic faith 'healer' lays claim to such power, under the reasons described above, the faith healer has broken the commandment of bearing false testimony (Exodus 20:16). Quite simply a faith 'healer' is lying about the claims he is making.

In returning to the discussion of certainty, and the pursuit of absolute universal understanding, asking questions about the physical properties of the universe, and if the elements contained in the universe are as old as the universe itself, could these elements therefore be universal constants themselves?

Assuming they are the same in property and character the universe over, this premise calls into question the properties and the nature of what human existence really means.

Why is the human body and physical life finite and fleeting, yet the human mind can contemplate and hypothesize about the nature of an unlimited universe? Whereas universal elements of constancy are considered to be as old as the universe, and will likely continue to exist long after human physical existence comes to its conclusion.

Yet, at the same time, universal physical elements such as rocks, metals, properties of light and sound for example additionally are not known to be consciously aware of themselves or each other. Nor are they thought to be able to contemplate or hypothesize about the unlimited nature of their existence and the universe. Pointing out this contrast highlights the difference from existing and being alive.

Animals, people, and plants are physically finite. Their physical lifespan therefore is measurable by time.

Perhaps universal constants cannot measure time because of their own infinite existence. With a therefore unlimited abundance of time, universal constants hold time itself inside of them, rather than it being an external point of reference.

‘Existence’ and ‘being’ then are two different things. This distinction draws out more nuanced meaning in phrases such as ‘human life’, ‘human being’, and ‘human existence’. Taking ‘being’ and ‘existence’ for a point further differentiation, ‘human being’ would pertain more to a *part* of existence. A rock could not really be called ‘rock being’ in the same way, yet it can be a rock in its existence. Even when examining states of matter, say in the sense of rock as lava, those are not really the same states of ‘being’, in the same quality as in ‘being human.’

In the absence of conscious awareness, infinite matter has no knowledge of the value of its properties. Perhaps universal constants function in the human mind as externally referential validation and substantiation of the human concept of the passage of life and time. Given that humans are capable of assessing and measuring the passage of time through comparison with universal 'constants' this way, the idea of universal constancy provides stability and order in the human mind.

The replication of logical proofs, through formal logical processes is especially helpful to verify certainty for the human mind, especially when completed by independent sources, and when repeatable as a method for testing degrees of certainty. Even in ability to test for constancy, the scientific method and formal methods of logical understanding help to substantiate and verify the idea that something is 'true' and perhaps even 'real' in the physics sense of the word.

Whether the universe is thought to be boundless, infinite, or even if it is thought to have boundaries or to be finite itself, grouping math, science, physics, chemistry, or any area of study that involves scientific method, or the process of formal logic into a single category for the purposes of experimentation will be deployed in this section.

It is hoped this will help demonstrate what is meant by the title of this chapter. That logic is 'parametric' and therefore limited, Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems will very much show their strength in the demonstration how difficult the task it would be to find completeness in the idea of something being axiomatically true. To find a non-self-referential concept containing no internal contradiction or

inconsistency, or to find a completely consistent set of truths or single truth that requires no external validation, or point of reference, is an extraordinary quest for meaning, and underlays the reason people seek fulfillment.

That a set of symbols might contain meaning is irrelevant for the experiment in logic at this time, rather, the use of ordered sets of symbols (symbols are being considered here to hold representational properties of axiom, given that symbols are thought of typically to hold meaning) are going to be deployed to demonstrate the difficulty of the search for such a degree of universal certainty as Gödel's Theorems call into question. In this case, numbers will be the kind of symbols used in the experimentation.

*Every Time a Logical Parameter is  
Successfully Breached through  
Scientific Discovery, New Parameters  
are Revealed*

In a class of twenty-five 2nd grade students hungry for understanding and wisdom, an open-ended question might be posed: Does  $4+5=9$ ? In a completely open-ended approach to resolving the quest for knowledge, perhaps some of the students might seek to form a team to collaborate and to tackle the problem head on with their combined brainpower.

Perhaps others will pair up to find a system or method that consistently and repeatedly works to find the 'answer'. Still, other enterprising students might search the classroom for physical objects and count them to find out if the statement  $4+5$  is the same as saying '9' is an accurate characterization of the properties of the object referred to as '9'. This group of students might find a package of crayons and count out 4, and then count out 5 more, and then line up crayon after crayon in the set of 4 crayons with the set of 5 crayons lined up alongside and agree that they have all witnessed (and thus agree they have had intersubjective experience) that a newly emerged set has come into existence.

The students in this group all testify to its extended length as a set of crayons when they recall and mentally compare the length of the set of 4 and the set of 5 independently drawn out from each of their minds. After having witnessed and testified to the emergence of such properties of the newly created set as described above, with all of the crayons in both ordered sets

combined together and ordered in a lengthened row, this group, as a final task, they count the crayons one by one in the sum total of the two sets of crayons combined and ordered to determine if '9' is 'true'. In the context of putting a set of 4 crayons together with a set 5 crayons, and declaring them bound into a new set with a new quality, they conclude that by way of their methodology, (intentional and unintentional processes of experiment, discovery, explaining, and verifying) that yes, they are reasonably confident that a set of 4 crayons and a set of 5 when combined together and when counted one after the other, has established a new and lengthier 'set' of crayons that can be thought to be called '9' (crayons).

Toward the end of the open-ended quest for truth, and more importantly for the students, toward the beginning of lunch, the ambitious class begins to self-organize to compare their results. If the conclusions are thought to be unconvincing, or as yet undetermined, perhaps the class might pepper each other with questions and clarification about their findings. Perhaps they will compare and contrast the methodology each group, pair, or individual student used to come to their conclusion about the nature of '9'; such that 7-year-olds might do in their 7-yearold way.

In the parameters of the 4 walls, the ceiling, and the floor of the classroom, an independent self-contained mathematical experimental laboratory emerged under which the discovery of something of the truth about '9' took place. Within the boundaries of their classroom space, like any other classroom with walls and a roof and a floor underneath, and under the parameters of the instructions of the given quest itself, did this class of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade scholars find out the truth about 9? Do 4

and 5 when somehow put together in a particular way organize to become '9'?

If the entire class of twenty-five students came to the same conclusion, that yes, 9 is the same as  $4+5$ , does that mean the mathematical '9' can be declaratively called a truth? If only twenty of the twenty-five students had the same outcome and concluded that yes,  $4+5$  is the same as '9', does their majority of twenty same answers, override the five students with a different outcome give weight to the claim that 'truth' has been established?

What if six of the twenty students who agreed with and supported the claim that '9' was as it was thought to be, had simply made random guesses, or went along with their friends' ideas to gain favor with them, without any effort or explanation put into their witness to and testimony of '9's claim of truth?

If the class was split more evenly split in their findings, or if twenty of the students found  $4+5$  to be 11, yet could reasonably explain their processes, used several uncoordinated processes, and only the remaining five students found  $4+5$  to result in '9', how would this confuse the situation?

If the 2nd grade classroom across the hall carried out the same quest to seek out the truth about 9 in their self-contained and independent experimental mathematics laboratory, what were their findings?

Would it matter if the 1st graders (or even the 4<sup>th</sup> graders) attained a consistent and agreed upon finding among themselves, but they found on the balance of results that  $4+5=7$ ?

Suppose that another 4th grade class conducted the quest as well and concluded that not only is  $4+5$  the same as 9, but at the same time  $2+7$  is the same as 9,

what would be the implications for certainty regarding the true nature of '9'? Are  $2+7$  and  $4+5$  consistent, or do they call into question the absolute terms of the constant properties of '9', and the composition of '9' as containing internal coherence and free from internal contradiction?

For the assurance of understood certainty for the originally mentioned 2<sup>nd</sup> grade class, what are the implications of these independent findings and differences in formal processes of study?

If  $2+7$  and  $4+5$  are somehow '9' by independent expression, in outcome, in properties of meaning, or even in physical properties, is that to say then that '9' differs contextually? '9' as an entity in the 5th grade room, found that  $3+6$  is the same as '9', and still, another student working on the question of 9 in the 3rd grade classroom noticed when looking across the front of the desk of another student that the image of '9' presenting from the opposite direction, shared similar visual properties as 6!

When or where then can '9' be declared a constant; if at all? If the classroom down the hall had no knowledge of the findings of the classroom at the other end of the hall, and accepted '9' for what they concluded it to be, and with differing results and experiences with '9' were treated as conclusive in the other classroom, in absolute terms then, is the understanding of '9' really complete in either room? or any room? Or in any classroom in another school, or in any part of the city, country, and in outwardly expanded parameters ad infinitum.

Are the theorems developed about '9' in each class incomplete in their absence of universal, or at least further experimenting with the properties of 9?

With the number '9' and its properties put to rest for the moment, what conclusions, if any, can be drawn from such a robust, engrossing, boring, lively, dulling, meaningless, thought-provoking, futile, meaningful, and perhaps at least at minimum healthy exploration and quest for truth?

Many things immediately become apparent in the use of the process of scientific inquiry of exploration and discovery, and formal procedures in understanding 9.

These include finding ways to explain, learn about, decide upon, describe, or understand something of the physical properties of 9, and to even devise abstract concepts about, and schema of those properties of the world that might apply to 9 or that 9 might be of benefit to in the world.

Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that logic as a scientific process of inquiry to examine the physical properties of the world, or even the universe is based upon defining parametrical boundaries by its very nature to make distinctions and create a sense of order.

The efforts to try to explain, to classify, or to organize the various properties and characteristics of things and by extension, even ideas, whether they are physical objects from the natural world like rocks, humanmade products and inventions like candy or cars, collections of symbols like numbers, color qualities, naming the planets and their attributes in a solar system, the measurement of the passing of time, portioning out quantities of liquids, the organization of sound into sets (like notes in a C major scale), or the development and ordering of the periodic table of elements; all of these systems of organization help humanity to create (or

identify) a sense of orderliness in what is seemingly a chaotic and unpredictable universe.

Logical systems are thus based upon greater and greater or smaller and smaller boundaries of distinction and difference (parameters). If this were not done, or, if humans were not capable of constructing (or identifying) such a way of understanding and relating the properties of like objects and dissimilar objects to each and from each other, human civilization could not be as it is today.

As an unlimited creative tool, parametric logic opens up many possibilities. While at the same time, as a tool of explanation and understanding, the tool of parametric logic draws up boundaries and closes off externalities and irrelevancies.

Parametric logic is strong as a tool to organize and to classify objects and ideas into collections and sets. When logic is used in this way, its parameters help to substantiate reality. By way of creating points of reference between 'this' and 'that', the toolkit of parametric logic helps to distinguish that 'this' cannot be 'that', and as such 'this' and 'that' can be seen as distinct entities from another (whatever 'this' or 'that' are determined to be).

With classification comes the opportunity for the application and use of sets or series of objects and ideas to perform functions (this would include static functions, such as simply grouping objects by comparable properties and leaving it at that).

In terms of active functions applied to sets, the scientific benefit to creating and binding sets by parameters (physically tangibly, abstractly, or both), means that variables can be inserted into the set or isolated from or drawn from the set, or sets can be

combined or extended to create new ones for the purpose or greater understanding.

The applications of formal logical procedures have been of immense benefit in science, medicine, physics, and engineering for the material improvement and physical health of humanity, even to the degree that like spiritual understanding, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the process of scientific process is beginning to be taken for granted similarly invoking the axiom of 'trust science' (whatever that means).

In conclusion, experimentation on the limitations of logic to understand the nature of the physical universe, is to say that under Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems, logic and systems of logical understanding are very much unstable. Therefore, they do not provide a guarantee of absolute certainty, or an absolute guarantee of universal constancy in mathematics, and then extended out to other areas of rational scientific understanding and philosophical and theological reasoning is quite a plausible conclusion.

The idea of absolute universal Truth is elusive in the immense proportion of the task of finding something of that quality rationally is very much a valid conclusion to be drawn. However, to infer from experimenting with Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems to abandon scientific inquiry or to abandon logical processes or logic itself would be sheer madness for any truly conscious and thinking person.

*Logic does not guarantee any sort of universal certainty. Instead, logic and systems of logic can offer and deliver reasonable assurance of certainty and reasonable assurance material improvement*

The improvement to human economic and material prosperity, and health and well-being, when parametric logic is inserted into, and used as a tool of ordering a seemingly chaotic and boundless universe, and the idea to create (or the discovery that) sets of objects and ideas containing certain properties or qualities that bind them together by parameters, has been of tremendous benefit and service to humanity.

By those who competently and capably make use of such tools of discovery and innovation, to express such sentiment is embarrassingly and underwhelmingly a tremendous understatement of the achievements of scientific advancement during the last several centuries, while gratefully typing on a web-enabled computer with access to the sum total of uploaded human knowledge a few clicks away.

Yet, as such, in the application of Godel's Theorems to the realm of mathematics and logic, as relatable to 'hard' science, the demonstration in it the limits of hard science in their characteristic and dispassionate 'make of it what you will' mindset cannot really explain or offer anything of a universal 'why' or provide anything more than 'meaning' in the parametrically bound way of discovering 'causal' or 'correlative' 'whys'.

As such, scientific logic cannot really be a source of philosophical assurances of universal constancy or certainty because the premise of logic formalism is one of objective understanding at its outset. Yet, at the

same time, logical formalism used in hard science pushes back with quite great resistance to Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems.

Please see: Plato *The Republic* Book VI, 'The Allegory of the Cave' ca. 380-350 BCE for further understanding Parametric Logic.

Please see: Aritotle *Physics* ca. 350 BCE for further understanding of the foundations of scientific logic.

For relevant New Testament scripture please see: Matthew 7:24 NLT, Romans 12:2, James 3: 13-18, Ephesians 5: 15-17.

The Old Testament Book of Proverbs additionally is the 'go-to' Biblical source for contemplating and understanding the properties of logical wisdom by way of axiomatic language.

## Experimentation with Limits of Moral Logic

The final experimentation with the limitations of logic in this volume will be centered on moral reasoning and its relationship to axiomatic logic and formal logical procedures in the Roman and Greek Classical Tradition.

Once again, Kurt Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems will be used as a tool of assessment and analysis to examine potential internal contradiction, breakdowns in logical coherence, and self-referential validation that might be contained within a sampling of the body of classical scholarship pertaining to intellectual understanding of morality and ethics.

Although, the tradition of classical scholarship as a body of work of such high quality that it is perhaps an insurmountable and formidable opponent to Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems and the minimal capacities of the author to engage with the classical scholarship this way. However, this experimentation will be carried anyway, out because, why not?

Jesus was able to overturn previously held conceptions about morality and God, against the backdrop of intellectual a high and rigorous standard of existing moral scholarship available in the Roman Empire at the turn of the last millennium. The deployment of the Incompleteness Theorems here will aid in the assessment of the benefits and drawbacks in developing moral character and personal standards of ethical living by way of various intellectual logical frameworks. For points of contrast, the benefits of developing moral character and ethical standards of living when led by the heart and the case for accepting

the message of Jesus by freedom of conscience has already been firmly established in Chapter 2.

While it will be a difficult undertaking, if likely not unavoidable, best efforts will be employed by the author in this section to not directly criticize or be perceived to be criticizing the moral frameworks of Faith and Spiritual traditions developed independently from Christianity, or to directly criticize the moral frameworks of Faith Traditions that share a common lineage with Christian thought.

The author will seek to acknowledge the strengths and commonalities that may be found among various approaches to moral and ethical standards of custom and belief and practice. This will include approaching moral and ethical standards in the intellectual tradition of the Greeks and Romans, and additionally the standards of the Abrahamic Faith Traditions, and as well, in addressing similar understandings of morality and ethics in various Eastern spiritual traditions as best as possible.

Because the Greek and Roman tradition of moral and ethical scholarship was highly focused on developing an understanding of the nature of morality and ethical life in an intellectual way, and because it would have thus been a predominant way of understanding morality during Jesus' life, the focus on the early Greek body of logic pertaining to morality and ethics, will largely be put under the scrutiny of Gödel's work here.

*The foundational figures of classical moral logic offer the 'how' of ethical living and reasons for the 'how', but leave undecidability in the 'why' and in assurance for life beyond death*

A brief but formidable undertaking will be attempted in this section. In a limited sampling of resources of the development of classical understanding of logic as it pertains to morality and ethical living, is not intended to minimize the impact of the foundational figures Western thought have had, nor is it to generalize to a complete understanding of the early tradition where in the lengthy span of time of the Greek and Roman civilizations many people wrote differing viewpoints and developed a range of theories on the subjects of morality, ethics, and the good life during that time.

By limiting this experiment to three of the early works from that time and seeing how they came to investigate and explain questions of universal morality, it is hoped that in microcosm, it will be shown even in the efforts of Plato and Aristotle, and in Plato's characterization of the beliefs Socrates would have likely held regarding questions of life, morality, death and God, that there is agreement in the finality of physical death, and if there is belief that there is life beyond death, that to earn a good eternal existence, it must be earned through deeds of ethical living. In *The Last Days of Socrates* (from *Phaedo*) ca. 360, Plato created a dialogue in which he has Socrates outline his beliefs on life, death, morality, ethics, and the God, and the afterlife upon physical death. The dialogue is in

Socratic format of questions and responses, and is set against the backdrop of Socrates being sentenced to death. During the course of the dialogue, Socrates discusses whether the human soul as the capacity for immortality, and when physical death occurs, the soul becomes separated from the human body, that in preparation of the soul for its departure to into the spiritual realm, the emphasis of the physical person must revolve around making good decisions and positive interactions and deeds with other people. To accomplish these, Plato has Socrates describes living a good life to be one of living by 'virtue' and a moral 'rightness' that is in keeping with the nature of divine order and the properties of goodness that are universal. Plato did not characterize Socrates as believing in a single God as a monotheistic entity. Socrates' in Plato's characterization of his beliefs suggested that he might have tilted toward the belief in something of a single source of supernatural 'Good'. In his sentence to death, Socrates was charged with questioning beliefs around the existence of a multitude of deities, although, he was not in disagreement that such things might exists. That Plato characterized Socrates as believing in living a life of virtue would more greatly align one's soul with divine supernatural order, Plato in his own work took Socrates reasoning on this and matters of good deed further.

In Plato's writing *The Republic*, Plato firms up the idea of universal order and supernatural good into an idea of a single supernatural entity of good form that is perfect and contains the properties of all morality. A person must strive to live a life of absolute goodness as best as possible, in order for their soul to become in-line

and itself ordered with this singular and perfect form of the supernatural.

Thus, Plato's line of reasoning, that there is something beyond physical death, and that the human soul would experience it upon its separation, and its departure and travel into the afterlife, shaped his belief on a system of morality. For Plato, acts of good deed while in physical life, would be helpful for the soul to experience something of eternal goodness in its time after separation from its physical body.

In Aristotle's philosophy of morality and ethical living, as characterized in Nichomachean Ethics, Aristotle reasoned that the highest standard of human morality is intellectually premised on virtue, and the character trait of virtue as it pertains to the interactions among people.

Aristotle divides the concept of virtue into various sub-attributes. However, in Aristotle's viewpoint, life does not continue in any way beyond physical death. As such, a person can make the most of this life by being of good character and being known to be remembered as virtuous for fulfillment.

The Incompleteness Theorems can be seen as being pushed back against strongly in the search for absolute universal truth when testing the limits of logic in classical Greek foundational thought. Yet, in a more broadly defined way, Godel has already demonstrated the limitations of their work. Not in the sense of axioms as a form of absolute truth, and not so in the methods of logical procedure themselves through which the Greek philosophers came to their conclusions. However, more so in the absence of prior precedents for comparative points of reference.

In the development and expression of skillful, yet still, closed loop logical argumentation, the early philosophers achieved a high standard of intellectual rigor, with much logical consistency, as was their craft. In Plato's Allegory of the Cave, he might have achieved something of the understanding of the limits of logic as being parametric in the absence of external reference, yet in the three works of the philosophers a described above, their premises are perhaps even internally self-referential in the absence of any prior work of comparative attainment of understanding. What is unknown of course is the discourse and informal conversations they would have engaged in at the time that would have influenced their thinking and writing.

For further exploration the topic of Morality and Ethics in Classical Times, please see:

*Phaedo (The Last Days of Socrates)* by Plato

*The Republic* by Plato

*Nichomachean Ethics* by Aristotle

## Chapter 6

### Potential Criticisms Arising and Defense of the Ideas Presented

*“Who is the great dragon whom the spirit will no longer call lord and god? “Thou shalt” is the name of the great dragon. But the spirit of the lion says, “I will.” “Thou shalt” lies in his way, sparkling like gold, an animal covered with scales; and on every scale shines a golden “thou shalt.” Values, thousands of years old, shine on these scales; and thus speaks the mightiest of all the dragons: “All value of all things shines on me. All value has long been created, and I am all created value. Verily, there shall be no more ‘I will.’” Thus speaks the dragon.”*

(Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Frederick Nietzsche)  
(1885)

## Defense from External Philosophical and Scientific Criticism

*The Quest for Meaning is Universal  
Across All Fields of Study*

Despite the title of this book, it has hopefully been demonstrated that it is not one of existential absurdism, nor existential nihilism, nor any philosophical or political 'ism' at all. However, during writing, the identification of similarities to the nature of such philosophies have surfaced over the course of undertaking this project. The idea that logic, while a useful tool, is not necessarily a source of spiritual fulfillment, is not to imply that even with humanity's overestimation of logical capabilities, is the same as saying that life is in any way meaningless or absurd. Logical formalism, rational philosophy, the scientific method, the study of historical precedents, the social scientists' study methods of human nature and affairs, are all important ways to learn from and to improve the human condition. They are of course drawn from human cognitive capacities and through building meaning from the information and observations that the cognitive mind draws in from the external world. That humanity overestimates collective understanding of the nature of the cosmos, or understanding of what awaits upon physical death, that people do not fully understand the nature of God, is not to say that the uses of formal logic should be excluded as a tool of free inquiry to at least continue to try. To give up and declare or admit defeat in the pursuit of such understanding, would be to give up on part of innate

human nature to seek higher purpose. It has hopefully been recognized through this writing that faith in God helps to steady the course of intellectual uncertainty and doubt. This, while not discrediting spiritual pursuit toward the same understanding, by not immediately dismissing it as an invalid way of making sense of the universe.

Additionally, without drawing intentionally from Eastern spiritual philosophy, in undertaking paradoxical problems as a source of Christian spiritual knowledge, the author acknowledges that some parallels might be pointed out between the ways proposed to approaching contradictions contained in Christian scripture and the way Buddhist philosophy is undertaken.

The compossible/impossible construct was deployed as a tool of examining contradictions including examination of those within oneself, within matters of worldly concern, and within spiritual thought. In applying logical processes to examine biblical paradoxes, and through applying the paradox of undecidability in mathematical law and formal logic to make an improved case toward spiritual understanding, what these approaches have in common with Buddhist practice of contemplating contradiction became apparent.

To explore Christianity in this way has parallels with the students of Buddhism who are given Koans by their teacher upon which to meditate. Koans are a riddle or paradox upon which the Buddhist student will meditate. However, not to find the answer to the riddle or paradox, but upon which to open channels of greater consciousness. (Reese, 1999, p. 382)

Typically, in the Western philosophical tradition of reason and formal logic, the identification of paradox may discredit an internally contradictory statement as fallacy and therefore consider such a statement to be deemed 'invalid'. Yet, there may be benefit to the Christian philosophical tradition to draw from the Buddhist approach to understanding theological confounds in the Bible this way. Of course, as seen, the Christian Bible is not without seeming contradiction.

Established contradictions in Christian Theology for example include: 1. The concept of the unlimited goodness of God versus the problem of evil and suffering. 2. The paradox of free will versus determinism. 3. God as the Holy Trinity versus Christianity as a monotheistic tradition. Indeed, these are broader and well-known criticisms of the Christian tradition, and similar examples of contradiction in scripture can be found and teased apart as well. The point however is to show that like the Buddhist meditative reflection on Koans, the Christian would benefit from the meditative practice of prayer as a channel to finding peace in these limitations of logical understanding of God.

While the benefits of prayer as a Church community is an established practice, as well as individual prayer, Christians often and for valid reason do so, to pray 'for' things. This could include for example, the well-being of others who are perhaps ill, for one's own well-being, for peace in a particular situation of personal, or societal strife.

Again, these are significant for individual Christians and as a Christian community. Overemphasis on praying 'for' may result in neglecting the practice as

described above in praying to reflect 'upon' questions of an existential nature. Christians tend to pray 'for' the welfare of humanity directly. Yet, perhaps in praying more broadly 'upon' the deeper questions of the Christian faith tradition and its seeming problems of contradiction, can be helpful in fulfilling the improvement of humanity by seeking greater scriptural clarity this way as well.

All of this, in addition to carrying out the work of improvement to the human condition through growth in areas of philosophical and scientific areas of understanding. In acknowledging the benefits of a broad range of approaches to human understanding is to say that rationalism and spirituality are not incompatible, nor are they at all impossible as an inherent contradiction. Christian theology would benefit from adopting the move in rationalist philosophy away from regarding 'paradox' as a mystical concept, to instead viewing paradoxes theorems yet proven or unproven. Alternatively, the study of scriptural paradox as a form of mysticism, or, under the framework of free inquiry, why not pursue both ways of understanding, and seek common ground between them?

## Defense from External Religious Criticism

### *Ritualism is not Analogous to Expressive and Meaningful Worship*

Like carrying out a formal logic process, ritualism contains many similarities. Like religious ritualism, the formal logic process can be easily replicated and is rightfully applied to the work of history, philosophy, scientific research or study and even spiritual studies.

No doubt, the idea that a procedure can be independently replicated and verified helps to create certainty and implies that something in the physical world is 'valid'. The benefits being seen in the material abundance of the West such as scientific advancements, improvements in medicine, new inventions, and any number of feats of improvement and understanding where people have succeeded greatly.

Both the strength and limitation of such ways of understanding is in the parametric nature of isolating variability under certain conditions. For example, a self-contained logical statement can be valid despite its initial premise being false. A self-contained logical statement can be true in itself despite being in error externally. To create a parameter, and then to insert and experiment with variability within the parameter, means that the variables can be manipulated within the set to create a sense of order.

Yet, despite doing so, if the premise at the start is false, the procedures performed inside the parameter may seem valid in themselves, with no inherent contradiction, yet may be lacking in external validity, even if it can be replicated independently. Applied to

religious behavior, the shortcomings in formal ritualism can be seen. This is where the premise of such behavior requires scrutiny. Does repetition will truth into existence? Does tradition mean certainty? If things are done simply because 'that's the way they have always been done', does that imply validity?

Of course, tradition has symbolism built into it. Tradition creates meaning in the sense of identifiable origins of the tradition and to ancestral and cultural heritage for example. Yet, if the premise of the ritual is faulty, if the individual surrenders to the collective (or is forced to), if the premise is to exclude others, or to grant favor to those who are amenable to compliance in the ritual for its own sake, then there lies the problem with the focus on ritualism in religion.

Who benefits? Is there fear of reprisal induced into, or othering of the non-compliant? In the absence of no external and independent reference or point of contrast, those living in such a limited way have become part of the 'set' in the parameters of a self-contained logic system. If the operations performed and contained within the ritualistic parameter have applications elsewhere, would it not be best to put them to the marketplace of spiritual ideas?

The idea of sameness is not synonymous with truth. To create truth from a faulty premise and to replicate the process to not will truth into existence by simply through brute repetition. How often in church is the refrain heard: 'but that's the way we've always done it!' The times in which one lives may call for a fresh approach to the 'old story'. However, if the 'old story' is of a solid premise and foundation, it will support and be able to withstand a shift in its parametric logic.

The purpose of a church service ought not to be for its own sake. A church service might contain formal order and tradition. It might contain particular meaningful practices and customs such as communion, song, testimony, scripture lessons, and prayer for example. However, these things are not for their own sake, but to move or inspire the attendee to act. Sunday is seen as the beginning of the week for this reason. In spiritually preparing for what difficulties and challenges the week ahead might contain, the Christian will begin on a solid footing.

If the premise of Christianity is built on the greatest of the commandments as Jesus taught, that kind of a foundation justifies the expression of worship irrespective of the parameters of the church building and the format of worship. The invitation of free participation to one's personal comfort rather than a focus on rigid adherence for its own sake, means that the individual does not lose themselves in a collective mindset.

While rigid ritualism creates order, if it requires enforcement to be upheld, or requires protection from external influence to retain its 'validity', perhaps it needs to be asked why? A closed set is confined by its own parameters, yet inevitably an undecidable influence will become infused into the self-affirming closed loop parameters.

The benefits of doctrine surface here, despite the previous criticism in this book. The optimal use of doctrine or the codification of religious or spiritual principles for a religious organization ought to be stripped down and limited only to what is really essential to fulfill scripture.

Anything beyond that essential purpose can be seen as frivolous, even harmful. If a spiritual organization's doctrine is excessive or overemphasized, then customary habit, cultural practice for its own sake, tribalism and politicization risk becoming infused into the articles of spiritual faith, and the codification of doctrine enters into the realm of dogma and all of its problems.

## Defense from Internal Christian Criticism

*“Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!”*  
(Matthew 4:19, NLT)

What does it mean when someone says they are ‘God fearing’ or if someone makes such a statement as ‘he put the fear of God into him’ for example? Is that really in the spirit of the Gospel message?

Certainly, there are many Christian traditions that claim, and perhaps with a degree of merit that being ‘God fearing’ is something of a virtue, or to ‘have the fear of God’ put into someone, might be viewed as a way of helping to ensure that poor conduct is not repeated. Indeed, there is some value in having a sense of fear of consequence for behavior when behavior leans toward being harmful for oneself or others.

Yet is that the message of Jesus? Is ‘fear God or else’ a sustainable spiritual mindset? Does fear lead to deepening understanding of faith or a growth in spiritual maturity? If a person is conditioned to act

according to external approval or disapproval, will they be capable of understanding the why?

Certainly, to have the love of God *'inscribed on one's heart'* as Paul describes might need to be backstopped when a person's actions maintain a pattern contrary to the good. However, the New Testament might suggest that it is not the fear of God where one should direct their spiritual mindset, but rather toward fear of one's own individual capacity toward wrongdoing.

That Christianity itself has been criticized for having a negative impact throughout history is of concern in this way. Were the 'in the name of' Crusades during the Middle Ages acts of aggressive Christian tribalism? Were cults of Waco or Jonestown built on a solid foundation of the love of Christ? What about the charismatic leadership of various megachurch organizations, or organizations that offer the snake-oil of false hope that literal and direct hands-on faith-healing is a credible substitute for modern scientific medicine?

Some of these message distortions involve a closed set of parameters and may offer the adherent a limited and internalized set of beliefs in the absence of external validation. Again, the marketplace of spiritual ideas provides a check and balance against a closed set of beliefs. If an adherent to such a system of belief is discouraged from seeking meaningful spiritual fulfillment elsewhere, one needs to ask: why?

For example, the approving religious authorities once required that a new work of Catholic writing would have to have been stamped 'Nihil Obstat'. Nihil Obstat translates roughly to 'without objection' as a requirement for a work to be printed and to be declared

in-line with Roman Catholic teachings. Similarly, until 1966 the 'Index Librorum Prohibitorum' was a publicized list of books and literature that were considered banned from reading by the Roman Catholic Church and denounced as heresy.

If the Christian message is thought to be so very easily threatened from external literature and influence this way, what does that say about the confidence the leadership of such religious organizations have in their belief about their message? What does that say about how much confidence the leadership has in their adherents' spiritual wherewithal and maturity if they are 'forbidden' from engaging with 'threatening' ideas? The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15: 11-32 NLT) is worth examining in this context.

Questioning this type of organizational practice can be applicable to other Christian faith groups, and as well to faith groups outside of Christianity whose messaging is thought by its leadership and adherents to be under threat from external influence.

It will be pointed out similarly, that those who 'trust the science' are restricting themselves to a limited range of ideas and scholarship when feeling somehow 'threatened' by what religious and spiritual literature might contain within it. The threat to those practicing a closed system of belief is the ever-present fear of external 'harmful' influence, and the possibility of internal 'mutiny' emerging from within the closed system of belief.

This of course calls into question the genuine trust or even faith held in such a faith-based belief system! The tendency among the most zealous of believers in such a system will be to become more deeply and firmly

restrictive in such circumstances. Yet, if the belief system is premised well, perhaps offering and advocating for a genuine and free investigation into a perceived ideological threat would strengthen the case for the belief system itself.

External checks of validation as a tool of logical discernment between systems of belief as a foundational tool of belief premised on the love of God and humanity offers defense against ideology that seeks to influence someone who might be swayed from their own individual agency.

## Chapter 7

# Break Free from Religious Axiom and Ritualism to Experience Spiritual Fulfillment

The Apostle Paul on Spiritual Growth

*“When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things. Now we see things imperfectly as in a clouded mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely. Three things will last forever -faith, hope, and love -and the greatest of these is love.”*

(Romans 13: 11-13 NLT)

The message of this volume is not to say that to live by God’s law and not the spirit of God’s law is necessarily a problem. Nor is it to say that even to coexist on this earth that people are not in need of law, spiritual or manmade, to govern human affairs and interaction.

One of the conclusions drawn in the undertaking of this book is to say however that it is more important what happens between law to law of God, under the

Law of God, and how the Law of God is upheld is truly what is important during every person's time on earth, and in our interactions with each other. The two most important commandments as taught by Jesus then, provide the overarching framework for moral living. Loving God and then loving your neighbor simply put would go a long way to ease much of humanity's quarrelling ways.

To take it a step further, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1-48, NLT) teaches humanity to keep the Commandments as revealed to Moses in the Old Testament (Exodus 20:2-48 NASB) and it can be seen, Jesus goes into great depth in this message to share the ethical standard by which to do so. Imagine if people simply followed such rules for life how few problems there would be in this world! (Meredith, 1997, pp. 6-7)

If humanity, at minimum, were to simply obey such laws it may very well result in a positive outcome. However, people have the latitude of free will, accompanied of course by temptations and ill intentions tilted toward using free will irresponsibly.

To compound the problems of humanity's free will and spiritual immaturity, according to the Old Testament, people have been granted the responsibility to govern over the things of earth, as being a function of being created in God's image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-31 NASB), although in what proportion and rendering the image and likeness might be, has likely been drastically overestimated.

Since we are created in God's image, then it can be inferred that we have a degree of cognitive capacity and a degree of free will under God's Law stated above,

exceeding that of the creatures we are entrusted to govern.

However, if the Law of God were to be simply obeyed, but not contemplated, not discussed, not debated, nor even tested, how would people possibly be able to responsibly manage the affairs of human interaction, and of the earth? That is, to provide for the well-being of humanity, and to maintain the well-being of the natural world in using the earth's resources.

Additionally, in relation to all things pertaining to spirituality and human-divine relations, a degree of responsible testing of limits is necessary. In human-divine relations, this would include relations as a function of personal and collective will. People have demonstrated that, like Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:1-24, that people seek understanding greater than obedience and submission can simply provide. Under human capacity for free will, people are rebellious toward obedience and submission to God in such a sense.

In the Book of Genesis, as the story goes, humanity chose to use its free will to indeed seek wisdom and understanding beyond its own capacity to handle. The Old Testament describes the result of seeking divine wisdom is to have been left and forsaken to manage earthly and material affairs, for better or for worse. (Genesis 3: 22-24 NASB)

The Old Testament tells the story of how God made the road to the likeness of his understanding and wisdom immensely challenging for humanity. After breaching the self-contained and 'parametric' logic of the Garden of Eden so to speak, humanity, in predisposition toward antinomianism and disdain for

the taming of curiosity and agency, would have to know that the knowledge and wisdom being sought, would not come easily, but rather through hardship and strife.

This brings to the forefront humanity's 'divorce' from God and the innate human desire to seek Him for a close relationship once again. Through the course of being cast out into the hostile world, humanity has had to experiment with inhospitable nature to seek the wisdom and understanding required to manage the affairs of earth, and then regain knowledge and understanding of God.

In superstitious acts of sacrificial appeasement, ordering of affairs a certain way, in repeated ritualized behavior, even after Moses received and delivered the Ten Commandments to the Israelites, seeking a relationship with God has been the ultimate intent and purpose for being, and not just to live by divine law for its own sake, not simply to attain a certain degree of Godlike wisdom, but foremost, to regain felt spiritual nourishment and fulfillment.

Yet, it seems despite even best efforts, humanity could not, and still, largely cannot get things right! This, despite even best efforts and intent. When Jesus came, he offered clarity. Although he himself said that his message would be misused and distorted going forward. (Matthew 7:15 NLT)

Nonetheless, it has hopefully been demonstrated through the course of this book that humanity very much has Free Will and ought to very much embrace it enthusiastically yet responsibly.

As well, it has hopefully been shown that the intent of the Law of God is to be 'inscribed on our hearts' and

thus that one does not need to live out of fear of the law of God but rather to live it out by and through the love of God as taught in the New Testament.

As it has been stated in these pages many times, that religious doctrine is but the interpreted human codification of spiritual rules and is indeed something quite different from the Law of God. One must take care to be mindful, and consciously aware of the benefits and drawbacks of such systems of religious operation and doctrine, lest they become religiosity and misused for material or political gain, or to become a form of gatekeeping.

It must be asked of adherents to such systems of practice: if people behold themselves to, or become beholden to such states of religious fanaticism through ritualized expression of religious dogma, has that assisted in their spiritual development, or obstructed it?

These practices have been the topics of many books. It is hoped that in drawing a comparison between repetitive ritualized behavior and mathematical functions of ordered sets that superstitious ritualized behavior is perhaps not really of much benefit to the spiritually seeking, particularly when compelled under the mechanism of fear.

As well, the comparison drawn between closed loop parametric logic, functions of sets within parameters, and religious ritualism in the absence as function any external point of reference, results in a lack of conscious awareness in the absence of external reference or ability to question articles of doctrine. The obstruction of spiritual free will, as a function of the

adherent being bound by the parameters of the closed system of self-contained 'logic' will show its effects.

Additionally, in testing the limits of logic, or in at least in showing there are limitations in viewing scientific or mathematical laws of the universe as they are not absolutely and fully understood, it can hopefully be seen that humanity is much farther away proportionally in understanding the nature of God and reality.

While scientific observation and research, through formal processes of rational logic do meet humanity's need to describe, design, and create things for material well-being, and while these functions can of course even satisfy human intellectual curiosity, at this point, such methods of human understanding are limited by not being able to explain the higher purpose of 'Why'.

As a simple example of the problem with belief that people fully and objectively understand universal 'truth' or 'law': The law of cause and effect proposed by Sir Isaac Newton can be used or adapted to understand and explain many scientific principles of physics, chemistry, biology, geology, and social studies, for a small example. Yet, when applied to the basic question of what caused the universe, the question is simply unanswerable.

The idea that the 'Big Bang' was the beginning of the universe might be perhaps as far away as human telescopes can view space, yet, sighting parametric logic, surely, the discovery of the cause of the 'Big Bang' in breaching parametric logic, would open up more parameters of logic to be learned about and to discover. By inserting Gödel's paradox of undecidability into this remarkably simple example demonstrates the problem

of closed loop systems of scientific proofs and the inherent problem of believing that finite people using finite methods of understanding, could use such tools of knowing alone to find principles of fixed universal truth or law.

This being in the event that the tool of logic is from time to time succeeds in breaching its own parameters, yet, upon having surpassed its own limitations, or at least the human expectation success, results in the discovery of more parameters of non-understanding; despite even in the instance of having achieved an unprecedented expansion of human knowledge?

How often, does 'trusting science' border on a system of faith in itself? Is that not counter to the spirit of inquiry and scientific method? How often in the media or in casual chatter is the axiom of 'trust science' thoughtlessly tossed around as a point of discussion, or lend the speaker an air of authority in what they are saying to their uncritical audience?

As a thinking Christian, to acknowledge the benefit of scientific and objective study, and yet, at the same time to embrace the very paradox of existence, in our seemingly nonsensical world, through reflection, contemplation, meditation, prayer, and spiritual freedom is to perhaps attain something of both material and spiritual improvement in the well-being of humankind.

That the unthinking, uncritical, acts of blind acceptance to the '-isms' of this world, or to simply 'trust science' as the final and complete end of all understanding and wisdom has hopefully been demonstrated to be an unfulfilling pursuit to both the

human spiritual conscience and the conscious awareness of the thinking human mind.

Thus, surely there is more than what seems possible to be understood and experienced tangibly. From the very minute vantage point of humanity as to the nature of the universe, reality, and God, in recognizing and acknowledging shortcomings, and with some humility before God, an unburdening of the weary load of life's problems that each person carries, or will inevitably carry at some point, will be relieved.

The human sense of proportion of everything is miniscule and minimal to the incomprehensibly vast and unlimited abilities of God. We have not yet found a calculator, science, computer, or mathematical method that can accurately tabulate and account for the sum total of goodness in God's universe and why and how it was created.

That is not to say not to keep trying, but at least people will benefit from having faith in God that pursuing understanding of nature of the universe, reality, and God is inherently good, and is indeed compossible with the human reason for being.

# Appendix I

## A Practical Proposal for the Ideologically Adrift

Toward Spiritual Fulfillment by Acting Consciously  
in the Best Interest of Humanity (Whether the  
Christian Message is Accepted or Not)

While the Bible offers any number of stories and lessons from days gone by that remain very much relevant to the present time, the context under which the stories of old take place and have been documented are due their consideration.

While it can be seen that human nature does not really change very much, it can also be seen that the times do. To discredit the stories of history in terms of religious, political, intellectual, or personal life is of course folly. As is to 'reinvent the wheel' in perpetuity, as though every 'new' idea or 'advancement' is somehow 'progress' or 'progressive' simply by virtue of it seemingly being new.

History, when forgotten, ends up manifesting itself by retelling its tragic story in real-time, where ideology is put over human interest and well-being. In recent living memory, material and technological advancements in human understanding have been dramatic and compounding at an extraordinary pace.

Such that, the need for a degree of predictability and a sense of order is as necessary now as much as it ever was. Indeed, in current times, finding a moment for

quiet spiritual reflection may require downloading an app to schedule it in would not seem out of the ordinary!

Asking those who are skeptical or perhaps in disagreement of the benefits to seeking a spiritual inner life, the question in practical terms, in the age of competing ‘-isms’, ideologies, political movements substituting for higher purpose, is how does the practice of Christianity as a tradition, or as even a ‘reimagined’ experience for the current age, make itself known and still relevant? This, while staying true to its message.

How can it be made understood that Christianity offers spiritual nourishment and fulfillment to those who seek it? Perhaps, at least, if people know that spiritual fulfillment is something desirable, and is something missing, would the Christian message be a good place to start? Many are largely devoid of spiritual reflection in the West. In the media, in society, in schools of both higher learning, and in trickling down to the younger ages.

For the ideologically adrift, Christianity is largely being dismissed, ignored, or at worst denigrated. Of the Christian message itself? It is often generally made light of despite the advancements made in human well-being in modern nations whose origins can be traced to the Christian tradition.

Perhaps, if much of humanity has an inflated sense being made ‘in God’s image’, do many among us then see that the very idea of God is unnecessary or inconvenient under the conditions of material advancement?

Worse maybe, perhaps there are some among us who believe that we will usurp the idea of God somehow with our own abilities? Again, what folly, as humanity's sense of proportion and pride is vastly distorted.

Limitless in Wisdom? Limitless in Power? Limitless in Love? To those who simply cannot find it within themselves to seek spiritual nourishment of any sort, through the Christian experience or otherwise, to those who believe they can find the 'why' of existence through the scientific method, to those who believe they can construct any sort of computer that will be able to add up the total of the infinite, the author's proposal is this: Please go ahead and try! There is nothing to lose in doing so. It will likely push the boundaries of human understanding of the infinite further! I sincerely hope it does.

However, in doing so, please remember your own 'why'. That is, doing so in the spirit of the first two and most important of the commandments. Or, if one remains unpersuaded by the idea of God, at least please remember to at least act in the spirit of the second commandment in all your endeavors.



## Appendix II

# Practical Suggestions for Church Communities

## Christian Spiritual Fulfillment as a Function of Conscious Practice of Free Will

None of the following suggestions are meant to be proposed as new or original in any way, nor are they to be thought to be experimental along the theme of the book series, or are they even meant necessarily to point to a new direction for the life of local congregations.

Many congregations already do such things presented below quite successfully or have other superior ways that aid in ministering the Christian message to their members and the public quite well. However, as they relate to the premise of this book, in that the suggestions below are meant to convey the idea that practicing Christianity is done well by being conscious and thoughtful about it.

To congregations, by offering from observation that much of what happens in churches often happens out of habit under the guise of 'tradition' is meant to be a gentle point of well-intentioned critique.

This, while keeping in mind a degree of sensitivity toward the sea of greying heads visible from many pulpits and choir lofts in order not to disenfranchise the already faithful.

With respect to tradition, it indeed provides a sense of stability, predictability, and order. As a concept, the assurances provided by tradition are of merit in a fast-

paced and ever-changing era. However, despite having referred to the problems with media previously in this book, to look favorably on popular media for a moment, as a point of contrast, in the 1997 film *Deconstructing Harry*, Woody Allen is credited with both writing the script and delivering the following line: “Tradition is the illusion of permanence.”

While I have not seen the movie, nor fully know the context, the line resonated with me in terms of what goes on behind Church doors on any given Sunday! As such, here are some suggestions to be made consciously aware of, humbly offered to small and mid-sized congregations and leadership in the context of this book.

## For Congregations

### *From a Church Musician’s Perspective*

Depending on Church governance structure and in an era of declining membership and Church involvement, best efforts should be in place to have a committee of members with fiduciary experience handle and report the financial health of the Church to the congregation. This should be at arm’s length from the Church Leadership.

The purpose of Worship and the reason various people and regular members come to Church or don’t come varies. Try to assist the leadership team in meeting the needs of as many people as best as possible. However, understand that there comes a point

at which it is each person's own responsibility to endeavor to meet their own practical needs as best they can. Encourage openness and free and rich dialogue regarding Church matters.

Embrace differences of opinion, accept respectful criticism and reflect on it, offer latitude, grace, and forgiveness in misunderstandings, and encourage other members and visitors to do so as well. Remember that while people may wish to have your ear, and may present a take on some point of scripture or spiritual practice that they may insist is wholly accurate, not all opinions are of similar merit or value. However, the person expressing them may simply wish to be acknowledged by at least being heard.

## For Church Leadership (Including Musicians)

*Awareness of Personal Leadership  
Styles vs. Congregational Needs*

*A Quick Self-Reflection for  
Leadership*

Are you a 'top down' leader and directing traffic too much or listening to and trying to meet the needs of the congregation where they are? This might include fulfilling the members' needs to find some kind of leadership themselves, informally or otherwise.

Do you facilitate connection between members? As in perhaps discreetly acting behind the scenes in such a way that folks will find a meaningful connection with someone else in the congregation with whom they might not have normally engaged?

Do you encourage (intentionally), or perhaps discourage (unintentionally) others' spiritual growth? Or, do you actively help them to meet own their needs in a way that is meaningful to them?

*What are the strengths of your church members and how can they be of service to the community?*

Who are the teachers?

Who are the mentors?

Who are the evangelists?

Who knows the congregation's story and history?

Who is musically or dramatically inclined, yet perhaps does not feel included to share their abilities?

Who are the helpers that make things run behind the scenes?

Who are the innovators that can propel the church forward?

Who are the 'schmoozers', inside and outside of church that will help to invite and to retain new members?

*The Distinction Between Praying  
'for' vs. Praying 'upon'*

While praying for the ill, the shut-ins, the concerns of the community, or for ongoing conflict in the world is of great benefit to bring the church together toward a common focus, the idea of taking time to pray 'upon' matters of concern is quite different altogether. Yet it is

often overlooked as a method of prayer in its importance.

While both ways may not offer any tangible solution to the ills of the world necessarily, in noting the distinction in these approaches to prayer, consciously practicing one way or the other may enable greater clarity to the spiritual mindset of those who may take on the world's ills in active ways.

### *The Spiritual Matters and The Sacraments*

Gently and offer support for those who are visitors and those new to the Christian church. Have a system in place or volunteers at the ready who can warmly and discreetly help meet the needs of newcomers.

On occasion, gently remind the congregation of the significance of elements of sacrament such communion. This would be helpful if done in an informal rather than scripted way from time to time.

The shift in many denominations toward communion offered to all and away from it being administered subject to certain conditions such as baptism or denominational membership is a good one: it is God's table, not that of the Church.

Gently remind the congregation that the administration and receipt of sacraments is a serious undertaking and not merely a habit of performative ritual.

When possible, tell of the significance of communion ahead of time and informally for inexperienced visitors, in addition to the prepared script for the service.

## *On Trying New Ways of Doing Things*

When implementing a shift in congregational practice, respect individual autonomy and the comfort level people may have with new experiences.

Make best efforts to consider individual people whose life history might result in their need for, and their benefit from the comfort of predictability and order of previously established worship practices that have already been established.

An impossible suggestion, but at the same time, make your best efforts to meet the needs of more forward-looking congregation members.

Offer transparency and accountability to members with respect to the intent of the spiritual direction of the church and provide as much advance notification as would be of benefit.

### *Best Intentional Practices for Preparing for Worship*

Strive for worship that is meaningful and affirming.

Prepare for worship conscientiously.

Do not compel participation.

Think long term and think thematically as it relates to scripture.

Consult with people who might offer insight into a special service or event.

Predictability creates comfort and assurance through orderliness, yet also employing spontaneity when the moment calls for it can add an element of renewal.

*FOR ALL CHURCH-GOERS*  
FULFILL THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE BY  
OFFERING POSITIVITY, HOPE, ASSURANCE, AND  
AFFIRMATION.  
MAKE IT KNOWN WHAT A JOY IT IS TO BE PART  
OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY!



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# Glossary

## Historical/Political/Economic/Social Terminology

- **Absolutism:** In 16th and 17th century Europe the authority over the state by claimed divine monarchical rule. Involved military, political, and religious powers being beholden to the supreme authority of the ruler to uphold the existing hierarchy of the state.
- **Constitution of the United States of America:**
- **The foundational document of American law.** Includes the Bill of Rights. The first amendment outlines the limitations of government in matters of freedom of conscience and freedom of expression.
- **Enlightenment:** In 17th and 18th century Europe a shift in mindset toward philosophical rationalism and scientific inquiry as guiding principles of human activity.
- **Laissez-Faire:** The relaxation of government interest in the affairs of citizens.

- Marketplace of (Spiritual) Ideas: The concept that in the absence of state-backed religion, spiritual belief systems must compete on their merits to gain influence and to prove their benefits for those who may be interested in subscribing to them.
- Mercantilism: State-directed commerce. During the 15th ~ 18th centuries, early-modern European mercantilism emphasized colonial expansion and accumulation of state wealth under the premise that the world contains finite riches.
- Merit System: The idea that through free exchange of goods, services, ideas, and open discussion about such things leads to optimal benefit for a society.
- Monarchism: A governmental structure formed by hereditary claim to authority. The ruler in a monarchy typically directs the affairs of the state as has the final say in matters pertaining to state interest. While the shift in Europe has been away from rule by monarchical principles toward governance premised on democratic principles, many European countries to this day retain 'Kingdom' in their official name.

Also, varying degrees of sentimentalism and civic pride regarding national monarchical heritage remains in many European countries.

- Protestant Ethic: A term used to describe the character of the late 19th and early 20th century American citizen. Coined by German Sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) based on his observations upon visiting the United States in 1904 to conduct research on the development of American society.
- Protestant Reformation: A religious movement that took hold in 16th century Europe that destabilized the Catholic Church. It Emphasized the development of a personal relationship with God, individual engagement with the bible and scripture, which sought to bypass priestly interpretation of the bible on behalf of the individual.

## Philosophical Terminology

- Absurdism: The theory that there is no meaning to be found in the universe.
- Agnosticism: Uncertainty regarding the existence of God.
- Atheism: A conviction of belief that God does not exist.
- Existentialism: A broad umbrella of philosophical inquiry under which the concerns for human experience and the state of human existence are examined and considered
- Humanism: In Enlightenment Europe it emerged as an area of understanding premised on the rediscovery and reapplication of the work of classical Greek and Roman philosophers. In the modern branches of Humanism, some retain the Enlightenment premise, while others view the human condition as one of aloneness and struggle against an unforgiving universe.
- Paradox: An idea or statement of seeming internal contradiction lending itself to being absurd, not provable, or not true. \*In current academic use, there is a move away from 'paradox' and toward reframing 'paradoxes' as 'unresolved' theorems.

- Theorem: a statement or proposition thought to be provable through the use of supporting logic and theorems previously considered to be valid.

### Philosophy of Mathematics Terminology

- Algorithm: In math, a sequence of operations or procedures applied to a series or set of numbers or axioms. \*This type of process is thought to be transferable to philosophical reasoning through converting ideas or thoughts into axioms and then using algorithmic operations to experiment with the ideas and thoughts as axioms.
- Axiom: A stand-alone statement generally regarded to be true without necessity of substantiation.
- Finite Mathematics: A branch of mathematics that works with objects containing tangible, fixed, or limited properties.
- Integer: A wholly complete number and not a fraction or portion of a number.
- Proof(s): Argumentation that supports the validity of a proposition.
- Parametric Logic: The classification and arrangement of ideas and properties of objects into bound sets helps to provide definition and order to the limitlessness of infinite possibility.

- Set Theory: The idea of arranging ideas, objects, symbols into bounded collections.
- Theorem: See ‘Philosophical Terminology’
- Truism(s): A statement that is generally agreed upon to be true, such that it does not require any further clarification or further inquiry.
- Undecidability: When the validity of a proposition cannot be proven or unproven without being self-referential or self-contradictory.
- Validity: When a theorem gains acceptance through the reason or formal process as provable and its provability can be independently replicated.

### Theological/Religious/Spiritual Terminology

- Abrahamic Faith Traditions: A name for the three largest monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) that recognizes their shared heritage.
- Absolution Theory: The idea that God is not the cause of suffering and evil, but that suffering and evil are permissible by God.
- Antinomianism: The belief that adherence to spiritual or religious law is no longer necessary.

- Apostolic Era: The time immediately following the resurrection of Christ in which the Christian message was being spread in order for the Christian Church to become established. (Death of Christ ~ End of the 1st century AD).
- Apologetics: A systematic approach to defending one's faith. Christian or otherwise.
- Apostolic Succession: A claim to religious authority and governance by way of hereditary lineage dating back to the Apostles in the 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E.
- Buddhism: An eastern spiritual philosophy dating back to the 6th century B.C.

### Compossible/Impossible Substance and Ideas

The theory and description of the properties of substance and ideas used by God in His creation.

#### Standard and Expanded Use

Compossible/Impossible in the Destruction of Logic  
from Within

- *Compossible substance and ideas are favorable to God for creation because their properties contain no internal contradiction,*

*and are thus deemed as being of excellent quality.*

- *Impossible substance and ideas contain internally contradictory properties, and thus God does not choose from them for His creation because of their poor quality.*
- *\*For the purposes of the current volume, the usage of the compossible/impossible paradigm has been expanded to include acts of free will by humans that are either compatible or incompatible with the goodness of God's creation.*
- *\*\*Additionally, the usage has been expanded in this volume as a tool of analysis for the degree of consistency of seeming contradictory concepts presented in biblical scripture.*

#### Theological/Religious/Spiritual Terminology Continued

- **Compunction:** Feeling as though one must act from a place of spiritual or moral guilt or deficit.
- **Convergence/Divergence Theory:** An extension of the concept of spiritual formation. The idea that in moments such as birth and death a person's spirit is integrated with their physical body whereas at death their physical body and spirit part ways.

- Exegetics: An approach to interpreting scripture in the way it was intended to be understood at the time it was written as best as possible in its original context.
- Free Will: An idea of conscience that people have the agency to determine their own outcomes in life.
- Just Compensation Theory: The idea that a person must earn their way into Heaven through an accounting of their good deeds and transgressions while on earth.
- Koans: From the Buddhist tradition. Meditating to reflect on a semantic paradox or a more profound paradox. The objective is not to solve the contradiction but rather to sit with it in contemplation.
- Liturgical Latin: A type of official language used in Church. Contrasted by the use of vernacular language in Church.
- Merit Theology: The idea that a person earns favor with God through good deeds.
- Monotheism: The belief that there is one supreme Deity or God.

- Polytheism: The belief that there are multiple Deities and Gods.
- Predestination/Determinism: The idea that since God is all-knowing and all-powerful, He has already decided the future for every individual and the fate of their soul upon dying.  
Religious/Spiritual Intermediary: A person who claims special divine knowledge or insight, acts as an interpreter of divine knowledge, and claims diplomacy and agency in human-divine relations.
- Religiosity: Over-investment in practices of religious custom, with diminished awareness of the premise of the custom or the implications.
- Secularism: A lifestyle that relaxes, de-emphasizes, or does not involve religious practices.
- Spiritual Formation: The development of one's personal spiritual character and the process of spiritual maturation.
- Spiritual Gatekeeping: Used in conjunction with Religious/Spiritual Intermediary, used as a description of how the idea divine favor can be a tool of coercion.

# Supplemental Practical Material

## An Example of Formal Logic Procedure

### *Formulation of Premise/Hypothesis*

- Identify Idea or Problem to be Addressed
- Identity Main Idea/Actions if Necessary/Who Will Benefit
- Gathering Research/Preliminary Legwork
- Formulate the Premise
- Clarification and Refinement of Premise will be Ongoing

### *1st Order Logic*

- Abductive Reasoning
- Analogous Reasoning
- Causal Reasoning
- Deductive Reasoning
- Inductive Reasoning
- Probabilistic Reasoning

### *2<sup>nd</sup> Order Substantive and Evidentiary Logic*

- Analogical Evidence
- Anecdotal Evidence
- Case Studies
- Hypothetical Evidence
- Statistical Evidence
- Testimonial Evidence
- Textual Evidence

*3<sup>rd</sup> Order Ethical, Moral, Philosophical Contextualization of a Premise in a Formal Logic System*

- Moral Implications of Premise
- Ethical Implications of Premise
- Philosophical Implications of Premise
- Systemic or Interactional Implications between parts of Premise

*4<sup>th</sup> Order Logic Defense from Objections arising from Premise*

- Evidential Refutation
- Logical Refutation
- Refutation via Discrepancy
- Refutation via Counterexample
- Refutation via Reduction to Extreme (Reductio ad Absurdum)
- Concessions/Deflections/Reframing as strategies in response to Objections

*Pre-Conclusion Process*

- Revisit and then Strengthen Premise
- Synthesize/Integrate/Contextualize
- Bias Check/Review from External Party
- Review of Moral/Ethical Impact and Implications for those who will be affected by the initial premise
- Revise/Refine/Strengthen Premise
- Review/Implementation/Practical Applications of Procedures

*Conclusion of a Formal Logic Procedure*

- Offer Clarity on the Summary of Key Points, Next Steps, and Further Action

## A Quick Glance at Kurt Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems (1931)



## Theorem 1

Within any formal process of stating numbers (or any type of symbol as part of a process of stating. For example, listing a set of integers: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5,) there will be statements that cannot be proven or disproven and therefore, those statements are considered to be of undecided validity.



## Theorem 2

If a formal process of stating numbers as axioms (or again, stating any kind of system or set of symbols) *is* proven to be consistently valid, then its consistency would necessitate external validation for the system itself to not be of undecided validity.

Sourced from: (Crilly, 2011, pp. 189-190)





# About the Series

## Experiments in Christian Thought

*The series Experiments in Christian Thought will approach Christian spirituality in unconventional ways in order to make the merits of Christian ideas better understood for those seeking answers to life's big questions.*

*In an age where the plausibility of God's existence is often rejected and even mocked reflexively on scientific grounds, this series will offer a second look at the topic of Christian spirituality.*

*To those who unquestioningly adhere to the 'conventional wisdom' in current academic institutions that God is or ought to be an off-limits topic for any 'rational' minded person; this series is for you.*

*To the university or college student who finds themselves saying 'trust the science', or 'the science says', the author offers this series as a gateway to bridging rigid philosophical rationalism with spiritual belief.*

*While exploring this series, it is hoped that the reader will come to understand that despite progress in material well-being and other advancements, human nature remains the same today as it has been throughout history. Any number of personal problems, experiences, or questions that a person has today have*

*been experienced and asked by many people who have come and gone before the present time.*

*In the present age, people have a tendency toward kneejerk reactions to overturn, demolish, and reinvent anything that doesn't seem to fit with their presupposed worldview. To such people, it is as though humanity is in a perpetual state of crisis and the answer is to simply discredit the past with reckless abandon.*

*Drawing from pre-21st century wisdom, this series offers comfort to those who are ideological drifters with the assurance that in history, someone somewhere has very likely experienced something very similar to the issues of today, personally and on a societal level.*

*Over the course of the series, it is hoped that Christian spirituality will show its compatibility with rationalism, and that mindset was the prevailing norm throughout much of history before the 20th century.*

*The Experiments in Christian Thought series will be available in both English and Spanish in Paperback and eBook editions.*

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### SUMMARY

Despite biblical assurance to the contrary, there remains a theological confound inherent in the Christian story. Indeed, it is the case that in the face of a God of love's mercy and grace; misery and suffering afflict humanity both relentlessly and in perpetuity.

In the Christian ideation of an all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving God, it often seems as though there is only negligence and silence.

In this revised and expanded edition, of a previous expository by Matthew M. Kryzanowski, the work of Enlightenment Mathematician and Philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) and Christian Experimentalist Theologian Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910) have their unexpectedly compatible viewpoints on the problem of evil built upon and expanded. This,

in the hope of opening up the possibility of a fresh understanding of the nature and limitations of human suffering.

Through experimenting with and expanding on the ideas of these unexpectedly well-matched thinkers, the question of humanity's quickly passing physical existence and time spent on earth will be looked at in the context of enduring unnecessary hardship and wrongdoing.

It is hoped that with the prospect of a fresh perspective on long-standing problems, insightful gains might be made into the question:

If God: Why evil?

The Compossible Pairing, Volume II in Christian Experimental Thought, intends to offer renewed hope and strength in the Christian message.

Through taking this book on, the reader will hopefully discover that there is a compelling case to be made that inevitably, when our physical experience terminates; there will indeed be something more.

Experiments in Christian Thought Volume II will be available through various booksellers and on an assortment of online retailers in early 2025. Please check with your preferred vendor for availability.

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## About the Author

Matthew Kryzanowski was raised in Kingston Ontario, Canada. He has a background in music, and is a graduate of the Queen's University School of Music. Additionally, he has a degree in History and holds the designation of Ontario Certified Teacher. Matthew has been teaching since 2004 in Toronto. He has been married to his lovely wife for 16 years, and together they have two children. In addition to being an educator, Matthew has spent much of the last twenty years serving various local church communities by directing choirs and providing service music.



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