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**The Little Book About God**

**GOD DOES EXIST!**

*But God may not be at all like you imagine.*

Introduction

It’s difficult to know where to start, so I’ll just jump right in.

God exists – God *must* exist – because there is no other way to answer this one question:

*How did you get inside your head?*

By that I mean, how come you are behind your two eyeballs looking out, and in between your two ears listening, while the others are looking at you and talking to you?

Think about it for a moment. *Really* think about it. Quite frankly, very few others have.

It turns out this realization has tremendous ramifications which I’ll try to explain in this little book.

If God put you here, there is another question which immediately presents itself:

*What happens when you die?*

Which leads to another question:

*Can you communicate with God*?

Which leads to another question:

*What is God like?*

Which leads to another question, and then another and another.

I will do my best to answer some of these questions in this book.

Chapter 1: **YOUR PLACE IN THE LONG HISTORY OF MANKIND**

*“You, your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules.”*

 *The Astonishing Hypothesis,* by Francis Crick

Dr. Francis Crick was awarded the Nobel Prize for physiology and medicine in 1962 along with his colleagues James Watson and Maurice Wilkins for their work on [discovering the structure of DNA](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/science-news/3305922/DNA-three-letters-that-spell-out-a-discovery-made-50-years-ago.html).

What Dr. Crick is saying, in essence, is that we humans may be nothing more than a complex biologic computer – which someday might even be implemented by a very smart app in a smartphone. Let’s explore that hypothesis, as we would any theory, by applying a test to prove, or disprove, its validity.

It might interest you to know that MIT has long led an ambitious, Institute-wide effort to advance the science and engineering of human intelligence. Called the “Quest for Intelligence,” the effort was originally spearheaded by MIT’s Center for Brains, Minds and Machines (CBMM) and its Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory (CSAIL). Most recently, however, MIT has consolidated the Quest into a new “Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences” (BCS) with an enormous staff of professors and graduate students, all investigating how the human brain is constructed and how it works.

As many and varied as these studies are, not one of them is focused on how humans, and in particular the human mind, becomes *self-aware.*

Even if this question were asked and answered, it would still not answer the question:

*How did you become you inside your body?* Why not somebody else?

In other words, how did you end up at this particular point in time and position on the face of the earth?

If this question could be answered, it would naturally lead to the next question:

*Have you existed previously?*

And if that question could be answered, it would lead to the next question:

*Will you exist again in the future?*

And still another question, which seems quite impossible, but one has to ask it:

*Can two of you exist at the same time?*

Don’t expect answers to these last three questions. I don’t think there’s any way to approach these questions logically, but they’re certainly interesting food for thought.

But back to the first and basic question: how did you become you? There is only one possible answer: *God must have done it.* There is simply no other way.

So there you have it: That’s the subject of this book.

Your Dash Through Life:

Have you ever walked among the gravestones at a cemetery and noticed the dates? These are the timelines of the persons buried there.

In the little Union Valley Cemetery near my old colonial house in Mahopac, the oldest date of death is 1842, fifty years after my house was built by a man who was buried there. His name was Gilbert Wright and he must have been strong. He lived to 76, an advanced age that was quite remarkable for his time.

Gilbert was born in 1766, so his timeline was 1766 to 1842. Every gravestone in the cemetery shows such a timeline. The people who were buried in the cemetery were alive during the periods represented by the dash “-----” between the years of birth and death.

*I recently went to a cemetery*

*To visit the grave of a friend;*

*I stared at the dates on his tombstone*

*That marked his beginning and end.*

*The first was the year of his birth;*

*The last, the year that he died.*

*But it was that dash between those years*

*That I pondered most, and…eventually cried.*

*For the dash represented his life;*

*When my friend spent time on this earth;*

*And now, only those who loved him*

*Have a clue what that dash is worth.*

*For it matters not how much we have:*

*The house, the cars and the cash.*

*What matters is how we live and love,*

*And how that we spend our dash.*

*I’ve thought about this long and hard:*

*Are there things we should rearrange?*

*One never knows how much time is left*

*And one’s attitude can be changed.*

*If we could just slow down enough*

*To consider what’s true and what’s real,*

*Let’s try to understand as best we can*

*The way that our neighbors feel.*

*Be less quick to anger,*

*And show appreciation more,*

*And love those people in our lives*

*As we’ve never loved before.*

*We should treat others with respect*

*And more often wear a smile.*

*Remembering that that little dash*

*Is ours for just awhile.*

*So, when your eulogy is being read*

*And your journey is being rehashed.
Would you be proud of what they say about you?*

*What they say about your Dash?*

Science tells us that humans originated in East Africa over 100,000 years ago. Since then there have been an estimated fifteen billion humans (*homo sapiens*) on this earth, over half of whom are alive today. This fact may surprise you, but it’s the result of exponential growth in population, reduced from time to time by rampant disease, like the Black Plague in 1350 that wiped out half the European population.

To understand the term “exponential growth” think of what happens when women have an average of more than one daughter who lives long enough to reach child-bearing age (men are irrelevant to this calculation, provided that there are enough of them around to inseminate the women). Each woman will produce, say, two daughters, who will each produce two daughters, who will each produce two daughters, and so on. Starting with one single woman, in each successive generation the population will become 2, 4, 8, 16, 32… well, you can do the math. After the population reaches a million, it goes up pretty quickly. In fact, the population literally explodes in a chain reaction.

By the year 2100 the worldwide population is expected to reach approximately 11,200,000,000. If here were no catastrophe, and assuming women had an average of two daughters, this figure could double in one generation.

What’s important here is that, among the approximately fifteen billion humans that have been alive so far, one, -- and presumably *only* one -- of them is *you*. Bingo!

While you are alive – in your “dash” through life – you have a chance to see, hear, smell, feel and experience joy and pain. And then you die.

How did it happen that you occupied this brief moment in time? That’s the question I’ve been thinking about. And you should think about it too.

I started by trying to think back to the moment my mind first “woke up” and began to remember things. My first remembrances are from my parents’ apartment in New York City. I had pneumonia, I learned only later, and I lay in bed with a “croup kettle” to my left, spewing out steam for me to breath. I can still recall that not-so-pleasant oily smell.

Each evening, when it became dark outside, I would watch as the window pane refracted the light – alternately red and green – from a traffic signal out on the street. In those days there were no yellow caution lights in the City. The green and red overlapped for a short period when the light turned from green to red.

I did not realize the significance of being alive, of course. It just *happened*. But there I was, starting off on my (hopefully) long journey through childhood, teenage years (not very much fun for me, actually), adulthood, and old age (which I’m passing though right now) and then, eventually, death. That inevitable *death*.

How did I get here? Was there any other “me” that inhabited another body, either before or at the same time? Would I have another shot at being alive at some later time?

When I thought about these things, I could come to only one conclusion: There had to be some external entity or source that caused my being to happen. There had to be some unknowable entity or source that all humans the world over called “God.” Otherwise, all of the other people that currently exist, and have existed up to this time, would be just that -- *other* people – and not *me*.

How did I get so lucky as to wake up inside my mind?

I’m not ruling out that an artificial mind - developed perhaps by reverse-engineering the brain – could become self-aware, as it appeared to do in the movie “2001.” But if it did, who would inhabit this manmade mechanism? Could such a mechanism look out through its multiple video lenses, and listen through its multiple microphones, and “think” it was somewhere “inside” while the rest of world was “outside”?

Could such a mechanism have the agenda of “staying alive,” and try to prevent us from pulling the plug?

If the mechanism were, in Dr. Crick’s words, “in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules,” would awareness even be possible? Could such a mechanism force the creation of its own self-awareness- its own “be here now.”

If self-awareness of each individual is not self-actuating and spontaneous, it must come from an outside source: an unknowable source that we call “God.”

The Place Where You Live

I was born in the New York Presbyterian Hospital in New York City, the son of well-educated and fairly well-to-do parents. Until I was three, I lived in a Park Avenue apartment with a round-the-clock nanny named “Marie.” My parents then moved to the lovely New England town of Litchfield, Connecticut, and ran a dairy farm. I went to school in Litchfield from kindergarten through eighth grade, and then attended one of the better-known high schools in the country: a college preparatory school called “Phillips Academy” in Andover, Massachusetts. Following Andover, I received an S.B. degree in Physics and a B.S.E.E. from M.I.T. and then, after a two-year hitch as an officer in the U.S. Army, received a J.D. degree from the Georgetown Law Center. With these credentials, I went to work and enjoyed a satisfying fifty-year career as a patent attorney.

I say all this not to bore you or brag but, on the contrary, to explain, as simply I can, that I was *lucky*. I was lucky to have been born in the United States, and lucky to have two parents who loved me and had the wherewithal to provide me with a good education.

It would have been more likely to have been born of poor parents in an impoverished nation where useful and rewarding work were scarce and a sound education were even scarcer.

In fact, most of the people in the world live like that: in abject poverty.

Also, many people suffer from disease. The lucky ones have a reasonably long, healthy life, but frankly most do not. They suffer a premature death for one reason or another.

Many babies even die at birth or live for only a few years. Think childhood leukemia, among the many causes of death for children.

If God does have the ability to change this sad situation, [he, she, it] does not do so.

We would much prefer that all children in the world be born of loving parents who could afford them, and then go on to have a wonderful life without pain until they were at least 100 years old. But no. We struggle, we live in pain, and then we die, sometimes with disease and sometimes violently, and often at too early an age.

It’s been said, *“Life isn’t fair,”* and it’s truly not.

I entered the U.S. Army at the age of 23. I had enrolled in ROTC in college to avoid the dreaded draft and was newly commissioned as a Second Lieutenant. During my second month of basic training at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, I was ordered to inspect the barracks of soldiers whom, I was told, did the heavy lifting of ordnance warheads at the ABG facility called Edgewood Arsenal. When I arrived to carry out the inspection, I expected to see a platoon of very strong men, and I was right. What surprised and also perplexed me, was that all the soldiers were African-American. I found out only later, when a scandal erupted in the 1970’s, that some of these soldiers at Edgewood were unknowingly subjected to experiments with toxic chemical weapons.

As I entered the front door of the barracks, a black sergeant who accompanied me there shouted, “ATTENN..HUT!” I looked down the central aisle between the two rows of beds and viewed a line of soldiers on both sides, standing erect next to their open foot lockers. Dressed in fatigues, hats off, they stared straight ahead until I called, “AT EASE.” That was the signal for them to relax in place, allowing them to look at me if they wished, as I carried out the inspection.

Although I’d had only a month of training in the Army plus a single military course during my four years of college, I already outranked these big strapping men. They were recruits, most of them, who had been drafted unwillingly into the Army. They were serving their time in much the same way that a civilian prisoner would: in the lowest rungs of the Army ranks. A few had been promoted from Private to Private First Class, or “PFC,” but that’s how high in the military pecking order they could expect to go.

Who was I, a newly-minted officer, to “inspect” their dress, their tidiness, and their behavior? I couldn’t help but think, as I entered the barracks and walked among at these poor men, was that *the system was not fair*!

Instead of critically inspecting these soldiers, I complimented each one in some way that I thought was warranted. Some men were particularly clean shaven, some had a good spit shine on their boots, and some had an unusually tidy foot locker. I found at least one thing to praise for each soldier.

Particularly poignant, I clearly recall to this day, was when I asked one soldier to open the metal wall locker near the head of his bed. As an officer I was entitled to do that, although this space was reserved for personal, civilian belongings and was normally locked to prevent theft by fellow soldiers. In this case, as the man unlocked and opened the tall slim door, I could see that its contents were impeccably arranged. His civilian clothes hung neatly, side by side on the single rod provided for that purpose. For some reason I asked him to remove a pair of pants, and he did so without reluctance or protest and held them out. What I saw astounded me: Seams of his pants, particularly near the crotch, had been sewed and re-sewed multiple times. Instead of throwing these pants away and buying new ones, something he couldn’t afford to do, the soldier made the best of what he had. I, who never been concerned about the cost of clothing, couldn’t help but thinking, *“There but the grace of God, go I.”*

“*The grace of God*.” What does that even mean? Does God care about me? Does God care about anybody else? Most people in the world have a much more difficult life than I do.

We are all aware of hardship cases: people who have been maimed or die in an automobile crash; people who have contracted a deadly disease like cancer. *Why them and not me?*

No one, so far as know, has been able to answer that question, not even the author of the Bible’s *Book of Job*.

All that we can say with some degree of certainty is that God sets things in motion. He lights the candle within each one of us so that we live within our bodies, until we die.

Chapter 2: **COMMUNICATING WITH GOD**

When we pray, does God listen to us? Sometimes we think that God does, but mostly it appears that God doesn’t. Only very rarely do we receive what we ask God for.

If we ask for personal traits, such as strength, fortitude and courage, we may receive them, but we can never be sure they came from God. More likely, just by the act of praying we receive them, and we convince ourselves that they came from God.

If we receive the *things* we ask for, they may well have been the result of our own efforts, or receiving them may have been just pure luck.

If God does exist, there must be a logical reason for God’s lack of response to our prayers. I can think of four:

1. God may not have the ability to provide what we pray for;
2. God may have the ability to do so, but may not care about us;
3. God may care for us but may not want to be a wish-fulfiller; and
4. There may be no God at all.

It’s only the third reason that requires some explanation:

Just imagine what would happen if God provided what we asked for when we prayed. We’d immediately pray for more!

We would ask God to get us anything and everything we wanted, as Reb Tevye was wont to do in *Fiddler on the Roof*:

If I were a Rich Man:

*“Dear God, you made many, many poor people.*

*I realize, of course, that it's no shame to be poor.*

*But it's no great honor either!*

*So, what would have been so terrible if I had a small fortune?"*

*If I were a rich man,*

*Ya ha deedle deedle, bubba bubba deedle deedle dum.*

*All day long I'd biddy biddy bum.*

*If I were a wealthy man.*

*I wouldn't have to work hard.*

*Ya ha deedle deedle, bubba bubba deedle deedle dum.*

*If I were a biddy biddy rich,*

*Yidle-diddle-didle-didle man.*

*I'd build a big tall house with rooms by the dozen,*

*Right in the middle of the town.*

*A fine tin roof with real wooden floors below.*

*There would be one long staircase just going up,*

*And one even longer coming down,*

*And one more leading nowhere, just for show.*

*I'd fill my yard with chicks and turkeys and geese and ducks*

*For the town to see and hear.*

*And each loud "cheep" and "swaqwk" and "honk" and "quack"*

*Would land like a trumpet on the ear,*

*As if to say "Here lives a wealthy man."*

*If I were a rich man,*

*Ya ha deedle deedle, bubba bubba deedle deedle dum.*

*All day long I'd biddy biddy bum.*

*If I were a wealthy man.*

*I wouldn't have to work hard.*

*Ya ha deedle deedle, bubba bubba deedle deedle dum.*

*If I were a biddy biddy rich,*

*Yidle-diddle-didle-didle man.*

*I see my wife, my Goldie, looking like a rich man's wife*

*With a proper double-chin.*

*Supervising meals to her heart's delight.*

*I see her putting on airs and strutting like a peacock.*

*Oy, what a happy mood she's in.*

*Screaming at the servants, day and night.*

*The most important men in town would come to fawn on me!*

*They would ask me to advise them,*

*Like a Solomon the Wise.*

*"If you please, Reb Tevye..."*

*"Pardon me, Reb Tevye..."*

*Posing problems that would cross a rabbi's eyes!*

*And it won't make one bit of difference if I answer right or wrong.*

*When you're rich, they think you really know!*

*If I were rich, I'd have the time that I lack*

*To sit in the synagogue and pray.*

*And maybe have a seat by the Eastern wall.*

*And I'd discuss the holy books with the learned men, several hours every day.*

*That would be the sweetest thing of all.*

This song is derived from the Yiddish *Ven ikh bin a Rothschild* (If I were a Rothschild), referring to the wealth of the Rothschild family. The Rothschilds were a Jewish family, descendants from Mayer Rothschild (1744–1812) who established a successful banking business in the German city-state of Frankfurt.

What Reb Tevye is saying is that God could just as well have chosen him to be one of the Rothschilds. He would have preferred that to being a poor Jew in Russia. However, Reb knew the chances of being born wealthy were small because there were so “many, many poor people.”

These lyrics from *Fiddler on the Roof* also convey another message: If we wanted riches (and who doesn’t?) we could pray for that. If we wanted to live longer (and who doesn’t?), we could pray for that too. But God would probably not answer our prayers. Why?

If our prayed requests were considered fair and reasonable by God, and if God would actually respond to such “good” requests, the problem wouldn’t be in getting what we wanted. It would be the unintended consequences. Our neighbors would see what God gave us and they would want that too.

It would be a lot easier to get what we wanted by praying than by working for it, so we’d pray our way through life. You get the idea.

What if two countries were fighting a war and the people both sides asked God to help them win? God would have to decide which side should win and then intervene. Wars would be over pretty quickly in such a case, perhaps before even a shot was fired. That would be a good thing but, in reality, the “good guys” never seem to catch a break.

If God did exist and did have the power to fulfill our reasonable requests, such a deity would understandably not want to be manipulated. Therefore, the correct and logical thing for God to do would be to do *nothing* in response to our many, many prayers. And this seems to be exactly what God does. Nothing.

God perhaps does secretly come to the aid of someone in need. We have no proof, nor even some evidence, that such an intervention ever occurs, but that’s understandable. If there were such proof or evidence we would seize on it. God does not want to be in the business of granting wishes.

I often think God may have an invisible hand in picking a lottery number. The Mega Millions and the Powerball lotteries have, at times, exceeded a billion dollars. A payout much less than that would certainly help a poor struggling family if someone in the family held the winning ticket. But as often as not, the winners of the lotteries are just ordinary folk. They may struggle financially and have health issues, like many of us, but they are seldom the worst off among us.

God could, and perhaps does, perform miracles from time to time. By “miracle” we mean that it was impossible for something to happen, and yet it happened. But if the impossible did happen, notwithstanding perhaps an extremely low probability of such an occurrence, it *must* have been possible. Therefore, it was not a miracle. Q.E.D.

Of course, our prayers are not always about asking God for something. It is often about praising God, in spite of God’s apparent lack of response to our asking. The Lord’s Prayer is an example of a prayer that has both – praising and asking:

*Our Father who art in heaven,*

*Hallowed be Thy name.*

*Thy Kingdom come,*

*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

*Give this day our daily bread,*

*and forgive us our trespasses* [or *debts*],

*as we forgive others who trespass against us* [or *our debtors*].

*And lead us not into temptation,*

*but deliver us from evil.*

The form of this prayer most often used in the Protestant churches includes a final line, which scholars believe was added by the early Christians:

For thine is the Kingdom, and the Power and the glory forever, Amen.

There you have it: The perfect prayer. Does it get results? It is considered a blasphemy even to ask that question.

Chapter 3: **WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE’RE BORN?**

Perhaps the most important question one can ask about life is: When do we become “I” or “me” as distinguished from “they” or “them.” Another way to ask the questions is: When did God choose *me* to inhabit my body?

I doubt if anyone can remember “the moment” – I certainly can’t – because it calls for remembering when the moment *happened*: that is, the change from being unaware to being aware of oneself.

Members of the Catholic Church, among others, firmly believe that the moment occurs upon conception, when semen of a man reaches a woman’s egg, and the single stem cell starts its complicated process of growth – first by splitting into two cells, then four, and eight, etc. – until it eventually takes the form of a human body.

Although a person is “born” when he or she leaves their mother’s womb, one wonders if that person yet has a “soul,” chosen by God to live within the person’s body until it dies. Is that the moment we become aware of our own existence, when we realize we are “inside” our head, observing what is going on “outside”?

When I was born, I learned many years later, I was extremely weak because my red blood count was low. I was anemic. I stayed in the hospital for nearly a month, and I almost died. My mother was so concerned she kept a diary that chronicled my progress, day by day. However, at the end of three weeks she wrote, “Baby will survive,” with a big fat line under the word “will.”

I don’t remember any of this, of course, but that’s the point. I could have died then and not even known that I existed. If God had anointed me at birth, my “dash” would have been wasted. I would have preferred that my dash had been placed in another baby’s body, a much stronger one than mine.

There is a period of about three years, it seems to me, from the moment of conception to the moment we first become aware, during which God gives each of us our identity and starts our “dash.” There are good arguments for the moment of conception (e.g., God has a plan for us, even at that instant of time) and for the moment of first awareness (e.g., God “wakes us up” to realize who we are) and for all the moments in between (the common law recognizes us as an individual when the umbilical cord is severed). The essential point is that God *must* have had a hand in starting our “dash” through life, during which we are “inside” our heads and everyone else is “out *there*.”

That is really all we can be certain about: God must exist because God gives us self-awareness.

Chapter 4: **WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DIE?**

When lights go out inside our heads – when we fall into unconsciousness and eventually die – what happens to our “souls”? Are they extinguished? Does God place our souls in other human infants, either immediately or sometime later, causing them to begin their “dash”? Or instead, do our souls gather somewhere for all eternity in places that we call “heaven” and “hell.”

There have been some near-death experiences of people who have contended that, in their minds, they saw a great light and felt their souls were being lifted from their bodies, before being brought back. Other than such imaginings, evidences of life after death seem to be lacking. The existences of heaven and hell appear to be more of a desire of humans than a reality.

While it may be a great comfort to think there’s a good place for our souls to go when we die, and a bad place for the souls of bad people to go, it’s quite absurd to keep on believing there is a *heaven* and a *hell* when the scientific evidence we have is to the contrary.

Just sayin’!

Chapter 5: **WHAT ABOUT ANIMALS?**

We know very little about God’s relationship with “lesser” living creatures, such as animals, birds, fish and bugs as well as plants. According to the Bible, God granted humans “dominion” over all living things and, for that reason, such lesser creatures are not believed to have been given a “soul.”

Only humans can do math, which is an absolute requirement for understanding the chemistry, biology and physics of the universe, and a requirement for the engineering of things. But does that mean that lesser creatures are not self-aware? Even the dumbest of dumb humans can be self-aware.

Are warm blooded animals more capable self-awareness than, say, a bug? Is a bug more capable of being self-aware than, say, a computer programmed to have “artificial intelligence,” be it a neural circuit or an app for a smartphone?

There’s no way to tell, as far as I know, because neither animals nor birds can talk and most bugs can’t make any sound at all. Notwithstanding, it’s still fun to imagine these creatures have human-like thoughts and emotions. For instance, there’s that nice mouse in “Stuart Little,” that nice bird in “Trumpet of the Swan,” and that nice spider in “Charlotte’s Web,” all by E.B. White.

And let’s not forget to mention the fish and the other various abundant creatures in the waters of the earth - creatures like “Sponge Bob, Square Pants.”

Chapter 6: **RELIGION 101**

The world’s great religions, the Chinese traditional religion, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, were all created long before mankind developed any scientific knowledge about the origin and structure of the universe, the solar system, the planet earth, life on earth and the human species in particular. People nevertheless continue to adhere to tenets of these ancient religions although many of them have been proven to be factually incorrect.

What if we started a new religion today from *scratch*, consistent with current scientific knowledge? What would this religion be like? What would be its tenets?

Love God:

*Jesus said…, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”* Matthew 22:37-40

*One day an authority on the law stood up to put Jesus to the test. "Teacher," he asked, “what must I do to receive eternal life?"*

*What is written in the Law?" Jesus replied. "How do you understand it?"*

*He answered, " ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Love him with all your strength and with all your mind.’ [quoting from Deuteronomy 6:5]; and, ‘Love your neighbor as you love yourself.’” [quoting from Leviticus 19:18].*

*"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do that, and you will live."* Luke 10:25-8

Knowing that God really exists changes *everything*.

Whereas, in the past we may have paid half-hearted homage to hedge our bets, just in case God might actually exist, we now realize that God is, well,…*real*.

As we go about our daily lives, most of us probably don’t think about God. Because God is thought to be unknowable, there is not really much to think about.

Now that we know God is actually *there*, we wonder what we should do about it. Well, here’s a thought: *Let’s appreciate what God’s done for us.*

God gave each of us our dash. God gave us *life.* How about that for starters?

How about showing our appreciation by thanking the Lord, again and again, in our thoughts if not out loud. God knows what we are thinking, so we just need to *think thanks*.

Love Others

The second tenet of the new religion should be a deep and abiding respect for the lives of all God creatures, especially human beings. The realization that God gave us each our dash – our limited time to be alive – should be the first in a series of increasing steps toward an understanding and appreciation of the value of life.

If you kill someone, you are shortening that person’s God-given dash. That person will never again come to live within a human body with self-awareness and the ability to interact with other people who are alive at the same time. So far as we know, this will be the one and only time this person will have to be alive. By killing this person, you will have taken part of that person’s timeline away.

Absent evidence to the contrary, we must assume that God will not give that person another dash. The person will not have another chance at life.

Therefore, it seems to me, the Fifth Commandment “Thou shalt not kill,” brought down from Mount Ararat by Moses, should be given a much greater emphasis in our lives than it does today. The media – movies, television, and video games – would have you believe that killing a person is the solution to their bad behavior. If a person is “bad,” or has done a bad thing, he/she can and should be eliminated.

A better translation of the Fifth Commandment from the original Hebrew is perhaps “Thou shalt not commit murder,” a subtle distinction that the Jews did recognize at Moses’ time. Killing an unjust aggressor to preserve one’s own life was still killing, but it wasn’t considered murder or even immoral.

The criminal law today recognizes a number of such distinctions, based on the *mens* r*ea* or mental state of the perpetrator, from capital murder (the most egregious) to negligent homicide (the least). The laws which spell out these distinctions, are fully adequate it seems to me, but the human morality from which these laws arose seems to be lacking.

There are so many killings reported in the news each day that we have become immune from thinking how tragic it is.

The antidote is to *love others*. It is our essential duty, as humans, to treat others with respect, sympathy, decency, humility and kindness.

At the very least, each and every one of us has a responsibility to make sure that all others we come in contact with feel secure and have no fear of losing their lives, given to them by God.

Against the backdrop of our daily lives, hatred and violence are much too frequent. But we can and should fight the numb helplessness that might allow these acts to ever feel normal. We must keep ourselves alive to the shock and the pain that results from the killing of others, and stay focused on finding a better path for our society.

That’s All!

 *"My religion is very simple. My religion is kindness."* Dalai Lama

First of all, let’s take a look at the kinds of things that our new religion would not include: There would be no “miracles” and no virgin birth. There would be no “heaven” or “hell,” as we think of these terms, because there is no evidence that either exists. There would be no paranormal or otherwise unexplained activity. There would be no asking for God’s intervention, because we know God won’t, or can’t, give us what we ask for.

Every well-known religion comes with a “package” of precepts and rules, and most come with a backstory about the folks who founded the religion: the Buddha, Abraham, Jesus, Mohammed and what have you. There are also religious rites and celebrations one needs to learn and to follow (and enjoy!).

Our new religion has none of these. There is nothing to study and nothing to learn except… Yep, you know it already: (1) Love God, and (2) Love Others.

Here’s an example of the beliefs you’re expected to buy into if you profess yourself to be a Christian of the Protestant persuasion:

*“I believe is God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only Son and our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen”* The Apostles’ Creed

If you parse this language you’ll see there are quite a few beliefs that go way beyond a basic belief in God:

1. There are a heaven and a hell;
2. Jesus was the “son” of God;
3. Mary became pregnant without having sexual relations with a man;
4. Jesus “rose from the dead;”
5. Jesus “ascended” into heaven (implying that heaven is “up there” somewhere);
6. Jesus “sits at the right hand of God” in heaven;
7. Jesus “judges” us, when we’re alive and when we’re dead;
8. There’s a thing called the “Holy Ghost;”
9. One’s “sins” *may* be forgiven (the Creed doesn’t spell out the conditions); and
10. One’s body may be “resurrected;” and
11. We may live forever.

All of these beliefs are bundled into this nice tidy “package.” A follower of Christianity is also expected to accept a number of “miracles,” such as:

1. Jesus turned water into wine;
2. Jesus walked on water;
3. Jesus cured a leper;
4. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead; and
5. Jesus rose from the dead.

to list just a few.

If you question whether these events really happened, you undermine your Christian faith. You need to accept these beliefs; if you don’t your faith may collapse like a house of cards.

This same kind of analysis may be applied to all the known religions. You are expected to accept a whole host of beliefs if you’re a true follower.

Not so, however, with the new religion. You may believe, or may not believe, whatever precepts and miracles you like, so long as you follow the two simple tenets: *Love God* and *Love Others*. They’re easy to say and easy to do. And best of all, they’re *logical* if you think about them.

For many years I taught Sunday school in the Protestant churches I was attending. I enjoyed teaching third graders both the Old and the New Testament Bible stories. I especially loved the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Esau and Jacob in the book of Genesis. I even wrote a full-length play about the life of Jacob that was put on at a synagogue.

The most heart-warming, in my opinion, are the stories and parables of Jesus. I focused on one of these stories each Sunday, so during nine months of the year that the children were in my class, they received but a small sample of the rich literature in the Bible. Over my many years of teaching, however, I naturally came to know and love them all.

Teaching a subject is really the best way to learn it. If you prepare well enough to teach others, the subject becomes a part of you.

Knowing stories about the founders of a religion doesn’t adhere you to that particular faith, be it Jewish, Christian, Muslim or whatever, but it helps to create a common mind-set. Since our brand-new religion doesn’t have any such stories, it might be helpful to create a few. Some people will undoubtedly object to these stories as beng fake, but if the stories are interesting enough, they’ll be enjoyed and may take on a life of their own.

So let’s have some fun and create a few stories for our new religion.

Chapter 7: **STORIES FOR THE NEW RELIGION**

Genesis:

In the beginning of mankind, between 100,000 to 200,000 years ago and somewhere in equatorial East Africa, there lived an animal species that looked a lot like us humans, but they blended in with the animals around them. They didn’t smile or frown because they experienced neither joy nor pain. They had evolved into what we now call *homo sapiens*.

They stood erect most of the time, especially when moving about from place to place, because they could run faster that way. However, no matter how hard they tried, they could not run fast enough to catch animals for food. Their diet therefore consisted mostly of fruits and vegetables.

One day God chose a man, whom we’ll call “Aaron,” and said, “I WILL GIVE YOU NEW LIFE.” God didn’t speak in any language, of course. He simply placed the thought in Aaron’s head. And Aaron realized who he was.

Next God chose a woman, whom we’ll call “Abagail,” and did the same for her.

Then Abagail looked at Aaron, and Aaron looked at Abagail, in a whole new way. They had become self-aware. They liked what they saw and felt joy for the first time. They smiled at each other.

Aaron made love to Abagail and Abagail conceived an offspring. During her pregnancy she felt emotions she had never experienced before: joy, love, empathy and eventually the extreme pain of childbirth. Aaron experienced these emotions too but they were not nearly as intense.

And God gave life to other humans too. God gave life to every human being on earth from that day forward.

It did not dawn on them at first, but eventually the humans came to realize they were quite different from animals. They could *think* and, most importantly, they *knew* that they were thinking. Although they would have liked to communicate with animals, they understood that animals were limited in their thinking. Humans didn’t have those limitations. They were experiencing life in a new and wonderful way.

The Troubles:

Aaron and Abigail had two children, Bea and Ben, who chose mates from among the others to whom God had given life, and they both had children of their own. These children found mates and had children too, and so on. The population of humans grew quickly and with each generation they became more adventurous. Soon the people had spread throughout the African continent.

Fast forward about 100,000 years and by this time the humans had spread outward to Asia, Europe, the Pacific Islands and then eventually to the Americas. During this entire time God gave each new person his or her “dash.”

Because the people were self-aware, they became selfish. This led to temptations and jealousies which, in turn, let to disputes between individuals and between groups of individuals. The disputes led to hatred between individuals and groups which, in turn, led to violence. As the populations on each continent increased and became denser, wars broke out between factions.

Religions sprouted up as humans looked to a “higher power” for solace and support. They wanted God to give them an advantage over their “enemies” while they were alive and give them eternal life after they died. They either didn’t comprehend, or they refused to understand, that their ideas of God arose from their desires which were rooted in their own selfishness. Some humans even thought that God favored them over “others,” rather than treating all humans the same.

Humans also began to invent new ways and means to maim and kill each other: clubs, slingshots, explosives, guns, cannons and bombs followed with ever-increasing destructive power. They also invented new weapon-delivery systems: wheels, wagons, carriages, trains, trucks, tanks, aircraft and eventually missiles. There seemed to be no end to this escalating arms race with its death and destruction until…

Angel Ariel:

The weapons of war became so powerful that, for a time, it looked like humans would eventually obliterate each other, and in so doing would also obliterate many of God’s creatures and plant life on earth. God therefore became concerned and sent a representative to turn humans away from this destructive behavior. The Angel Ariel was tasked with this mission to save God’s creation.

In the Christian religion, an angel was sometimes imagined as a young woman with wings to fly. Ariel was a beautiful young woman, to be sure, but she had no wings. She looked much like everyone else. However, she had striking good looks. Men and women alike would stop and stare when she was in their presence. Her voice was beautiful too – crystal clear as the sound of a bell – and when she spoke everyone heard her in their own language.

Angel Ariel was seen by people on every continent, in many different places at the same time. Those who witnessed her appearance all told the same story. She would appear at a place full of people and speak to them, always with kindness and humility. She would immediately gain the trust of her audience, no matter what their race, socio-economic status, and religion. And this is what she said:

*“I have come to warn you that, unless you change your ways, you will destroy everything that God has made. Neither you, nor any of God’s creatures on this earth, will survive. You must turn away immediately from your anger and your hatred and embrace one another as the brothers and sisters that you are. Follow these two simple rules – love God and love one another – and God’s light will shine upon all of you and grant you the peace you have always wanted.”*

The shocking news of AngelAriel’s appearance, everywhere at once, resounded around the world. For the first time, people not only listened to their religious leaders, but they actually followed what these leaders had been saying for hundreds of years: (1) love God and (2) love others. There was no longer a need to say more.

Political leaders stopped their self-interest messaging and spoke of unity rather than separation.

The leaders of companies, both for-profit and non, spoke of working together with other, previously antagonistic companies, both in their own and in other countries, to benefit not only the people to whom they offered their goods and services, but also their own underpaid workers, many of whom had long been taken advantage of.

Peoples actions followed their words and, within a short time, the entire worldwide mentality of mankind changed from “me first” to “let’s work together to benefit the world.”

Peace rained down upon the earth and reigned supreme from that point on.

The Present Day:

Don’t believe a word of it. These stories are complete fiction, although they’re more believable, I would say, than most of the Bible stories. Except for the story about the appearance of the Angel Ariel, there were no miracles to strain our credulity.

Today we are still on a path to oblivion, whether it be through climate change, an untreatable disease or atomic warfare. If the human species withstands challenges like these, it can look forward to being incinerated in about five billion years as the sun expands into a red giant star.

Our only real hope in the short term, it seems to me, is to do what we were told by Angel Ariel, and by all the other religious leaders who have said basically the same thing. If you won’t follow the Buddha, Jesus or Mohammed, at least take Ariel’s advice: Love God and love others. You know in your heart of hearts that it’s the right thing to do.

THAT’S ALL FOR NOW!