

Bridges for Honest Skeptics

4th Edition



**Rational bases for belief
for truth-seekers struggling
with God's existence,
involvement, and relevance**

Joel Lantz

Bridges for Honest Skeptics

4th Edition

(God Sightings? in editions 1 & 2)

Copyrights © 2012, 2014, 2016, and 2022 by Joel B. Lantz. All rights reserved, except for brief quotations in reviews and summaries as allowed by copyright law.

This e-book may be freely shared but with the following restrictions: 1) the document must be shared in its entirety, including this copyright page, 2) the document may not be modified in any way, 3) no derivative work may be created or used without written permission from the author, and 4) the document may not be used for any commercial purposes whatever; no fee may be charged — I have written it as a free educational resource, and it must stay that way.

To my
grandchildren

Beckett

Emily

Natalie

Reagan

Tanner

who may some
day benefit
from this book

Table of Contents

FIRST THINGS.....15

Forward	15
Why this book?	16
What's in it for me?.....	18
Who am I?.....	19
Bottom line.....	20
Overview	22
Changes in this 4th edition	28
Navigating this e-book	31
Active links	31
Active link usability	32
Footnotes	33
"Accessed on" comments for URLs	34

EVIDENCE.....35

Introduction	36
These accounts ring true	37
<i>The healing accounts</i>	37
<i>The other accounts</i>	38
Some themes may irk some readers	40
Miracles impossible?	43
Introduction.....	43
<i>What are miracles?</i>	43
<i>How rare are medical miracles?</i>	45
<i>About healings summarized in this book</i>	49

Adult small intestines CAN'T regenerate, but...	57
<i>The first surgery</i>	59
<i>The starving</i>	66
<i>The prayer</i>	66
<i>The regeneration</i>	68
<i>The permanence</i>	70
<i>Comments</i>	70
'Once I was blind, but now I can see...'	71
<i>Legally blind</i>	72
<i>Healed</i>	82
<i>Observational confirmation</i>	85
<i>Medical confirmation</i>	92
<i>Truly a miracle?</i>	97
Chronic back pain disappears	100
Direct encounter	105
<i>Pre-encounter condition</i>	105
<i>Pre-encounter physician observations</i>	108
<i>The encounter</i>	112
<i>Post-encounter physician observations</i>	113
<i>Remarks</i>	115
'Dead within 24 hours'	116
<i>The account</i>	116
<i>Remarks</i>	118
General comments about miracles	118

Who transformed these lives? 122

Qualifying remarks	123
From leading Pearl Harbor raid to spreading God's love	126
<i>From enemy full of hatred...</i>	126
<i>...who escaped multiple brushes with death...</i>	128

... to friend of love.....	129
Jew-hating PLO sniper strives to reconcile Arabs & Jews	134
<i>The transformation of Tass Saada</i>	134
<i>Reviewer: "Tass Is the Real Deal!"</i>	139
Father's hateful killers become son's loving family	140
Slave to wickedness becomes minister of freedom	145
A violent gang 'shot-caller', but then... ..	147
Sets out to make intellectual joke of Christianity, but... ..	152
White-hating Black Panther to white-majority pastor	155
Personal changes prompt personal investigation	163
Christ-follower hater to mission administrator.....	165
Christ-follower hater to beloved Christ-follower leader .	167
'Mr. Insecticide' risks life for 'insects'	169
Hindu supremacist transformed by supreme love	172
Beater to benefactor	173
Christ-followers show love to their torturers	174
<i>Some of the tortures</i>	174
<i>Some responses</i>	177
<i>Why such responses?</i>	180
Muslims encounter Christ, accept all risks; why?	181
The phenomenon.....	181
The cost	186
Sample accounts	190
<i>Bibles in the rain</i>	190
<i>Vision → mission</i>	192
<i>Gunpoint rendezvous</i>	193
<i>Angry Muslim cleric wants Bible</i>	194
<i>Beating Jesus?</i>	195
<i>The Muslim in the market</i>	197

<i>From contempt to Christ</i>	198
<i>Life-saving dream</i>	200
<i>Taliban transformation</i>	202
<i>ISIS guy enjoyed killing Christians, but then...</i>	204
Comments	206
Unusual means meet unusual ministry needs?	208
Whose impressions?.....	208
Whose promptings?	210
Whose words?.....	212
Whose army?.....	214
Whose intervention?	215
Help from...?	219
General comments.....	219
Who pushed the car?	220
Who guided the skier?.....	220
Who towed the car?	221
Who temporarily flew the plane?.....	222
Who held the guns?	223
Who rescued the little girl?	224
Discussion	225
Personal experiences	227
A de-perforated bowel?	227
The just-in-time job	228
The rescue.....	230
Traffic signs?.....	232
<i>Slippery-road guidance #1?</i>	232
<i>Slippery-road guidance #2?</i>	233

THINKING FURTHER.....234

Introduction	236
Scope	236
Emphasis	236
God?	239
Arguments and evidence	239
<i>No evidence?</i>	240
<i>Big Bang initiator?</i>	256
<i>Directed fine tuning?</i>	277
God is for weak-minded people?	301
<i>Introduction</i>	302
<i>Scientists too smart to believe in God?</i>	303
<i>Historical scientific rejections of belief?</i>	331
God is incompatible with science?	338
<i>The shoddy background of the science-vs.-God war</i>	338
<i>Science is objective?</i>	340
<i>Theistic belief is subjective?</i>	354
Supernatural = superstition?	359
Miracles are illogical and violate nature?	359
<i>Hume's anti-miracle argument: valid?</i>	359
<i>Miracles violate nature?</i>	362
The supernatural is irrational?	367
<i>Big Bang in the Bible?</i>	367
<i>More around than we perceive?</i>	372
<i>Supernatural in extra spacial dimensions?</i>	375
<i>Extra time dimensions and God?</i>	389
Mythical foundations?	397
Introduction	397

<i>A few remarks about general reliability</i>	398
<i>General approaches to the Bible</i>	400
<i>Examples of eisegesis</i>	401
Bible full of contradictions?	406
<i>Unwarranted biases</i>	406
<i>Unwarranted expectations</i>	408
New Testament mostly myth?.....	417
<i>Motivations for affirming myth?</i>	418
<i>Does scientific sophistication affirm myth?</i>	419
<i>Pagan parallels: biblical miracles = myths?</i>	421
<i>Modern parallels: biblical miracles = real?</i>	425
<i>OLD-Testament myths?</i>	426
New Testament is fundamentally unreliable?.....	428
<i>New Testament written long after Christ's death?..</i>	428
<i>Other ancient docs valid? New Testament not?</i>	430
<i>Authors fabricated stories about beloved leader?...</i>	435
<i>New Testament is unhistorical?</i>	438
<i>Dan Brown corrects history?</i>	451
<i>Can we trust Bart Ehrman?</i>	458
God? Then why this mess?!	467
Introduction.....	468
<i>Some 'what if' thinking fodder</i>	469
<i>Chapter focus</i>	471
Some thoughts on foundations of evil.....	473
<i>The 'what-if' CONTRIBUTION of entropy</i>	473
<i>The NECESSITY for entropy</i>	475
<i>The GOODNESS of God</i>	475
Foundations of goodness?.....	477
The only bad thing?	479

Humans liked the only bad thing?	479
A mixed bag?	481
Turn back the clock?	482
The clock keeps running?	484
What about justice?	485
<i>Don't we like justice?</i>	485
<i>Is what's good for the goose good for the gander?</i>	486
<i>The dilemma</i>	488
<i>The solution</i>	490
<i>Acceptable terms?</i>	493
<i>Effects</i>	494
Christ? Why?	497
Introduction	498
Can ANY belief system be true or most true?	498
<i>Objective truth doesn't exist?</i>	500
<i>Equalizing truth claims avoids conflict?</i>	502
<i>All belief systems are fundamentally the same?</i>	505
<i>Contradictory belief systems are equally true?</i>	514
<i>Bottom line</i>	518
If a belief system can be true, why biblical Christianity?	519
<i>A transcendent, personal, active God exists</i>	521
<i>A one-WHAT/three-WHOs God seems reasonable..</i>	523
<i>Christ as one of the WHOs seems reasonable</i>	525
<i>Christ's offer of grace makes sense</i>	531
<i>Acceptance of that grace makes sense</i>	537
But what about all the 'Christian' denominations?	538
Talking to the wind?	540
What is prayer?	540
Is all prayer equivalent?	540

The rationality of biblical prayer	541
<i>Biblical prayer is irrational?</i>	542
<i>Biblical faith is irrational?</i>	543
Evidence for effectual prayer?	546
<i>Some accounts in EVIDENCE</i>	546
<i>Double-blind studies of intercessory prayer</i>	547
<i>Prayer for Rome</i>	548
<i>Prayer for Istanbul</i>	551
Questions about prayer?	553
<i>Questions about Prayer for Istanbul</i>	554
<i>Other potential questions about prayer</i>	561
Closing thoughts	576

CONCERNING US.....577

Just animals?	578
Three viewpoints	579
Sudden appearance of behaviorally modern humans....	587
<i>The anthropological & linguistic evidence</i>	587
<i>Interpreting anthropological & linguistic evidence</i> ..	591
The cognitive uniqueness of human free will	598
<i>Claims of determinism self-refute</i>	599
<i>Materialism, determinism, and reality</i>	600
Evidence of transcendent directive influence today	613
Uniquely human behaviors	613
<i>Nonessential behaviors</i>	614
<i>Nonessential capabilities</i>	614
<i>Sense of justice</i>	615
<i>PROXIMATE meaning</i>	617
<i>ULTIMATE meaning</i>	620

<i>Unselfish, even sacrificial, love for strangers</i>	621
Just stuff?	626
Introduction.....	626
Standing in the shadow of dualism?	627
Brain's wiring makes us who we are?.....	628
<i>A grossly-premature book title?</i>	628
<i>How much do we KNOW about the brain?</i>	632
<i>Will science ultimately find we're just brains?</i>	633
God ↔ mind interface: how?	634
Other remote, non-sensory, extra-neural inputs?	636
<i>Introduction</i>	636
<i>Remote, non-sensory, extra-neural inputs?</i>	637
Life beyond the brain?.....	646
<i>Physical?</i>	648
<i>More than physical?</i>	649
<i>Bottom line</i>	649
AFTERWORD.....650	
APPENDICES.....653	
Appendix A: Greg Spencer evidence analysis	654
Did Greg truly have irreversible vision loss?	655
<i>Dr. Weleber's evaluations and diagnosis</i>	656
<i>Dr. Boyer letter</i>	696
Was Greg truly healed of his blindness?	697
<i>Could Greg's GOOD vision be ambiguous or faked?</i>	697
<i>Did Greg's eyes change physically?</i>	700
Encore performance of youthful sight regeneration?	701
<i>Analysis</i>	701

<i>Bottom line</i>	705
Conclusions	705
Appendix B: No singularity, no initiator?	707
Philosophical presuppositions	711
<i>'Grand DESIGN' but no designer?</i>	711
<i>Philosophy is dead?</i>	712
Basics	714
<i>The Planck-size universe</i>	714
<i>The expansion</i>	717
Issues.....	720
<i>From where did Planck-size universe come? When?</i>	720
<i>"...who created God?"</i>	724
<i>God plays dice?</i>	725
<i>Imaginary time is real?</i>	729
Conjecture in physics resolves issues in METAphysics? .	734
Appendix C: UNSpecial universe, one of zillions?	736
OUR physics spawned DIVERSE physics?	738
If so, OUR universe may indeed be exceedingly special	741
Appendix D: Prospective entropic contributions to evil	745
What is evil?	748
<i>What's the reference point for 'should be'?</i>	748
<i>How much of 'should be' is expectation?</i>	750
<i>Moral evil</i>	750
<i>Natural evil</i>	751
<i>Which is worse: moral or natural evil?</i>	755
The influence of entropy?	756
<i>What is entropy?</i>	756

<i>The impetus of entropy toward natural good?.....</i>	758
<i>Impetus of local entropy-DEcreases for good?</i>	759
<i>Impetus of entropy-INcreases toward moral evil?..</i>	760
<i>Impetus of entropy-INcreases toward natural evil?</i>	767
Is moral evil inevitable?.....	773
Forever?.....	774

**DEFINITIONS, COMMENTARY,
CITATIONS, REVS.....775**

Glossary	776
Endnotes	831
Revision history	997
This 4th edition	997
3rd edition.....	999
2nd edition	1000
1st edition	1001

FIRST THINGS

Forward

"...He so regulates the knowledge of Himself that He has given signs of Himself, visible to those who seek Him, and not to those who seek Him not. There is enough light for those who only desire to see, and enough obscurity for those who have a contrary disposition."

--- Blaise Pascal¹

"God has given us evidence sufficiently clear to convince those with an open heart and mind, yet evidence sufficiently vague so as not to compel those whose hearts and minds are closed."

--- Paraphrase popularly attributed to Blaise Pascal²

Why this book?

The combined title and subtitle of this book succinctly define its purpose (though *by no means is this book only for skeptics*^a). However, amplification is in order, both here and in the forthcoming [Overview](#).

Why this book?

Why have I written and given away this book? As a former agnostic/quasi-agnostic — a former honest skeptic³ — I now see the need to counter a) compartmentalized (vs. unified) notions of truth and b) popular misunderstandings, misperceptions, and myths about the **supernatural**, God generally, and the **biblical Christ** specifically. In agreement with the above Pascal quotes, I hope evidence and arguments in this book will be “sufficiently clear” to help *honest* skeptics, who:

- Believe truth exists.
- Seek truth.

^aThough presented foremost as thinking fodder for honest skeptics, I hope that this material also strengthens the confidence of readers well along the path of belief and helps *them* to help *others*.

Why this book?

- Are willing (or at least willing to be willing) to embrace truth when they find it.

I hope to build some bridges, however small, over intellectual — and, perhaps on occasion, emotional — obstacles to rational belief and to help honest skeptics gain confidence that God is real and involved.

Such confidence is an *extension* of, not a substitute for, other avenues of reason and evidence — an extension that accepts **transcendence** we can't perceive based on evidence and reason that we can. This book attempts to contribute to the latter.

Again, this book is written for *honest* skeptics. I take pains herein to analytically present evidence and arguments for the existence and involvement of a God. However, abundant mystery will remain. Refusal to accept mystery looms as a huge roadblock to acceptance of a **transcendent** God. If a **transcendent** God indeed exists — again, as evidenced and argued in this book — then mystery **MUST** exist, and forever-humanly-inaccessible knowledge, perspective, and understanding **MUST** exist, per the definition of **transcendence**. Therein lies the boundary between evidence and faith. Accordingly,

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

