

CURVEBALL

When Your Faith Takes Turns You Never Saw Coming
(or, How I Stumbled and Tripped My Way
to Finding a Bigger God)

PETER ENNS



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Notes

Chapter 1: My True Purpose. Or Not.

- 1 This means nothing if you're not into baseball, but it's a way of gauging how many outs a pitcher gets by striking batters out. Nine strikeouts per nine-inning game is pretty good. I averaged more than twelve, which is still a record for my college nearly forty years later. To impress you further, my other college record of note is wild pitches. I was more interested in blowing the ball past batters without caring much about where it went. Some have suggested these extremes are a metaphor for my emotional life.
- 2 I came to learn later that scouts generally sign players who they feel will be major leaguers within a few years (say by age twenty-four or twenty-five), not because they are good enough to pitch in the minor leagues now. The scouts felt I was good but not good enough to take a chance on.

Chapter 2: I Love You, Bible. Just Not "That" Way.

- 1 The Christian Bible certainly contains sections that contradict each other. In the Hebrew Bible, one need only compare the different accounts of Israel's monarchy as we read them in 1 and 2 Samuel/1 and 2 Kings and then in 1 and 2 Chronicles. In the New Testament, we have four Gospels that clearly (and intentionally) differ from each other. The reason for such a state of affairs is not confused authors, but the fact that the biblical authors wrote at different times and places, and under different circumstances—not to mention viewed the world through their own distinct lenses. Peter Ens, *The Bible Tells Me So: Why Defending Scripture Has Made Us Unable to Read It* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2014); Ens, *How the Bible Actually Works* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2019).

- 2 The exploits of King David, for example, seem to be mimicked in the earlier tales of Abraham and Judah. For example, the political relationship between the kingdoms of Israel and Edom is oddly reminiscent of the relationship between their eponymous ancestors Jacob and Esau.
- 3 This analogy comes from Gary Rendsburg's essay "The Genesis of the Bible." For a fuller and more academic take on this, see Gary A. Rendsburg, *How the Bible Is Written* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2019), 443–67.
- 4 The quotation is from Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, trans. Adrian J. Walker (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 97–98 (italics added).

Chapter 3: Welcome to a New Normal

- 1 Not to complicate things unnecessarily, but dating the beginning of Israel's monarchy to 1000 BCE is problematic. Saul and then David were more warrior-leaders trying to wrangle together various groups than kings reigning over a united land. In fact, many scholars think that there never was a united monarchy that eventually split into northern and southern factions (around 930 BCE). If we take the United States of America as a modern analogy, it would be like saying that there never was a "United States" that split during the Civil War. Rather, North and South always saw themselves as distinct, as did the individual states, which governed themselves. In this scenario, the idea of a presplit "United States" was only imposed by the North after it won the war as a way of bringing some unity to the country. Of course, this didn't happen, but it is roughly how some scholars understand the united monarchy over a united Israel—it is more propaganda than historical fact. It is also worth noting that the earliest evidence we have from outside of the Bible for Israel's politics comes from the ninth century BCE, when the northern and southern factions existed. If we ever uncover clear archaeological evidence for a united monarchy, the scholarly portrait will need to be adjusted accordingly.
- 2 It might be worth knowing that "forever" is the Hebrew word *'olam*, which does not mean a literal eternity, as Christians typically presume. It means more a long duration that can extend either backward or forward in time. David's "forever" reign would be through his children and would last a "good long time." The notion that, according to the New Testament, David's descendant Jesus will reign forever should not be read back into the Hebrew Bible.
- 3 I gleaned this term from James L. Kugel, *The Great Shift: Encountering God in Biblical Times* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2017), 169–75.
- 4 I explore this idea at greater length in *How the Bible Actually Works*.

Chapter 4: Adjusting for Jesus

- 1 Ancient Judaism was not a monolith. Various groups emerged that responded differently to cultural shifts, and especially to Greek and Roman occupation. Four of those groups are known to us: the Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, and Essenes—all but the last of which are mentioned in the New Testament. The Pharisees tended to resist the idea of Roman influence and were more concerned with the interpretation of the law of Moses. Sadducees were of the upper class of Jewish society and were in charge of the temple. They welcomed the power given them by Roman rule. The Zealots, by contrast, were all about rebelling against Roman rule. The Essenes, according to other ancient sources, were more of a separatist group that removed itself from society and practiced asceticism. They are also likely the group that is responsible for the famous Dead Sea Scrolls, which were discovered in 1946–1947. Apart from these four groups, other opinions were likely floating around among the common people about how to live with the Romans, including simply wanting to be left alone to live their lives.
- 2 The wicked King Antiochus IV Epiphanes (215–164 BCE) persecuted the Jews, which led to a Jewish revolt in 167 BCE, memorialized in the Hanukkah celebration. The persecution ceased in 164 BCE, but not before the blood of many faithful Jews had been shed. The anonymous author of 4 Maccabees says of these martyrs: “the tyrant [Antiochus] was punished, and the homeland purified—they [the martyrs] having become, as it were, a *ransom* for the sin of our nation. And through the blood of those devout ones and their death as an *atonement sacrifice*, divine Providence preserved Israel that previously had been mistreated” (4 Macc 17:21–22; emphasis added). “Ransom” and “atonement sacrifice” also describe Jesus’s crucifixion in the New Testament, for example, Mark 10:45 and 1 John 4:10.
- 3 John’s Gospel begins, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people” (John 1:1–4). “Word” is a concept borrowed from the world of Greek philosophy. The Greek term is *logos*, and grasping its exact meaning can be tricky. It often means something like logic, reason, or divine thought or plan. In some Jewish circles influenced by Greek thought, “Word” was the divine “force” of creation as well as a divine mediator bridging the gap between God and humans. For John, the Word, who was with God at creation and through whom all things were created, is the same Word who “became flesh and lived among us” (John 1:14).

- 4 A list of worldwide Christian denominations can be found at Wikipedia, “List of Christian Denominations by Number of Members,” Wikipedia, last updated September 22, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Christian_denominations_by_number_of_members. According to the Center for the Study of Global Christianity (CSGC) at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, the total number of Christian denominations worldwide runs as high as forty-one thousand, though “this statistic takes into consideration cultural distinctions between denominations in different countries, so there is an overlapping of many denominations” (Mary Fairchild, “How Many Christians Are in the World Today?,” Learn Religions, last updated April 16, 2020, <https://www.learnreligions.com/christianity-statistics-700533>). The true number is certainly far less than forty-one thousand, but even four thousand or four hundred would make the point.

Chapter 5: Blink of an Eye

- 1 I first saw this quotation in Dale Allison, *The Luminous Dusk: Finding God in the Deep, Still Places* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 2. This quote struck an immediate and deep chord with me.
- 2 See Bob Berman, “The Ever-lasting Question: More Sand or Stars?,” *Astronomy*, January 23, 2019, <https://astronomy.com/magazine/bob-berman/2019/01/more-sand-or-stars>.
- 3 Although space is not really empty. Astrophysicists are on the search for dark matter and dark energy, which cannot be seen by any means we have available to us but which mathematically have to be there. On dark matter, see Richard Panek, *The 4 Percent Universe: Dark Matter, Dark Energy, and the Race to Discover the Rest of Reality* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011).
- 4 Blaise Pascal, “Of the Necessity of the Wager,” sec. 3, nos. 205 and 206, in Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. W. F. Trotter, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, <https://ccel.org/ccel/pascal/pensees/pensees>.
- 5 Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543) created a scientific model that put the sun at the center of the solar system rather than the Earth. Galileo Galilei (1564–1642), among other things, is known for getting in hot water for his support of Copernicus’s heliocentrism. Johannes Kepler (1571–1630) developed laws of planetary motion, mathematically working out the elliptical (rather than circular) revolution of the planets around the sun.
- 6 Wordsworth’s words are cited in Allison, *The Luminous Dusk*, 85–86.
- 7 A number of books in the bibliography represent a small sampling of the work that has been done in recent years and from which I have learned much, including but not limited to work by Anna Case-Winters, Denis Edwards, John

Haught, Ilia Delio, John Polkinghorne, Tom Oord, and Thomas Torrence. I would also like to mention the series John Robert Russel, ed., *Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, 5 vols. (Vatican City State: Vatican Observatory Publications/Berkeley, CA: Center for Theology and Natural Sciences, 1993–2001), which is an invaluable five-volume collection of essays covering quantum cosmology, chaos theory, evolution, neuroscience, and quantum mechanics.

- 8 See Peter B. Todd, *The Individuation of God: Integrating Science and Religion* (Asheville, NC: Chiron, 2017).
- 9 See “The Pillars of Creation,” NASA, February 22, 2018, <https://www.nasa.gov/image-feature/the-pillars-of-creation>.
- 10 David Bentley Hart comments eloquently that such a view of God is hardly innovative but is central to the “great theistic traditions,” namely, “orthodox Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, Hinduism, Baha’i, a great deal of antique paganism, and so forth.” David Bentley Hart, *The Experience of God: Being Consciousness, Bliss* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013).

God so understood is not something posed over against the universe, in addition to it, nor is he the universe itself. He is not a “being,” at least not in the way that a tree, a shoemaker, or a god is a being; he is not one more object in the inventory of things that are, or any sort of discrete object at all. Rather, all things that exist receive their being continuously from him, who is the infinite wellspring of all that is, in whom (to use the language of the Christian scriptures) all things live and move and have their being. In one sense he is “beyond being,” if by “being” one means the totality of discrete, finite things. In another sense he is “being itself,” in that he is the inexhaustible source of all reality, the absolute upon which the contingent is always utterly dependent, the unity and simplicity that underlies and sustains the diversity of finite and composite things. Infinite being, infinite consciousness, infinite bliss, from whom we are, by whom we know and are known, and in whom we find our only true consummation. All the great theistic traditions agree that God, understood in this proper sense, is essentially beyond finite comprehension.

Chapter 6: Just When You Thought You Had the Bible Figured Out

- 1 In some of my previous books, I look more deeply at the Bible’s ancient weirdness as signposts for truly grasping what the Bible is and what it means for us to read it well. Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament*, 10th anniversary ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2015); Peter Ens, *The Bible Tells Me So*; Ens, *How the Bible Actually Works*.

- 2 Abraham Heschel quoted in Jon D. Levinson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1988), 63. Levenson is citing Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 46.
- 3 Barbara Brown Taylor explores this theme in *Learning to Walk in the Dark* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2014), and *The Luminous Web: Faith, Science and the Experience of Wonder* (London: Canterbury, 2000), as does Dale Allison in *The Luminous Dusk*.
- 4 As regards how much we can know, I love the following quotation from Allison, *The Luminous Dusk*, 173–74 :

I find it helpful in this connection to think about my dog Ralph, who is more German shepherd than anything else. Ralph knows that his food is kept in a large bag in the kitchen cabinet, and also that when I go to that cabinet with his dog bowl in hand, he is about to enjoy a meal. That is why he then barks with excitement. Ralph further knows that rubbing his large paws and whiskered nose against the cabinet in my presence communicates hunger, and that turning over his empty water bowl will get it filled immediately. Regarding his food and water, then, Ralph can think well enough.

There is, however, a fixed limit to his understanding. He does not know that bags of dog food come from a grocery store, a thing for which he has no concept. He does not know that a store has products because there are trucking lines. And he knows nothing about the agricultural operations or the manufacturing processes that result in bags of food. Such knowledge is too high for him; he cannot attain it.

These are things, moreover, that he can never understand. I could spend every waking hour trying to instruct him about the long chain of events that puts dog food in the kitchen cabinet. But it would all be in vain, for his mind is constricted. Beyond a knowledge of certain facts about the cabinet and his bowl, there is only fog. His mind runs out.

So too must it be with us. Some of us seem to imagine that because we understand much, we should be able to understand everything, and that science will continue pulling up the blinds, exposing to the light more and more of the dark room that is our ignorance. But this is a faith one need not be embarrassed to decline. Despite all our knowledge about ourselves and the universe we inhabit, much more is unknown than is known; our ignorance drowns our knowledge; and, just as Ralph's understanding soon enough meets what it cannot fathom, so too is it with us. The world is large, and our minds are small, so the latter cannot always contain the former. We cannot but expect there to be mysteries—permanent mysteries—on every side.

- 5 David Bentley Hart has many incisive thoughts on this topic in *The Experience of God*, none less so than the following (which appears on p. 332): “More simply, we shall arrive at a way of seeing that sees God in all things, a joy that encounters God in the encounter with all reality; we shall find that all of reality is already embraced in the supernatural, that God is present in everything because everything abides in God, and that God is known in all experience because it is the knowledge of God that makes all other experience possible.”
- 6 C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (London: Macmillan, 1952), 174.
- 7 Mark William Worthing, *God, Creation and Contemporary Physics* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 201.
- 8 Karl Rahner, “The Spirituality of the Church of the Future,” in *Theological Investigations, Vol. 20: Concern for the Church*, trans. Edward Quinn (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 149.

Chapter 7: The Other 99 Percent

- 1 David Kindy, “Near-Perfect Cave Lion Cub Corpse Found in Siberian Permafrost,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, August 10, 2021, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/near-perfect-cave-lion-cub-corpse-found-siberian-permafrost-180978403/>.
- 2 See Geoffrey Migiro, “The Oldest Ships in the World,” *WorldAtlas*, May 21, 2018, <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-oldest-ships-in-the-world.html>; see “Ancient Maritime History,” Wikipedia, last updated September 19, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_maritime_history; see “History of Wrestling,” Wikipedia, last updated July 30, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_wrestling; see “History of Beer,” Wikipedia, last updated September 16, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_beer.
- 3 See Andrew Curry, “An Immense Mystery Older than Stonehenge,” *BBC*, August 16, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20210815-an-immense-mystery-older-than-stonehenge>; see “Stonehenge,” *History.com*, last updated February 19, 2020, <https://www.history.com/topics/british-history/stonehenge>.
- 4 See Brian Handwerk, “An Evolutionary Timeline of Homo Sapiens,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, February 2, 2021, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/essential-timeline-understanding-evolution-homo-sapiens-180976807/>.
- 5 Darwin’s classic *On the Origin of Species* was published in 1859, and *The Descent of Man* in 1871; See Charles Q. Choi, “How Did Multicellular Life Evolve?,” *Astrobiology at NASA*, February 13, 2017, <https://astrobiology.nasa.gov/news/how-did-multicellular-life-evolve/>; See Handwerk, “An Evolutionary Timeline.”

- 6 *The DNA Tests*, “How Much DNA Do Humans Share with Other Animals and Plants?” <https://thednatests.com/how-much-dna-do-humans-share-with-other-animals/>.
- 7 Recently, apologist William Lane Craig, *In Quest of the Historical Adam: A Biblical and Scientific Exploration* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2021), has thrown his hat in the ring on this option. He argues that Adam was not the first human but a member of the early human species *Homo heidelbergensis* and lived between 750,000 and 1 million years ago. Craig is known for his defense of biblical authority, and I find his claim a welcome, surprising, and significant concession to scientific fact, for which he is to be applauded, particularly given his conservative readership. On the other hand, his insistence in retaining a notion of biblical authority that requires a literal Adam of some sort, even a *Homo heidelbergensis* man, seems to minimize the Bible’s ancient Near Eastern context and the rise and evolution of religions in general.
- 8 For some hefty reading, see Kieth B. Miller, ed., *Perspectives on an Evolving Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), and Robert John Russell, William R. Stoeger, and Francisco J. Ayala, eds., *Evolutionary and Molecular Biology: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action* (Vatican City State: Vatican Observatory/Berkeley, CA: Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, 1998). For something more accessible, see the books listed in the bibliography by Denis O. Lamoureux.
- 9 St. Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. J. H. Taylor, 2 vols. (New York: Paulist, 1982), 1:42–43.
- 10 Johnathan Sacks, *The Great Partnership: Science Religion, and the Search for Meaning* (New York: Schocken, 2011), 352–3.
- 11 *Yellowstone*, season 4, episode 5, “Under a Blanket of Red.”
- 12 Technically speaking, “evolution” is limited to biology and involves genetic change over time. When we speak of the evolution of the cosmos or of the Earth, we are using the term as a metaphor for a nonstatic cosmos and Earth. But even having said that, there is somewhat of a connection between the scientific and metaphorical meanings. The revolution of biological evolution in the nineteenth century developed in the wake of the geological evolution one to two centuries earlier. The Earth’s crust emerged over time from volcanic activity and earthquakes, and sedimentary rocks reveal ancient layers of the Earth; Ilia Delio, *The Unbearable Wholeness of Being: God, Evolution, and the Power of Love* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2013), xvii.
- 13 Many other cosmologists, informed by quantum theory, theorize that our universe is one of limitless others that bubbled up (my words) and out of another universe in an endless cycle of universes. From what I can tell, this view is gaining traction. One universe is more than enough for me to get my head around, so I’m just going to leave this here.

- 14 Richard B. Larson and Volker Bromm, “The First Stars in the Universe,” *Scientific American*, January 19, 2009, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-first-stars-in-the-un/>.
- 15 Ethan Siegel, “The Only Three Heavy Elements in the Universe That Aren’t Made in Stars,” *Forbes*, July 1, 2015, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ethansiegel/2015/07/01/the-only-three-heavy-elements-in-the-universe-that-arent-made-in-stars/?sh=b3a49db39e68>.

Chapter 8: Other People (Eww. I Mean, Yay.)

- 1 Scholars call these four books the “Johannine literature” for sake of reference, even though many see no reason to think the disciple John wrote them. “Johannine” is from the German “Johan” since “John” is virtually impossible to turn into a decent-sounding English adjective (Johnian?!). The other Gospels can form fine English adjectives: Markan, Matthaean, and Lukan.
- 2 A wonderful look at navigating love in contentious contexts is Jared Byas, *Love Matters More: How Fighting to Be Right Keeps Us from Loving like Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020).
- 3 For Rohr’s tricycle metaphor, see Richard Rohr, “Another Way to See the Bible: Lesson 4, The Tricycle: Scripture, Tradition, and Experience,” Center for Action and Contemplation, https://cac.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/The-Bible_Lesson-4_The-Tricycle-Scripture-Experience-and-Tradition.pdf, or Pete Enns and Jared Byas, “Interview with Richard Rohr: A Contemplative Look at the Bible,” *The Bible for Normal People*, podcast, March 12, 2018, <https://thebiblefornormalpeople.com/a-contemplative-look-at-the-bible-with-richard-rohr/>.
- 4 “Rob Portman Commentary: Gay Couples Also Deserve Chance to Get Married,” *Columbus Dispatch*, March 15, 2013, <https://www.dispatch.com/story/opinion/cartoons/2013/03/15/rob-portman-commentary-gay-couples/23832285007>.

Chapter 9: Quantum Weirdness

- 1 “Sizing Up Protons,” *Nova*, The Elegant Universe, student handout, https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/teachers/activities/3012_elegant_13.html.
- 2 I say “roughly” because it’s really only sort of halfway, but the image is still useful to help us grasp how ungraspably small the quantum level is. See “Are We Big or Small?,” Physics Stack Exchange, edited July 13, 2014, <https://physics.stackexchange.com/questions/44284/are-we-big-or-small>. If you want to try to visualize this, see “Visualizing the Planck Length. Why Is It the Smallest Length in the Universe?” YouTube, October 12, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bjVfL8uNkUk>.

- 3 Wikipedia explains Erwin Schrödinger's equation as "a linear partial differential equation that governs the wave function of a quantum-mechanical system." I'll take your word for it, Wiki. Basically, from what I can gather, the equation predicts the weird motions of subatomic particles, which can't be accounted for according to Isaac Newton's equations (which deal with the utterly predictable movements of larger objects, like planets and falling apples). Now that that's cleared up, Google "Schrödinger's cat"—unless you really love cats. "Schrödinger Equation," Wikipedia, last updated September 19, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schr%C3%B6dinger_equation.
- 4 See Manjit Kumar, *Quantum: Einstein, Bohr, and the Great Debate About the Nature of Reality* (London: Icon Books, 2009).
- 5 Not to mention space! "The first thing that can be said is we do not honestly know the true nature of space and time." Shahn Majid, "Preface," in Shahn Majid, ed., *On Space and Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008), ix.
- 6 Kelly Dickerson, "Here's Why Astronauts Age Slower Than the Rest of Us Here on Earth," Insider, August 19, 2015, <https://www.businessinsider.com/do-astronauts-age-slower-than-people-on-earth-2015-8?op=1>.
- 7 "Time Dilation," Wikipedia, last updated August 13, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Time_dilation.
- 8 "A Roller Coaster Through Relativity/Time Dilation," Wikibooks, last modified February 16, 2018, https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/A_Roller_Coaster_Ride_through_Relativity/Time_Dilation.
- 9 Carlo Rovelli, *Seven Brief Lessons on Physics* (New York: Riverhead, 2016), 60. Rovelli himself does not think the flow of time is an illusion, though Einstein at least makes room for it. On that same page, Rovelli goes on to cite a letter Einstein wrote after the death of his longtime friend Michele Besso to Besso's grieving sister: "People like us, who believe in Physics, know that the distinction made between past, present and future is nothing more than a persistent, stubborn illusion." Rovelli argues that Einstein's view of time is more complex than can be gathered from a single quotation from a private letter in a time of grief.
- 10 " $E = mc^2$ Explained," Einstein's Big Idea, *Nova*, August 2005, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/einstein/lrk-hand-emc2expl.html>.
- 11 Allison, *The Luminous Dusk*, 90. I might add to Allison's list Einstein reconceiving of the universe simply by the act of thinking it through in solitude in his spare time during work hours.
- 12 This is true, but not entirely. It was the German physicist Max Planck who truly started the quantum revolution in 1901. Einstein did not start publishing his theories until 1905. Not a big deal in the grand scheme of things, but let's give credit where credit is due.

- 13 In 1964, Irish physicist John Stewart Bell worked it all out mathematically. In 1982 it was verified experimentally, and has been many times since. Sheldon Goldstein, Travis Norsen, Daniel Victor Tausk, and Nino Zanghi, “Bell’s Theorem,” *Scholarpedia*, 6(10) (2011): 8378, http://www.scholarpedia.org/article/Bell%27s_theorem. The 2022 Nobel Prize for physics was awarded to Alain Aspect, John Clauser, and Anton Zeilinger for their work in further verifying the phenomenon of quantum entanglement. <https://english.elpais.com/science-tech/2022-10-18/why-quantum-entanglement-is-revolutionizing-our-understanding-of-nature.html>.
- 14 For Bohm’s words, see David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (New York: Routledge, 1995). Although I cannot endorse his book as a whole, Joseph Selbie, *The Physics of God: Unifying Quantum Physics, Consciousness, M-Theory, Heaven, Neuroscience, and Transcendence* (Newburyport, MA: New Page Books, 2017), 94–97, offers a readable and, it seems to me, balanced explanation of Bohm’s contribution to the question. Overall, however, the book seems to lack the grounding that a serious academic study would provide (Selbie is a yoga and meditation instructor with a modest background in undergraduate physics). The book’s claim is in its subtitle. That is a tall order for anyone, and quantum physicists are generally quick to point out that one cannot simply claim that what happens in the quantum realm can be applied to anything outside of it. Having said that, I am all in favor of trying to build bridges between the science of quantum physics (and other sciences) and theology. But lines of connection have to be drawn in such a way that don’t promise too much or oversimplify the science along the way.
- 15 I learned most of what follows from Paul Davies, *God and the New Physics* (New York: Touchstone, 1983), 107–10.
- 16 Davies, *God and the New Physics*, 110.
- 17 Physicists don’t even agree on how to define “measurement” or whether it matters. See, for example, Sean Carroll, *Something Deeply Hidden: Quantum Worlds and the Emergence of Spacetime* (New York: Dutton, 2019), 17: “What exactly a measurement is, and what happens when we measure something, and what this all tells us about what’s really happening behind the scenes: together, these questions constitute what’s called the *measurement problem* of quantum mechanics.”

Chapter 10: Quantum God-ness

- 1 Taylor, *The Luminous Web*, 44.
- 2 Delio, *The Unbearable Wholeness of Being*, 60.
- 3 Delio, *The Unbearable Wholeness of Being*, 15.

- 4 Delio, *The Unbearable Wholeness of Being*, 15. The move from Newton’s “picturable and predictable” world to the quantum one is a big deal, because theology had made many intellectual accommodations to Newton’s curve-ball. For example, God’s Presence and action in the world came to be seen as supernatural *intervention* from the outside, a suspension of the cosmos that obeyed God’s mechanistic rules, rather than seeing God’s Presence and action woven throughout the creation. Part of what quantum physics and Process Theology open up is the ability to affirm the importance of human freedom and of divine Presence and action apart from Newton’s passé view of the cosmos. Much has been written on this subject since the days of philosopher Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947), who sought to explore the impact of the quantum revolution on the nature of meaning. Very helpful entry points to this discussion are Thomas Jay Oord, *Open and Relational Theology: An Introduction to Life-Changing Ideas* (Grasmere ID: SacraSage, 2021), and Denis Edwards, *The God of Evolution: A Trinitarian Theology* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1999).
- 5 For a hefty discussion of panentheism in the face of science, see Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke, eds., *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God’s Presence in a Scientific World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003).
- 6 In this respect, I have been helped by the works of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and by two of his helpful interpreters, John F. Haught and Ilia Delio. Some of their books are listed in the bibliography.
- 7 Denis Edwards, *How God Acts: Creation, Redemption, and Special Divine Action* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2010), 27.
- 8 I am aware that the gendered language the Bible and the church have used to speak of the Trinity is a legitimate theological problem for our day and can create barriers. I hope readers will understand that in the context of this book I am simply using the conventional language because it is easily recognized. Readers are invited to employ other language, such as “Mother, Daughter, and Spirit.” Along these lines, a friend passed on to me a book that includes a fascinating discussion of how some early Christian depictions of Jesus have “broad hips” that “look feminine in outline,” or where “Early Christian artists have expressly given him breasts”: Thomas F. Mathews, *The Clash of Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art*, rev. ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 128ff.
- 9 When on Easter morning Jesus tells a startled Mary Magdalene, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended” (John 20:17), I imagine that perhaps in his transformed state Jesus was in his own interdimensional travel through space and time, where the intimate love of God for the Son conquered all barriers to relationship, death included. Musing on the mys-

- tery of Easter Sunday in quantum terms is another hill I won't die on, but I don't mind letting my thoughts wander a bit, especially since I've never fully bought in to any explanation for this scene at the end of John's Gospel, nor is it clear to me what a resurrected body actually is.
- 10 Karl Rahner cited in Edwards, *How God Acts*, 153 (Rahner, "Dogmatic Questions on Easter," 129).
 - 11 From St. John of Damascus's brief essay "First Apology Against Those Who Attack the Divine Images," which can be found at Aidan Kimel, "I Do Not Worship Matter, I Worship the God of Matter, Who Became Matter for My Sake," *Eclectic Orthodoxy* (blog), <https://afkimel.wordpress.com/2018/02/24/i-do-not-worship-matter-i-worship-the-god-of-matter-who-became-matter-for-my-sake/>.
 - 12 The poem is "God's Grandeur."
 - 13 Oord lays out his wonderful portrait of God as relational and relentless loving in several books, two of which are *The Uncontrolling Love of God: An Open and Relational Control of Providence* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), and *Pluriform Love: An Open and Relational Theology of Well-Being* (Grasmere, ID: SacraSage, 2022).

Chapter 11: Thin Places

- 1 Taylor, *The Luminous Web*, 54. Carlo Rovelli, *Helgoland: Making Sense of the Quantum Revolution* (New York: Riverhead, 2021), tells of a friend's similar experience: "My good friend Lee recounts that as a young man he lay on his bed for hours on end looking at the ceiling, after he had studied entanglement. He was thinking about how each atom in his body must have interacted in some distant past with so many other atoms in the universe. Every atom in his body had to be entangled with billions of atoms dispersed throughout the galaxy . . . He felt a connectedness with the cosmos."
- 2 This is a major theme in N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2008).
- 3 Dale C. Allison, *Night Comes: Death, Imagination, and the Last Things* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 36.
- 4 "Is There Life After Death? Fifty Years of Research at UVA," YouTube, February 22, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oAtTM9hgCDw&t=2362s>. For a deeper dive into the research, a good place to start is Janice Miner Holden, Bruce Greyson, and Debbie James, eds., *The Handbook of Near-Death Experiences: Thirty Years of Investigation* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2009), and John C. Hagen III, ed., *The Science of Near-Death Experiences* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press).

- 5 Bruce Greyson, "I Study NDEs. What I Learned About Near-Death Experiences Changed My Life," *Newsweek*, March 13, 2021, <https://www.newsweek.com/i-worked-people-who-came-back-brink-death-1575676>.
- 6 Bruce Leininger and Andrea Leininger, *Soul Survivor: The Reincarnation of a World War II Fighter Pilot* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2009).
- 7 I recommend highly Allison, *Night Comes*, Dale C. Allison Jr., *Embracing Mystery: Religious Experience in a Secular Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2022), and part 3 of the massive Dale C. Allison Jr., *The Resurrection of Jesus: Apologetics, Polemics, History* (London: T&T Clark, 2021).
- 8 Allison, *Night Comes*, 14–15.
- 9 "Greyson NDE Scale," IANDS, last updated June 11, 2022, <https://iands.org/research/nde-research/important-research-articles/698-greyson-nde-scale.html>.
- 10 Caleb Wilde, *All the Ways Our Dead Still Speak: A Funeral Director on Life, Death, and the Hereafter* (Minneapolis, MN: Broadleaf, 2022), 24.
- 11 Molly's story, as well as information on the Molly Steinsapir Foundation, can be found at <https://mollysteinsapir.com>.
- 12 Bradley Jersak, *Her Gates Will Never Be Shut: Hope, Hell, and the New Jerusalem* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 120–21. Jersak cites the third-century theologian Origen, *De Principiis* 1.1.1, found in *Ancient Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 4. See also Hans Urs von Balthazar, *Dare We Hope "That All Men Be Saved"?*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014); Gregory MacDonald, *The Evangelical Universalist: A Biblical Hope That God's Love Will Save All*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012); Bradley Jersak, *A More Christlike God: A More Beautiful Gospel* (Pasadena, CA: CWRpress, 2015).
- 13 I say "similar" because this episode also has dwarves who refuse to fully enter the real Narnia and receive what Aslan wants to give them. This suggests that Lewis is more of an inclusivist than universalist.
- 14 Teilhard calls this future the "omega point" (omega being the last letter of the Greek alphabet). See John F. Haught, *The Cosmic Vision of Teilhard de Chardin* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2021), 17–33.
- 15 Recently, Richard Rohr has described his own understanding of this dimension in *The Universal Christ: How a Forgotten Reality Can Change Everything We See, Hope for, and Believe* (New York: Convergent, 2019).
- 16 Shout-out to the 1960s and Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young's version of Joni Mitchell's classic song "Woodstock."
- 17 George L. Murphy works out this idea in *The Cosmos in Light of the Cross* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 2003).
- 18 Richard Beck, *The Slavery of Death* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014), 31.

- 19 Einstein quoted in Allison, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 358–59 (from Einstein and Infeld, *Evolution of Physics*, 31).

Chapter 12: Catching Glimpses

- 1 I am grateful for my colleague of ten years, theologian Dr. Eric Flett, for continually encouraging me to engage the implications of global Christianity.
- 2 I have learned much from Bessel A. van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Viking, 2014).
- 3 Thomas Keating, *Invitation to Love: The Way of Christian Contemplation* (New York: Continuum, 2007), defines “divine therapy” as “a paradigm in which the spiritual journey is presented as a form of psychotherapy designed to heal the emotional wounds of early childhood and our mechanisms for coping with them.” More briefly, see Thomas Keating, *The Human Condition: Contemplation and Transformation* (New York: Paulist, 1999), 29–45; see also Kyriacos C. Markides, *Gifts of the Desert: The Forgotten Path of Christian Spirituality* (New York: Doubleday, 2005).
- 4 See the opening chapter in John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (“The Connection Between the Knowledge of God and the Knowledge of Ourselves”), which is available in various editions and formats. An online version can be found at Project Gutenberg, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/45001/45001-h/45001-h.htm>: “True and substantial wisdom principally consists of two parts, the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of ourselves. But, while these two branches of knowledge are so intimately connected, which of them precedes and produces the other, is not easy to discover. For, in the first place, no man can take a survey of himself but he must immediately turn to the contemplation of God, in whom he ‘lives and moves’; . . . On the other hand, it is plain that no man can arrive at the true knowledge of himself, without having first contemplated the divine character, and then descended to the consideration of his own” (Chapter 1, Sections 1 and 2).
- 5 Hart, *The Experience of God*, 44.

Bibliography

I normally don't like flooding readers with a long bibliography, as if I'm giving homework or something, but this is a different kind of book for me to write. I had to (better, *got* to) do a lot of reading outside of my usual areas—namely, science—and I want you to know what I've been reading. I've whittled the list down to books I have actually cited and some others (mainly in the science category) that I have benefitted from more generally, that are for the most part quite readable, and that I wanted to share with you. Internet sources are not included here but can be found in the endnotes.

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