

Liberty University

**Original Monotheism: A Signal of Transcendence Challenging
Naturalism and New Ageism**

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the Faculty of the School of Divinity
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

Department of Christian Leadership and Church Ministries

by

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Liberty University School of Divinity

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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Where once in America, belief in Christian theism was shared by a large majority of the population, over the last 70 years belief in Christian theism has significantly eroded. From 1948 to 2018, the percent of Americans identifying as Catholic or Christians dropped from 91 percent to 67 percent, with virtually all the drop coming from protestant denominations.¹ Naturalism and new ageism increasingly provide alternative means for understanding existential reality without the moral imperatives and the belief in the divine associated with Christian theism. The ironic aspect of the shifting of worldviews underway in western culture is that it continues with little regard for strong evidence for the truth of Christian theism emerging from historical, cultural, and scientific research. One reality long overlooked in this regard is the research of Wilhelm Schmidt and others, which indicates that the earliest religion of humanity is monotheism. Original monotheism is a strong indicator of the existence of a transcendent God who revealed Himself as portrayed in Genesis 1-11, thus affirming the truth of essential elements of Christian theism and the falsity of naturalism and new ageism. Original monotheism is a signal of transcendence and stands with other emerging existential realities that point to a Creator, including the fine-tuning of the universe, the origin and complexity of life, the mind and consciousness, the moral code which imbues humanity, and the growing evidence for the resurrection of Jesus. This paper concludes that the retreat from Christian theism has been hasty and ill-founded in the light of the evidence.

Thesis project topic abstract length: 260 words.

¹ "Religion," Gallup, accessed September 9, 2019, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/1690/religion.aspx>.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Problem Presented

In *A Secular Age*, philosopher Charles Taylor suggests that the shift in western culture toward materialism, and thus naturalism, has been facilitated by a coming of age story and a death of God narrative, thus leaving humanity to the “genuine deliverances of science.”² According to Taylor, where once in western society, “it was virtually impossible not to believe in God,” now, faith is but one “possibility among others.”³ Taylor refers to the way sense is made of the surrounding world as the “cosmic imaginary.”⁴ Taylor is struck by the views which are present in modern society, ranging from atheistic materialism to orthodox Christianity with numerous options in between, including the pantheistic transcendentalism of Emerson, which is spiritual but not religious.⁵ As Taylor indicates, a host of spiritual options are available in twenty-first-century America. However, as the philosopher of science Bruce Gordon notes, that does not imply that all these views are rationally defensible.⁶

The problem is that western culture is abandoning the theist worldview for naturalist and new ageist worldviews, at a time when evidence for the truth of the theist worldview is rapidly emerging. Supporting this assertion is strong evidence for original monotheism, the fine-tuning of the universe, the complexity of life, the existence of universal values and morality, and the

² Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 575, Kindle.

³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 323.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 351.

⁶ Bruce Gordon and William Dembski, *The Nature of Nature: Examining the role of Naturalism in Science* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2014), 593, Kindle.

failure of reductionist materialist theories to account for the nature of the mind and consciousness.

Consistent with Taylor's claim, philosopher Thomas Nagel affirms that metaphysical naturalism is the dominant worldview in the secular academy.⁷ Its most basic presupposition denies the existence of God. Likewise, Gordon affirms the dominance of naturalism in the sciences. However, in the culture at large, Gordon, like Taylor, sees a full range of religious and irreligious options in modern western society, ranging from atheistic materialism to New Age syncretism and paganism.⁸

The press of naturalism on western culture is not limited to the academy, for the same forces are found to be at work in the primary and secondary education system in the United States. The recently developed Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) suggest that organisms arose from molecules and teach that all living things evolved from a common ancestor by natural selection.⁹ The NGSS have been adopted in whole by 20 states. An additional 24 states have developed their science standards based upon the Framework for K-12 Education from which the NGSS are derived.^{10, 11}

Through the education system, from kindergarten to college, metaphysical naturalism enjoys wide acceptance and the imprimatur of the educational establishment. Also, through the

⁷ Thomas Nagel, *Mind & Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 4.

⁸ Bruce Gordon and William Dembski, *The Nature of Nature*, 601, Kindle.

⁹ "Disciplinary Core Ideas," National Science Teaching Association, accessed September 7, 2019, <https://ngss.nsta.org/DisciplinaryCoreIdeasMid.aspx?id=2>.

¹⁰ "About the Next Generation Science Standards," National Science Teaching Association, accessed September 7, 2019, <https://ngss.nsta.org/About.aspx>.

¹¹ "A Framework for K-12 Science Education" National Science Teaching Association, accessed September 7, 2019, <https://www.nextgenscience.org/framework-k-12-science-education>.

mainstream media, Christians and non-Christians are assailed with naturalism and its major tenets.¹² Referred to as a group as the new atheists, prominent public intellectuals have mounted a campaign dedicated to the death of God and the abolishment of religion. Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens, and Daniel Dennett have written books in recent years promoting atheism, the Theory of Evolution, and the truth of the naturalist worldview. So strident was the cacophony denying the existence of God with great certainty that a response was prompted by an unlikely interlocutor, agnostic, secular Jew, David Berlinski, because in his words, “A defense is needed because none had been forthcoming.”¹³

Original Monotheism: Evidence for the Truth of Theism

As western civilization is rapidly divesting of Christian theism, it has been long known, and never refuted, that the original religion of humanity is monotheism. This paper will present evidence to show that the nineteenth-century thesis that religion evolved from animism to monotheism is falsified by the monotheism that is found throughout the world among the least materially advanced cultures, believed to most closely approximate the earliest culture of modern human beings. Furthermore, it will be shown that the challenges and objections to the monotheistic conclusions of Lang and Schmidt have fallen far short in overturning the evidence of monotheism as the earliest religion of modern humans. It will also be shown that the religion of ancient China was decidedly monotheistic with the worship of Shang Di during the Shang dynasty and perhaps earlier, as is made clear in the *Chinese Classics*. This paper will argue that

¹² Francis Beckwith, William Lane Craig, and J. P. Moreland, *To Everyone an Answer: A Case for the Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 224-225.

¹³ David Berlinski, *The Devil's Delusion: Atheism and Its Scientific Pretensions* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2009), xiii.

the best explanation for original monotheism among diverse ancient people groups is the existence of a transcendent God who revealed Himself to the creatures He created. Thus, the ubiquity of original monotheism is a strong argument for the existence of a God who greatly resembles the God of the Bible revealed in Genesis 1-11, and further, that He revealed Himself to His creatures. This historical evidence affirms important claims of Christian theism.

It is argued that original monotheism is a signal of transcendence, a pointer for humanity directing it beyond the immanent frame to the existence of a transcendent reality and a creator God. This argument will be bolstered by others signals of transcendence including the origin and fine-tuning of the universe, the origin and complexity of life, the human mind and consciousness, the existence of moral law, altruism, and a sense of justice, and the growing evidence for the resurrection of Jesus. It will be further argued that the growing evidence for the truth of theism poses an insurmountable challenge for naturalism and new ageism.

The paragraphs immediately following will show that the growing acceptance of important aspects of the naturalist and new ageist worldviews has led to the thinning of the ranks of Christian theists. Ironically, diminishing Christian theist influence in American culture has accompanied growing evidence for its truth, a reality long ignored. Thus, the departure from Christian theism in America has been hasty and ill-founded.

Belief in God in America

While the preceding paragraphs might give the impression that belief in God has plummeted in recent years, that is not the case. A Gallup Poll conducted periodically in the United States between 1944 and 2014 shows that belief in God has dropped from 96 percent to 86 percent, thus affirming that most Americans still believe in God. All polls were conducted

with 1000 participants and are estimated to have a 3-5 percent margin of error.¹⁴ Thus belief in God is still high, but it is eroding. This fact, coupled with increasing acceptance of concerning aspects of the naturalist and new age worldviews, sets the stage for significant cultural shifts and trends. The survey data cited in the paragraphs below elucidate the nature of the shifting religious landscape in America. The shift away from a Christian theist worldview to naturalist and new age worldviews is of concern, since as will be argued in this paper, the presuppositions of the naturalist and new age worldviews fail to comport with important existential evidence and facts.

Denominational Trends

The recently released results of the 2018 General Social Survey (GSS) contain a concerning trend.¹⁵ From 1972 to 2018, the GSS data show all religious groups attracting a fairly steady percentage of the U.S. Population except two groups, mainline Protestants and those claiming no religious affiliation (often referred to as nones). During this period, mainline Protestant denominations dropped from 28 percent to 12 percent of the U.S. population, while nones, those who are religiously unaffiliated, grew from 5 percent to 23 percent of the U.S. population. According to professor of political science, Ryan Burge, who analyses trends in religion, individuals in mainline denominations are leaving the pews of mainline Protestant Churches and becoming nones, individuals declaring no religious affiliation.¹⁶

¹⁴ “See How Americans' Belief in God Has Changed Over 70 Years,” Time, accessed September 7, 2019, <https://time.com/4283975/god-belief-religion-americans/>.

¹⁵ “Results of the 2018 General Social Survey Now Available to the Public,” NORC at the University of Chicago, accessed September 7, 2019, <http://www.norc.org/NewsEventsPublications/PressReleases/Pages/results-of-2018-general-social-survey-now-available.aspx>.

¹⁶ “‘Nones’ now as big as evangelicals, Catholics in the US,” Religion News Service, accessed September 7, 2019, <https://religionnews.com/2019/03/21/nones-now-as-big-as-evangelicals-catholics-in-the-us/>.

Southern Ontario Study

In a separate study of 9 growing and 13 declining mainline Protestant churches of southern Ontario, the study's authors (Haskell, Flatt, and Burgoyne), concluded that theological conservatism of the clergy and congregants of these mainline Protestant churches was a predictor of whether they would grow or decline. Responding to a question as to whether Jesus rose from the dead in a real flesh and blood body leaving behind an empty tomb, 84.6 percent of the clergy of the growing churches strongly agreed, while only 37.5 percent of the clergy of the declining churches strongly agreed. When asked whether the Bible is the Word of God to be taken literally, 38.5 percent of the clergy in growing churches strongly disagreed while 93.75 percent of the clergy in declining churches strongly disagreed.¹⁷ In a separate article featured in the Washington Post, one of the study's authors, professor of religion and culture, David Haskell concludes, "Conservative Protestant theology, with its more literal view of the Bible, is a significant predictor of church growth while liberal theology leads to decline."¹⁸

The south Ontario study is localized and should not, without further investigation, be extrapolated to the overall North American church. However, it can be concluded from this study that rejection of the supernatural elements of Christianity, i.e., the divine authority of the Bible and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, was present in the declining churches of south Ontario connected with the study. Rejection of the supernatural is precisely the position advanced by the naturalist worldview. It appears from this limited study that clergy from the declining churches

¹⁷ David Millard Haskell, Kevin N. Flatt, and Stephanie Burgoyne. "Theology Matters: Comparing the Traits of Growing and Declining Mainline Protestant Church Attendees and Clergy." *Review of Religious Research* 58, no. 4 (12, 2016): 515-41.

¹⁸ David Millard Haskell, "Liberal churches are dying. But conservative churches are thriving," January 4, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2017/01/04/liberal-churches-are-dying-but-conservative-churches-are-thriving/?noredirect=on>.

of south Ontario would find themselves in agreement with naturalists in rejection of important supernatural elements of Christianity.

Belief in the Resurrection and Divinity of the Bible

As the Gallup poll, referenced above indicates, over the 70-years between 1944 and 2014, belief in God has declined from 96 percent to 86 percent of those polled. The GSS poll (also cited above), affirms the increase of those in America with no religious affiliation and is informative regarding the acceptance of Americans of the supernatural elements of Christianity. Between 1972 and 2018, the percentage of Americans declaring no religious affiliation has risen from 5 percent to 23 percent. These data correlate well with a Gallup poll of religious preferences conducted annually between 1948 and 2018. During that period, the percent of Americans identifying as Catholic or Christians dropped from 91 percent to 67 percent, with virtually all of the drop coming from Protestant denominations.¹⁹ In an intervening period between 1976 and 2017, the percentage of Americans believing that the Bible is the actual Word of God or the inspired Word of God dropped from 83 percent to 71 percent. During the same period, the percent of Americans who considered the Bible to be a book of fables and legends rose from 13 percent to 26 percent.²⁰

In a Harris poll conducted in November of 2013, 65 percent of Americans said they believed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, down from 70 percent in 2005, while 72 percent

¹⁹ “Religion,” Gallup, accessed September 9, 2019, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/1690/religion.aspx>.

²⁰ Ibid.

believed in miracles down from 79 percent in 2005. During the same period from 2005 to 2013, belief in Darwin's theory of evolution rose from 42 percent to 47 percent.²¹

Religious Trends in America

These data indicate a significant decline of the Christian influence in the American culture and the increasing acceptance of views consistent with a naturalist worldview, i.e., rejection of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the divine origin of the Bible, and the increase of the percent of Americans subscribing to Darwin's theory of evolution.

The question arises, are Americans leaving the pews of mainline Protestant churches abandoning spirituality altogether? The answer to this question is found in a Pew Research poll released in October of 2018. Individuals responding to the Pew survey were asked to indicate whether they affirmed four beliefs associated with the new ageist worldview: (1) spiritual energy can be located in physical things, (2) psychics, (3) reincarnation, (4) astrology. Of those who declared no religion in particular, 78 percent hold at least one new age belief.²² Of those who identified as mainline Protestants, 67 percent affirmed at least one of these new-age beliefs. Even among evangelical Protestants, 47 percent affirmed at least one of these new-age beliefs. These data indicate that Americans, in significant percentages, are subscribing to new age beliefs, and furthermore that new age beliefs are being added to pre-existing Christian beliefs in a syncretic

²¹ "U.S. belief in God down, belief in theory of evolution up," UPI, accessed September 11, 2019, https://www.upi.com/Health_News/2013/12/22/US-belief-in-God-down-belief-in-theory-of-evolution-up/24081387762886/.

²² "'New Age' beliefs common among both religious and nonreligious Americans," Pew Research Center, accessed September 8, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/10/01/new-age-beliefs-common-among-both-religious-and-nonreligious-americans/>.

manner. As Burge indicates above, those abandoning mainline churches are becoming nones. In this group, acceptance of new age beliefs is very strong.²³

Implications of Religious Trends in America

In aggregate, the preceding survey results indicate the decline in belief in the supernatural aspects of Christian theism. In America, belief in God is down 10 percent, belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ is down 5 percent, belief in the inspiration of the Bible is down 12 percent, while belief in Darwin's theory of evolution has risen by 5 percent. Concomitant with changing views of Christian theism is the widespread acceptance of essential tenets of the new age worldview.

Writing in *The American Interest* journal, Tara Isabella Burton traces the rise of occultism in the progressive movement in the United States. According to Burton, the imagery of witchcraft, spells, the cleansing of bad energy, and astrology is the "de facto religion of millennial progressives."²⁴ While 23 percent of Americans claim no religious affiliation, 72 percent of this group believes in God or a higher power.²⁵ According to Harvard Divinity School researchers Casper ter Kuile and Angie Thurston, this demographic group is open to drawing religious practices and rituals from various traditions and religions, mixing yoga, the reading of Tarot cards, Buddhist meditation, and Christmas concerts.²⁶

²³ "'New Age' beliefs common among both religious and nonreligious Americans," Pew Research Center, accessed September 8, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/10/01/new-age-beliefs-common-among-both-religious-and-nonreligious-americans/>.

²⁴ Tara Isabella Burton, "The Rise of Progressive Occultism," *The American Interest*, 15, no. 1, (June 7, 2019), <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2019/06/07/the-rise-of-progressive-occultism/>.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

Research Question

Thus, in American society, increasingly, naturalist, new age, and Christian theist worldviews are viable choices on equal footing in American culture. The research question of this paper is: **Of Christian theism, naturalism, and new ageism, which of these worldviews better comports with original monotheism?**

The danger of capitulation to false worldviews is great, for Gordon argues, Judeo-Christian beliefs imparted to western civilization a moral framework, basic principles of decency, and theistic belief which laid the “foundations for western science and technological success.”²⁷ If Gordon is correct, deconstructing Christian theism puts western civilization at risk. Moreover, departure from Christian theism places souls in jeopardy (John 14:6).²⁸

Worldviews

A wide range of worldviews could be considered in a search for the one that best fits the existential data. This paper will limit consideration of worldviews to Christian theism, naturalism, and new ageism, as these are dominant in American culture. The following paragraphs will seek to establish what is generally held to be true by these different worldviews. The beliefs of adherents of these worldviews spans a considerable range, thus, this section will seek to establish what is commonly held by those subscribing to each of these worldviews.

Limitations

In considering Christian theism, naturalism, and new age worldviews, the scope of inquiry will be limited to what each of these worldviews declares or implies about: (1) the

²⁷ Gordon and Dembski, *The Nature of Nature*, 580.

²⁸ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the *New American Standard Bible* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

existence of God, (2) the nature of reality, (3) the origin of the universe, (4) the origin of diverse life on the earth, (5) the mind body problem, (6) the source of ethics, and (7) the possibility of an afterlife.

Having established what is implied by Christian theist, naturalist, and new age worldviews, this paper will move to investigate original monotheism in order to learn which of the three worldviews best explains the historical data.

Christian Theism

Christian theism is the worldview which contends that an all-powerful God who transcends the universe brought the universe into existence from nothing and sustains it. God transcends the universe and is immanent in it.²⁹ God created all materials, energy, natural processes, forces, and all animal, plant, and human life. God created human beings in His image, and thus, human life is sacred, imbued with dignity, and an innate moral law, and thus must be treated with the utmost respect.³⁰ Human life is composed of two distinct essences, a material body, and a non-material soul and spirit sustained eternally by God. Because God created the universe and is active in it, miracles are possible. Christian theism affirms the trinitarian nature of God, who exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and moreover, that the progenitors of humanity Adam and Eve were created good in the image of God. However, because Adam and Eve disobeyed God at the fall, the image of God within them was damaged; it was effaced but not erased. Because of God's love for His creation, He sent His Son Jesus to restore relationship with humanity for all who repent of their sins and have faith in the person and works of Jesus.

²⁹ James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 28-32.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 31-42.

Restoration of relationship with God is available to all who receive Jesus.³¹ Humans will live eternally, either in the presence of God or in eternal separation from God; history is purposeful; it brings glory to God, reveals the children of God, and fulfills God's purpose for humanity.³²

Naturalism

According to Steven Schafersman, metaphysical naturalism (hereafter referred to as naturalism) is the worldview that the universe and what it contains is all that exists, and thus, all that occurs is the result of natural processes.³³ Regarding the natural order, atheist philosopher Thomas Nagel affirms, "among the scientists and philosophers . . . reductive materialism is widely assumed to be the only serious possibility."³⁴ James Sire acknowledges that some naturalists allow that some elements of the universe may not be material, but the vast majority of naturalists are materialists³⁵ who would affirm with Carl Sagan, the cosmos is the extent of all reality.³⁶ According to naturalists, all physical events can be explained in terms of and as a result of other physical events.³⁷ The initiation and existence of the universe can be explained without calling upon a supreme being who does not exist.³⁸ Since the material universe is all that exists,

³¹ Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 35-41.

³² *Ibid.*, 25-46.

³³ Steven Schafersman, "Naturalism is Today An Essential Part of Science," *Conference on Naturalism, Theism and the Scientific Enterprise*. Retrieved June 20, 2019 from http://www.stephenjaygould.org/ctrl/schafersman_nat.html.

³⁴ Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos*, 4.

³⁵ Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 68.

³⁶ Carl Sagan, *Cosmos* (New York: Random House, 1980), 4.

³⁷ Rodney D. Holder, *God, the Multiverse, and Everything: Modern Cosmology and the Argument from Design* (London: Routledge, 2016), 2.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

there is no transcendent God or realm. Thus, there is no afterlife. Mind and body are of the same substance since only the materials, and physical laws of the universe exist. Mind is a product of the brain. Therefore, substance monism is true. Finally, since there is no transcendent God, ethics are grounded in human beings, the highest lifeform in the natural realm.³⁹ One prominent naturalist, William Provine articulated his views stating there are no gods or purposes or directing forces of the universe; there is no afterlife, foundation for ethics, or possibility of free will; there is no meaning to life.⁴⁰ Similarly, professor of philosophy David Johnson writes regarding the big questions of philosophy, “many of the answers that our philosophical questioning made tempting were also troubling: There is no God, no soul, no afterlife, no free will, no persons, no mind, and so on. Embracing as true any one of these troubling answers might lead us to think that life is meaningless.”⁴¹

It is important to consider divergent views within naturalism. Some naturalists like William Provine, as noted above, and Friedrich Nietzsche⁴² reject the possibility of a basis for ethics within the naturalist worldview. Many other naturalists concur with the Humanist Manifesto II that, “Ethics is autonomous and situational needing no theological or ideological sanction. Ethics stems from human need and interest.”⁴³ Naturalist philosopher Daniel Dennett holds out hope for discovering a basis for ethics within the naturalist paradigm.⁴⁴

³⁹ David K. Johnson, *The Big Questions of Philosophy: Course Guidebook* (Chantilly VA: The Great Courses, 2016), 253.

⁴⁰ Anya Plutynski, “William Provine (1942-2015),” *Philosophy, Theory, and Practice in Biology* 7, no. 3 (2015): 2.

⁴¹ Johnson, *The Big Questions*, 253.

⁴² Walter Kaufmann, *The Portable Nietzsche* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 570.

⁴³ Humanist Manifesto II. Retrieved June 20, 2019 from <https://americanhumanist.org/what-is-humanism/manifesto2/>.

New Ageism

The new age movement lacks an authoritative book from which it derives its beliefs; thus, there are no well-defined doctrines or standards.⁴⁵ The movement is eclectic and still developing from its infancy in the 1970s.⁴⁶ Former new age practitioners Steven Bancarz and Josh Peck view the new age movement as syncretic with a set of practices and beliefs directed toward attaining enlightenment. According to Bancarz and Peck, the new age movement draws on the sacred texts of Hinduism and Buddhism and a wide range of topics including transcendentalism, Gnosticism, occultism, meditation, sorcery, and witchcraft.⁴⁷

In the new age worldview, no transcendent God exists; therefore, the prime reality is located in the self. Thus, like Christian theism, it elevates the importance of the individual for very different reasons. In Christian theism, the individual is important because creation is in the image of God. In the new age worldview, the self is important because the self is divine, fully capable of manipulating external reality.⁴⁸

In *Confronting the New Age*, professor of philosophy, Douglas Groothuis summarizes the essential core beliefs of the new age movement: (1) humanity is in a transition to an age of spiritual enlightenment, the age of Aquarius, where individuals discover the divinity within, (2) the pantheistic view that all is God and God is all, where there is no separation between individuals, (3) a view of God that is impersonal force or consciousness, devoid of morality, that

⁴⁴ Daniel C. Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 510.

⁴⁵ Steven Bancarz and Josh Peck, *The Second Coming of the New Age: The Hidden Dangers of Alternative Spirituality in Contemporary America and Its Churches* (Crane, MO: Defender Publishing, 2018), 181, Kindle.

⁴⁶ Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 167.

⁴⁷ Bancarz and Peck, *The Second Coming*, 129-144.

⁴⁸ Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 181-183.

all humans are part of, (4) the importance of initiation of using meditation, drugs, crystals, or other activities to realize one's divinity, (5) there is neither good nor evil or objective moral prescriptions; sins need no forgiveness, while some in the movement do speak of the law of karma, (6) all possess and are endowed with the prerogatives of deity capable of creating new realities using the paranormal, precognition, psychokinesis, psychics, or various other means, and (7) tapping in to universal principles and laws through channeling of spirit guides and revelations.⁴⁹

According to Groothuis, the new age movement is “an eclectic grab bag of Eastern mysticism, Western occultism, neopaganism, and human potential psychology.”⁵⁰ At their mystical core, all religions are viewed as having the same true essence; all is God and God is all. Thus, the new age worldview lacks an understanding of and dismisses the important doctrinal differences between the religions of the world.⁵¹

Worldviews Contrasted

In consideration of the above, Christian theist, naturalist, and the new age worldviews contradict each other concerning the existence of God and a transcendent realm, and the origin of the universe. Christian theists would affirm that the mind and body are two separate things (substance dualism). Naturalism and the new age affirm that mind and body are composed of the same thing (substance monism). Christian theists would affirm that God and His divine revelation are the ultimate source for ethics and furthermore, that humans are imbued by their

⁴⁹ Douglas Groothuis, *Confronting the New Age: How To Resist a Growing Religious Movement* (Downers Grove, IL, 1988), 20-30.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

creator with an objective moral code. Naturalists and new ageists would reject divine command theory and see humanity as the ultimate source of ethics. Christian theists believe in an eternal afterlife for all human beings; those who have faith in Christ will spend eternity in the presence of God in heaven, while those who do not have faith in Christ will spend eternity separated from God in hell. Naturalists reject the possibility of an afterlife, since, in their view, there is no transcendent realm. New ageists look to reincarnation in progression to godhood.

In conclusion regarding these worldviews, Christian theists, naturalists, and new ageists have irreconcilable differences. This paper will move to consider Christian theism, naturalism, and the new age worldviews as systems, examining the arguments, evidence, and explanatory power of these worldviews. In particular, this paper will investigate which worldview best explains original monotheism.

Definitions

Atheist: a person who denies the existence of any gods, or who rejects the existence of God because of the belief that evidence for God is lacking.

Christian Theism: worldview, which contends that an all-powerful God who transcends the universe brought the universe into existence from nothing and sustains it. God transcends the universe and is immanent in it. God created all materials, energy, natural processes, forces, and all animal, plant, and human life. God created human beings in His image, and thus, human life is sacred, imbued with dignity, and an innate moral law, and thus must be treated with the utmost respect. Human life is composed of two distinct essences, a material body, and a non-material soul and spirit sustained eternally by God. Because God created the universe and is active in it, miracles are possible. Christian theism affirms the trinitarian nature of God, who exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and moreover, that the progenitors of humanity Adam and Eve were

created good in the image of God. However, because Adam and Eve disobeyed God at the fall, the image of God within them was damaged; it was effaced but not erased. Because of God's love for His creation, He sent His Son Jesus to restore relationship with humanity for all who repent of their sins and have faith in the person and works of Jesus. Restoration of relationship with God is available to all who receive Jesus. Humans will live eternally, either in the presence of God or in eternal separation from God; history is purposeful; it brings glory to God, reveals the children of God, and fulfills God's purpose for humanity.⁵²

Divine Command Theory: the belief that ethics are rooted in the nature and commands of God.

Messianic Prophecy: prophecy contained in the Old Testament, which was fulfilled, or is yet to be fulfilled, in the New Testament in the life of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Metaphysical Naturalism: is the worldview that the universe and what it contains is all that exists, and thus, all that occurs is the result of natural processes.⁵³ In this paper, the following generally accepted implications will be presupposed. There is no transcendent God or realm. The initiation and existence of the universe can be explained without calling upon a supreme being who does not exist.⁵⁴ Thus there is no afterlife. Mind and body are of the same substance. Ethics are grounded in human beings, the highest lifeform in the natural realm.⁵⁵ The origin and

⁵² Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 25-46.

⁵³ Steven Schafersman, "Naturalism is Today An Essential Part of Science," *Conference on Naturalism, Theism and the Scientific Enterprise*. Retrieved June 20, 2019 from http://www.stephenjaygould.org/ctrl/schafersman_nat.html.

⁵⁴ Holder, *God, the Multiverse*, 1.

⁵⁵ Johnson, *The Big Questions of Philosophy*, 253.

diversity of life can be explained by natural means and evolution by natural selections.⁵⁶ Life ends at death. Thus, there is no afterlife.⁵⁷

Naturalism: in this paper, synonymous with metaphysical naturalism.

New Age: a modern worldview movement which elevates the individual as the prime reality in the universe. Syncretic in nature, the new age draws upon Buddhism, Hinduism, mysticism, paganism, psychedelic drug use, divination, sorcery, channeling, and reincarnation, with an aim to gaining enlightenment.⁵⁸

Original Monotheism: asserts that religion began with God and His revelation to man and is corroborated by monotheism being found in the earliest forms of the religions of the world.

Reductive Materialism: the belief that all things in the universe can ultimately be reduced to materials or physical forces.

Substance Monism: the belief that only matter governed by natural laws exists in the universe.

Substance Dualism: the belief that mind is non-material and distinct from matter and exists in addition to matter governed by natural laws.

Theist: a person who believes in a transcendent creator God who is active in the universe.

Transcendent Realm: what is beyond the temporospatial universe.

Worldview: a belief system about the world and how it operates rooted in presuppositions or beliefs concerning prime reality, the origin of the universe and human life, the source of ethics, and the ultimate destiny and purpose of humans.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Plutynski, "William Provine," 2.

⁵⁷ Johnson, *The Big Questions*, 253.

⁵⁸ Bancarz and Peck, *The Second Coming*, 129-144.

⁵⁹ Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 18-23.

Thesis Statement

It is the thesis of this paper that the Christian theist worldview is far better supported by the available evidence, and that moreover, it far better explains the historical reality of original monotheism than the naturalist or the new ageist worldviews. An extensive list of historical events and facts consistent with existential experience, science, and history, can be formulated that are best explained by the Christian theist worldview. Worthy of consideration in this light include the origin of the universe and complex life, the implied existence of a transcendent reality, the growing philosophical and medical evidence for a dualistic solution to the mind-body problem, the existence of objective moral values, the large body of evidence for the reality of miracles, and finally, the monotheistic nature and links to the Book of Genesis found in the earliest world religions. This paper will argue that the truth of Christian theism is the best explanation for original monotheism. Furthermore, it will be shown that if Christian theism is true, then the naturalist and new ageist worldviews cannot be true.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

This chapter will provide an overview of the literature pertaining to this thesis paper. Following that, the theological rationale supporting this paper will be presented, as will be the theoretical foundations for this work. In the literature review, the literature concerning the evidence and arguments for Christian theism, naturalism, new ageism, and original monotheism will be considered.

The theological foundation section of this chapter will present the theological and biblical case for defending Christian theism against other worldviews which explicitly or implicitly deny the truth of Christian theism. Biblical support for this thesis project will draw from the Old and New Testaments. The theoretical foundation section will review the precedent literature related to this thesis paper and identify a gap in the literature that will be addressed in this paper.

Literature Review

In Chapter 1, it was shown that there is a trend in America toward the divestiture of Christian theism and the acceptance of elements of naturalism and new ageism. The intent of this paper is to show that Christian theism is far better supported by the evidence, and far better explains existential realities as they are presently understood. This paper will argue that original monotheism is one existential reality of a growing list that defy explanation as the product of a naturalist or new ageist universe. It will be argued that the universe is theistic, and that original monotheism can only fit in such a universe.

Thus, in order to address the thesis of this paper, an understanding of the presuppositions and beliefs of the naturalist, new ageist, and Christian theist worldviews is needed. Chapter one accomplished this. In this literature review, the arguments in favor of these three worldviews, and objections to each will be presented. This section will then move to consider the weaknesses

brought to light regarding each worldview. Then, what is known and postulated about the origin of world religions will be considered, and the literature regarding original monotheism will be examined. As noted in the thesis statement, it will be shown that the evidential basis for Christian theism is strong while the same cannot be said for naturalism and new ageism. The reality of original monotheism serves to bolster the case for Christian theism since it cannot be explained on a naturalist or new ageist worldview.

Argument for Naturalism

Since the central presupposition of naturalism is that reality is exhausted by the temporospatial universe, naturalists offer arguments against the existence of God to support their position. Naturalist Steven Schafersman argues there is a lack of evidence for the existence of a transcendent God and a supernatural realm. Therefore, he disbelieves in the supernatural, believes in naturalism, and asserts that the statements of naturalism are supported by a great amount of empirical evidence.⁶⁰ Richard Dawkins argues that one should resist ascribing the universe to the work of a designer because to do so raises the larger problem of who designed the designer.⁶¹

Johnson sees the problem of moral and physical evil as a major impediment to the existence of the Christian theist God.⁶² He argues that God would create the best of all possible worlds, and considering the brokenness of the world, this cannot be the best of all possible worlds.⁶³ Johnson moves to consider physical evil in the world, such as earthquakes, hurricanes,

⁶⁰ Schafersman, "Naturalism is Today An Essential Part of Science."

⁶¹ Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006), 158.

⁶² Johnson, *The Big Questions*, 100-112.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 102.

and tsunamis. He concludes that if God is perfect, he could not be the author of the evils that are found in the world. Thus, he must not exist.⁶⁴ Sam Harris agrees with Johnson citing Hurricane Katrina as clear evidence that God does not exist. For if God exists, how could he allow such destruction of property and human life?

Moreover, Harris argues, how could God permit the Holocaust, the genocide in Rwanda, and the death of 500 million people from smallpox in the twentieth century?⁶⁵ Dawkins' argument from improbability suggests that a being capable of creating and controlling the universe would be so complex that the existence of such a being is statistically improbable.⁶⁶ If there is no God or transcendent realm, the immanent frame is a closed system.⁶⁷ If the universe is a closed system, the material and the natural laws of the universe are all that exist. Naturalists then conclude that the universe is uncreated since no creator exists.⁶⁸ The assumption of substance monism by naturalists is a result of the acceptance of the sole existence of the material realm and the non-existence of God. Johnson sees substance dualism as false because it implies that the immaterial can make things happen in the material world which is contrary to the laws of nature.⁶⁹

Furthermore, Johnson argues that the mind is merely a product of the brain, not a separate entity.⁷⁰ If the mind is produced by the brain, then the mind must be purely the result of material

⁶⁴ Johnson, *The Big Questions*, 112.

⁶⁵ Sam Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation*, (New York: Knopf, 2006), 50-56.

⁶⁶ Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 113-114.

⁶⁷ Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 70.

⁶⁸ Beckwith, Craig, and Moreland, *To Everyone an Answer*, 72-73.

⁶⁹ Johnson, *The Big Questions*, 164.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 165.

properties and the laws of physics and chemistry. Naturalists recognize the statistical improbabilities for the origin of life by chemical evolution. Given this problem, Francis Crick hypothesized directed panspermia, the concept that life on the earth was seeded with single cell organisms by a more advanced lifeform living elsewhere in the galaxy. Nagel favors natural teleology, where yet undiscovered principles or natural laws embedded in the universe make likely the development of life and consciousness.⁷¹ While the origin of life and the information found in DNA presents a significant challenge to naturalism, Francis Collins rejects intelligent design as the invocation of the God of the gaps.⁷² The gaps in knowledge about the origin of life must be filled by advances in science, not an appeal to God according to Collins. Once the first living self-reproducing cell arose on the earth, a pathway to the diversity of life now observed upon the earth was established. As those early living cells reproduced, random mutations in their genetic code was likely. Natural selection operated on these random genetic variations over billions of years, resulting in the evolution of complex lifeforms from that first living cell. According to Dawkins what seems improbable can be accomplished by the accumulation of small changes.⁷³ Since naturalists reject the existence of God and a supernatural realm, the possibility of an afterlife is ruled out.

⁷¹ Nagle, *Mind and Cosmos*, 123-125.

⁷² Francis Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 90-91; 194-95.

⁷³ Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe Without Design* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), 43-50.

Argument for Christian Theism

For millennia, Christian theists have defended the unique truth of Christianity. Naturalists might say that there is no proof for the existence of God, but William Lane Craig responds, there are good reasons and arguments to believe in God even if they do not provide 100% certainty.⁷⁴ Many logical arguments for the existence of God have been proposed, including the Kalam cosmological argument, the teleological argument, and the moral argument.⁷⁵ These three deductive logical arguments for the existence of God are valid in their construction, which means that if the first two premises of each argument is true, each argument is then sound, and the conclusion must follow necessarily.

The Kalam cosmological argument can be stated as follows: (1) everything that begins to exist has a cause; (2) the universe began to exist; (3) therefore, the universe has a cause. The first premise can be seen to be true from uniform human experience. Although some might argue that events at the quantum level are uncaused such as virtual particles. However, this fails to recognize that these particles are the result of energy fluctuation, and thus are not uncaused. The second premise asserts that the universe began to exist. The Book of Genesis has said this very thing for 3500 years, but until Einstein's work in the early twentieth century, the universe was thought to be eternal. In our modern scientific era, with the acceptance of Big Bang Cosmology, virtually all scientists affirm this premise.⁷⁶

The teleological argument is structured as follows: (1) the fine-tuning of the universe is due to physical necessity, chance, or design; (2) It is not due to physical necessity or chance; (3)

⁷⁴ Gordon and Dembski, *The Nature of Nature*, 27171.

⁷⁵ William Lane Craig, *Does God Exist?* (Pine Mountain, GA: Impact 360, 2014), 162-867, Kindle.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 162-482.

therefore, it is due to design. Few will argue against the observation that the physical constants of the universe appear to be exquisitely set to infinitesimally narrow ranges. This premise offers a choice of three reasons for the fine-tuning. Necessity fails because M-Theory permits 10^{500} possible universes based upon variations in physical constants. Chance fails because the probability of obtaining the present universe based on chance settings of physical constants is so mathematically improbable. Thus, design as the only viable option.⁷⁷

Most often associated with C. S. Lewis, Craig's version of the moral argument can be summarized as follows: (1) if God does not exist, objective morals do not exist; (2) objective moral values do exist; (3) therefore, God exists. Concerning the first premise, some might argue that morality can be explained within the naturalist paradigm, but as shown above, in chapter one, Provine, Nietzsche, Johnson, and the signers of the Humanist Manifesto would all affirm the truth of premise one. Craig states that almost no one denies premise two. For example, very few would deny that it is wrong to imprison an individual without cause. Most individuals will concede that there are right things, and there are really wrong things.⁷⁸

Habermas shows that evidential near-death experiences (NDEs) are best explained by the substance dualism affirmed by theists. Large numbers of cases are recorded of individuals who have suffered brain death (some of which have been blind since birth), which upon resuscitation, can report the details of their treatment, events elsewhere in the hospital, and in some cases, events far away from their place of treatment.⁷⁹ If the mind exists apart from the body as is indicated by NDEs, this is indicative that there is more to the universe than matter and physical

⁷⁷ Craig, *Does God Exist?* 496-704.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 709-1038.

⁷⁹ Gary Habermas, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope* (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 62.

laws. Regarding the origin of life, atheist Fred Hoyle and agnostic Chandra Wickramasinge studied enzyme development and concluded that chance formation of the information content in DNA is one chance in $10^{40,0000}$, and is thus virtually zero.⁸⁰ Meyer affirms the improbability of life arising by chance and states that the odds of obtaining a single functional protein from the prebiotic soup is no better than one chance in 10^{164} .⁸¹ Meyer quotes Francis Crick affirming that the origin of life appears to be almost miraculous.⁸² Meyer argues that information of the type found in DNA, wherever it occurs is the product of an intelligent mind, and furthermore, the information found in DNA is best explained as coming from an intelligent source. Thus, a creator is implied.⁸³

The information in the preceding paragraphs leads to the conclusion that theism offers the best explanation for the origin of cosmos and all life, and that our universe is a theistic universe.⁸⁴ Next, the evidence for the truth of Christianity will be ascertained predicated upon the reliability of the New Testament, the evidence of fulfilled prophecy, the truth of the resurrection, and the miracles of Jesus. Josh and Sean McDowell catalog a large body of manuscript, archeological, and non-Christian source evidence that supports the reliability of the New Testament and the Bible in general.⁸⁵ If one grants the reliability of the New Testament, the miracles reported in it must be considered. Furthermore, Barton Payne cataloged 191 Messianic

⁸⁰ Gary Habermas, *The Risen Jesus*, 57.

⁸¹ Stephen C. Meyer, *Signature in the Cell: DNA and the Evidence for Intelligent Design* (New York: Harper One, 2009), 212.

⁸² Stephen Meyer, *Signature*, 321.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 341.

⁸⁴ Gary Habermas, *The Risen Jesus*, 66.

⁸⁵ Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2017), 46-91.

predictions fulfilled in the life of Jesus Christ. According to mathematician Peter Stoner, the estimated odds of a single individual fulfilling just 48 of these prophecies is one chance in 10¹⁵⁷.⁸⁶ Gary Habermas argues for the truth of the resurrection using the minimal facts argument. Four of the facts are accepted by virtually all scholars in the field of New Testament studies. A fifth fact (that the tomb of Jesus was empty on that first Easter Sunday) is affirmed by a majority of New Testament scholars but not all. Habermas concludes that the best explanation for these five facts is that Jesus rose from the dead.⁸⁷

Argument for New Ageism

At the core of the New Age movement is pantheistic monism taught in eastern religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism and in classical occultism.⁸⁸ The source for the oldest known form of pantheism is found in the Vedas which are the Hindu Scriptures.⁸⁹ The Vedas are held to be the supernaturally revealed by the Hindu gods.⁹⁰ Essential teachings of Vedanta pantheism have been directly appropriated by the new age movement. These teachings include the belief that man is God and that all is God, the world is illusory (maya), and the divinity of man; one must transcend the world of illusion to discover the divine self. Brahman (God) is beyond the dualism of good and evil and thus, it is the goal of man to go beyond good and evil, to be no longer concerned by what has been done or not done. The goal for man on this earth is to

⁸⁶ McDowell & McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, 229-231.

⁸⁷ Gary Habermas and Michael Liacona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2004), 48; 75-76.

⁸⁸ Douglas R. Groothuis, *Unmasking the New Age* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 19-22.

⁸⁹ Norman L. Geisler and William D. Watkins, *Worlds Apart: A Handbook on World Views*, Second ed. (Eugene, Or: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003), 79.

⁹⁰ John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs* (Eugene, Or.: Harvest House Publishers, 1996), 217.

recognize the illusion of self and reality of the unity of all in Brahman. Until then, one will undergo cycles of reincarnation until the realization of oneness with Brahman. All this rests on the efforts of man.⁹¹

The practices of Hinduism inform the new Age movement. Altered states of consciousness are entered by hypnosis, meditation, yoga, or by taking drugs to gain spiritual enlightenment. Yoga and meditation aim at attaining oneness with Brahman. Occultism which includes spiritism, astrology, magic, sorcery, shamanistic practices, and witchcraft, are tools for enhancing human growth and development.⁹²

Influential in the new age movement is the one-year occult devotional *A Course in Miracles* authored by Helen Schuman and Bill Thetford. The authors claim it to be a revelation of Jesus Christ designed to complete the atonement. Aimed at achieving daily spiritual growth of the reader, *A Course in Miracles* reorients one's perception of self and the world and shifting perception from what is taught in orthodox Christianity to new age eastern practices.⁹³ According to *A Course in Miracles*, the following is reality: God is an impersonal loving force devoid of judgment; humans are God imbued with power; sin is an illusion and does not exist; heaven can be entered apart from Christ; Jesus a mere man who appeared to save others from illusions; Jesus was the Christ but so are all humans; there is no punishment for sins because humans as the sons of God are not sinners. Finally, this world is merely an illusion.⁹⁴

Channeler and medium Jane Roberts has also had a significant role in laying the foundation for new age belief and practice. In 1963, Roberts began receiving revelations from

⁹¹ Geisler, *Worlds Apart*, 80-84.

⁹² Ankerberg and Weldon, *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*, 222-224.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 11-14.

Seth, a spirit guide.⁹⁵ Seth teaches that each individual creates their reality,⁹⁶ (a pantheistic view which affirms the Buddhist view of God as an “energy gestalt”)⁹⁷ and that the individual is God and “a part of all that is.”⁹⁸ Furthermore, according to Seth, the physical world is an illusion,⁹⁹ and all individuals live a series of lives on earth, culminating in continued existence in “other systems of reality.”¹⁰⁰

Further informing the new age movement is the use of drugs to achieve altered states of consciousness and the ancient art of astrology. In *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, Marilyn Ferguson points to the use of psychedelic drugs in the 1960s as providing “the visionary experience of self-transcendence to a sufficient number of individuals, so that they might well determine the future of human development.”¹⁰¹ Groothuis cites hallucinogenic drugs and astrology as fueling the counterculture. Public intellectuals such as Timothy Leary, Aldous Huxley, and Carlos Castaneda popularized the use of drugs in order to attain higher states of consciousness. Groothuis notes that millions have been influenced by the Beatles who sought enlightenment through hallucinogenic drugs and eastern mysticism. The appellation for the movement, the Age of Aquarius, links the new age movement to the occultic art of astrology.¹⁰²

⁹⁵ Jane Roberts, *The Seth Material* (Manhasset, NY: New Awareness Network, 2011), 357, Kindle.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2493.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 4054.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 255.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1729.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 2180.

¹⁰¹ Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980s* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 62.

¹⁰² Groothuis, *Unmasking the New Age*, 40-42.

It is upon the foundation described in the preceding paragraphs that the new age movement has been built and advances to this day. The new age movement has embraced the evolutionary model of human development and the prospects of a new age of human enlightenment, envisioning a drastically different future where the present will be regarded as the dark past ages.¹⁰³ The new age movement spans disparate groups seeking new consciousness in the fields of sociology, anthropology, science, science fiction, and entertainment. Unconstrained by logic and reason, the movement is dynamic, syncretic, and broad, drawing from naturalism and eastern pantheism. The individual is at the center for an individual holds the spark of divinity.¹⁰⁴

Adjudicating Conflicting Worldviews

While naturalists argue there is no evidence for God, they can only say that if they ignore the substantive logical arguments advanced by theist for millennia. Naturalists demand absolute proof for the existence of God while missing the point that a creator is the best explanation for the initiation of the universe and complex life. As Craig notes, there are good reasons for believing in God. Theists argue against Dawkins that the creator needs no creator for He is outside of space and time in eternity.¹⁰⁵ Against the problem of evil, Ronald Nash argues that the existence of evil does not preclude rational belief in God.¹⁰⁶ Theists defend God against charges of moral evil explaining that God allows his creatures to choose freely. Human free choice will at times result in moral evil. Regarding physical evil such as hurricanes and tsunamis, theists

¹⁰³ Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 167-170.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 179-180

¹⁰⁵ Daniel Cote, *Earth To Eternity*, (Collierville, TN: Instant Publishers, 2010), 11.

¹⁰⁶ Beckwith, Craig, and Moreland, *To Everyone an Answer*, 200.

defend God by showing that these types of events are the result of plate tectonics and the water cycle, which are necessary for the existence of life on the planet earth. While God could create a planet without dynamic elements such as plate tectonics and the water cycle, it likely would be unable to support life.

The origin of life by chemical evolution is highly improbable, leading Francis Crick to posit directed panspermia, and Nagle to posit natural teleology. The reality is, there is no evidence to support directed panspermia or natural teleology.¹⁰⁷

Regarding evolution by natural selection, atheists Stephen Jay Gould¹⁰⁸ and Richard Dawkins¹⁰⁹ affirm the lack of transitional forms in the fossil record. The lack of fossil evidence has led Christian theists to reject the naturalist claim that the diversity of life arose by the means of evolution by natural selection. Furthermore, evolution theoretically works by natural selection operating on random mutations. Thus, a fully functional living and reproducing cell is required for evolution by natural selection to occur in the first place. However, as noted above, origin of life researchers are at a loss to explain the origin of the first living cell by natural means. Lacking this, evolution by natural selection could not commence.

The Cambrian explosion is a particularly vexing concern for evolutionary theorists. The Cambrian explosion is a geologically short time period in the history of the Earth, where a vast number of complex, multi-celled organisms appeared on the earth. Its duration was a geological instant lasting five to ten million years. In this short period, most of the animal phyla (animal groups) that exist today appeared upon the earth. Creatures that rapidly appeared during the

¹⁰⁷ Nagle, *Mind and Cosmos*, 123-125.

¹⁰⁸ Stephen Jay Gould, *The Panda's Thumb: More Reflections in Natural History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1980), 181.

¹⁰⁹ Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker*, 230.

Cambrian Explosion include insects, shellfish, starfish, worms, and vertebrates.¹¹⁰ Complex creatures appeared without adequate time to evolve. Whole phyla and classes appeared with no predecessors. The creatures that existed before the Cambrian Explosion were simple single and multi-celled organisms with no ancestral link to the creatures that appeared during the Cambrian Explosion. Modern proponents of the Theory of Evolution acknowledge the challenge that the Cambrian Explosion presents for Darwin's theory, yet Dawkins rejects the possibility of divine creation.¹¹¹

Concerning ethics, as discussed above, naturalists are divided regarding the grounds for ethics within the naturalist paradigm. Atheist Thomas Nagle¹¹² and theistic evolutionist Francis Collins¹¹³ concur that reductionist materialism and evolution do not explain the emergence of objective morals by natural selection.

As Habermas has shown above, NDEs pose a significant challenge to substance monism and threaten to unravel the entire naturalist framework. NDEs demonstrate that the mind operates apart from the material body and thus disaffirms substance monism.

Nagle goes so far as to admit that the origin of life from dead matter cannot be considered sacrosanct¹¹⁴ and that consciousness presents a challenge to naturalism which relies only on the physical sciences.¹¹⁵ Nagel further concludes, notwithstanding its achievements, reductive

¹¹⁰ Jonathan Wells, *Icons of Evolution* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 2002), 29-45.

¹¹¹ Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker*, 230.

¹¹² Nagle, *Mind and Cosmos*, 97.

¹¹³ Collins, *The Language of God*, 27.

¹¹⁴ Nagle, *Mind and Cosmos*, 11.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 35.

materialism is ripe for displacement.¹¹⁶ Former atheist Anthony Flew was compelled toward theism partially by arguments concerning intelligent design as related to the origin of the universe its apparent fine-tuning.¹¹⁷

The new age movement is rooted in pantheistic monism and the experiences of its pioneers. Thus, the validity of these must be assessed to determine if the claims of the new age movement are valid. Hinduism is said to be beyond logic and is not constrained by logic, yet new age leaders use logic to get their point across. Thus, new ageism seems contradictory. Moreover, the new age movement has failed to take a critical look at its roots in pantheistic monism. Scholars point to several flaws in pantheism. Geisler identifies these: (1) God is changeless and absolute according to the pantheist, yet man, who is God, must undergo change to realize that Godhood, (2) if the world is illusory, how does one distinguish between fantasy and reality; if the world were illusory, there would be no need to look before crossing the street, (3) pantheism treats evil as illusory, yet many have endured evil and succumbed to it; if evil is illusory, what is the source of the illusion and feeling of seemingly real pain, (4) it is said that the universe and God are one; if the universe is finite, how can it be one with an infinite God, (5) according to pantheism, God is unknowable, yet this very statement claims knowledge about God is thus self-contradictory.¹¹⁸

Those tapping into spirit guides, such as Seth, have no way to prove or disprove his claims and have seemingly failed to consider the possibility of delusion, or the presence of a deceiving spirit who denies much of what is taught by orthodox Christianity. From a Christian

¹¹⁶ Nagle, *Mind and Cosmos*, 12.

¹¹⁷ David Baggett, *Did the Resurrection Happen?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 73-74.

¹¹⁸ Geisler and Watkins, *Worlds Apart*, 102-105.

theist perspective, the claims of Seth would appear to be demonic in origin, for the evidence of the divinity and resurrection of Jesus Christ outweigh the unvalidated claims of the spirit guide Seth. In the same way, the evidence for the truth of what is experienced by new age proponents during drug-induced altered states of consciousness lacks affirming evidence.

Weighing the Evidence for Worldviews

In conclusion, it is the view of the author that the evidence for Christian theism can be shown to outweigh the evidence for naturalism or the new age, and furthermore, that the origin of the universe, the origin of life, minds and consciousness, the existence of objective morals, and near-death experiences, are best explained within the framework of Christian theism.

Original Monotheism

In the Making of Religion, Andrew Lang writing in the late 1800s presented his research on the religions of primitive peoples and found that the supreme god among these people was regarded as a fatherly figure, a creator, beneficent, and, the source of the moral code.¹¹⁹ As an example, Lang describes the beliefs of the Australian Kurnai tribe. The Kurnai refer to their god Mungnan-ngaur (meaning Our Father) as one who destroyed the earth by water but hence ascended to the sky where he remains. Mungnan is immortal, and his precepts include, listening to the older men, sharing with and living peaceably with friends, a prohibition of promiscuous behavior, and obedience to food restrictions.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Andrew Lang, *The Making of Religion* (Project Gutenberg, 2004).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 181.

Important observations made by Lang from the available data include that in many cultures, (1) there is no evidence of evolution of a supreme god from a polytheistic context,¹²¹ (2) the supreme god did not evolve from an animistic spirit,¹²² (3) the supreme being cannot be a dead former chief since many tribes (in Australia) have no such chief,¹²³ (4) the supreme being is aware of all that transpires in the life of the individual,¹²⁴ (5) the supreme being's name is held in reverence, "his abode is the heavens, he is the Master and Lord of things; his lessons soften the heart."¹²⁵

Lang concludes, "there are two chief sources of religion, (1) the belief, how attained we know not, in a powerful, moral, eternal, omniscient Father and Judge of men; (2) the belief in a human afterlife."¹²⁶ Lang's work contradicted the prevailing evolutionary theories of religion and was received with skepticism or silence.¹²⁷

Lang based his work on the anthropological reports of scholars and travelers. One such important source for Lang was *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia* by A. W. Howitt. Howitt's findings are based on his research and the research of many other individuals (named in the preface of his work) studying the primitive tribes in Australia in the late 1800s. Howitt

¹²¹ Lang, *The Making of Religion*, 184.

¹²² Ibid., 185.

¹²³ Ibid., 178.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 179.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 179-181.

¹²⁶ Lang, *The Making of Religion*, 301.

¹²⁷ Wilhem Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion: Facts and Theories* (Wythe-North Publishing, 2014), 13.

catalogs the observations of researchers concerning tribal life, social organization, beliefs, customs, and practices.¹²⁸

The seminal work advancing the theory of original monotheism is Wilhelm Schmidt's *Der Ursprung der Gottesidee (The Origin of the Idea of God)*. In this twelve-volume set, Schmidt lays out the case for original monotheism as well as other competing theories. *Der Ursprung* is written in German, though never translated into English. In 1931, to provide a more compact work on comparative religions, Schmidt published *The Origin and Growth of Religion: Facts and Theories*, a volume of a few hundred pages. In *The Origin and Growth of Religion*, Schmidt examines the succession of theories regarding the origin of religion, including nature myths, fetishism, ancestor worship, animism, most of which assume the evolution of religion. Schmidt shows that all these theories fail to explain the monotheism found among the most primitive cultures and earliest tribes. Schmidt applied the cultural-historical method of the Vienna School, where the traits of cultures placed them in the chronology of history. Schmidt demonstrated that the least developed cultures (which are expected to be most similar to the earliest human cultures) worship one god who shares many attributes with the God of the Bible.¹²⁹

Schmidt establishes the ethnological priority of the most primitive peoples as meeting several criteria. First, the most primitive peoples tend to be geographically isolated by mountain ranges, seas, locations on islands, rivers, or primeval forests. Second, ethnologically primitive peoples are food-gatherers at the initial stages of economic development, who have not exploited, farming, or breeding animals. Third, the most ancient cultures have developed only

¹²⁸ A. W. Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia* (New York: MacMillan & Co., 1904), vii-xii.

¹²⁹ Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion*, vii.

primitive, housing, clothing, and tools. Fourth, the most primitive cultures lack any indication of development of more advanced cultural elements such as farming, weaving, pottery, or metallurgy.¹³⁰

Philosopher of religion, Winfried Corduan, has published a modern text addressing the origin of religion controversy. In *In the Beginning God: A Fresh Look At the Case for Original Monotheism*, Corduan reviews the theories of the origin of religion. In the 1800s, the majority view was that religions began as primitive animism and evolved to monotheism. Corduan details the arguments of scholars of the nineteenth century, at a time when the appellation scholarly implied that the work was devoid of the supernatural.¹³¹ Müller advanced the theory that mythology (religion) arose because of the inadequacy of language.¹³² Tylor applied Darwinian methods to religion and posited that religion evolved from animism through stages to monotheism.¹³³

Corduan assesses the work of Andrew Lang and Wilhelm Schmidt and concludes that the evidence for original monotheism uncovered by Schmidt still stands unanswered by the skeptics and serves to bolster the case for the truth of Christianity.¹³⁴

Corduan then moves to describe monotheism around the globe. In the Rig Veda, the personal creator of everything is Dyaus Pitā. Written in Sanskrit, the Rig Veda is in the Satem branch of Indo-European languages. A similar name for god is found in the Centum Branch of

¹³⁰ Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion*, 251-255.

¹³¹ Winfried Corduan, *In the Beginning God: A Fresh Look at the Case for Original Monotheism* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2013).

¹³² *Ibid.*, 10; 21-26.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 336.

Indo-European languages. The corresponding god in Greek is Zeus Patèr, and in Latin is rendered as Jupiter (Ju-piter). That these similar renderings for the supreme god appear on both branches of the Indo-European family of languages, according to Corduan, indicates that the word was part of the very early Proto-Indo European language from which the Centum and Satem groups branched off. Thus, it can be inferred that in the earliest times of the Indo-European speakers, a personal supreme god was known.¹³⁵

Daniel Strange addresses the concept of remnantal revelation in the writings of Cornelius Van Til and Herman Bavinck, and adds to the support of remnantal revelation, the original monotheism research of Wilhelm Schmidt. Strange draws extensively on the work of Corduan in the area of original monotheism.¹³⁶

Additional works that treat world religions and original monotheism include Patrick Zukeran's *God, Eternity, and Spirituality: World Religions Through a Christian Worldview*¹³⁷ and Winfried Corduan's *Neighboring Faiths*.¹³⁸

Supporting evidence for original monotheism is found in ancient China in the worship of a monotheistic god Shang Di. Several volumes address original monotheism in ancient China, including *The Discovery of Genesis: How the Truths of Genesis Were Found Hidden in the Chinese Language*¹³⁹ and *Faith of Our Fathers: Finding God in Ancient China*.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ Corduan, *In the Beginning God*, 314-321.

¹³⁶ Daniel Strange, *Their Rock Is Not Like Our Rock: A Theology of Religions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014).

¹³⁷ Patrick Zukeran, *God, Eternity, and Spirituality: World Religions Through a Christian Worldview* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Bible Press, 2013).

¹³⁸ Winfried Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths: A Christian Introduction to World Religions* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1998).

¹³⁹ C. H. Kang and Ethel Nelson, *The Discovery of Genesis: How the Truths of Genesis Were Found Hidden in the Chinese Language* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1979).

World Religions: Liberal Theories

Writing in 1871, E. B. Tylor articulated support for the evolution of religion from animism to monotheism in his work, *Primitive Culture: Researches Into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom*.¹⁴¹ Max Muller¹⁴² theorized that religion originated from the confusion and misunderstanding due to the development of language.¹⁴³ Joseph Kitagawa¹⁴⁴ and Mircea Eliade¹⁴⁵ are scholars proposing modern evolutionary theories of religion.

Apologetics

This paper will primarily make use of two apologetic approaches, the classical approach exemplified by Norman Geisler and the presuppositional approach exemplified by Scott Oliphant. Oliphant terms his presuppositional approach (which is built upon Van Til's), covenantal apologetics. Thus, this term will be used in this paper. Classical apologetics stresses arguments for the existence of God and the provision of historical evidence for the truth of Christianity.^{146, 147} Covenantal apologetics stresses the truth of the claims and doctrines

¹⁴⁰ Chan Kei Thong, *Faith of Our Fathers: Finding God In Ancient China* (Singapore: Cru Asia Ltd, 2018).

¹⁴¹ E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches Into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom* (London: Murray, 1920).

¹⁴² F. Max Muller, "Comparative Mythology" in *Chips from a German Workshop*, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner, 1871), 1-141.

¹⁴³ Corduan, *In the Beginning God*, 29-30.

¹⁴⁴ Joseph Kitagawa, *The History of Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

¹⁴⁵ Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religions* (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 1996).

¹⁴⁶ Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), s.v. "Apologetics, Types of."

¹⁴⁷ Norman Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 2003).

Christianity and biblical revelation and works from the perspective that all humans retain some knowledge of the truth, which has been suppressed. Thus, persuasion is possible. Since Christianity is true and anything that opposes it must be false, the weaknesses of other worldviews are exposed when they fail to comport with existential reality and the facts of history.¹⁴⁸

Using classical and covenantal apologetic approaches, this paper will first show the weaknesses of the naturalist and new age worldviews and the lack of evidence in support of their presuppositions. In contrast, extensive evidence can be marshalled in support of the Christian theist's presuppositions. The central argument of this paper will focus on original monotheism, the evidence for it, and argue that the only worldview capable of explaining original monotheism is Christian theism.

Theological Foundations

At His parting, our Lord commanded His followers to go and make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all that He commanded (Matt 28:19-20). Jesus' main focus in the Great Commission is the necessity for all believers to replicate themselves in whatever their circumstances. For some, this may involve relocation to a foreign country; for others, it may involve being salt and light in their community of origin.¹⁴⁹ In the Great Commission, the Greek word translated as "make disciples" is *mathēteuō* and refers to one who becomes a follower of

¹⁴⁸ Scott Oliphant, *Covenantal Apologetics: Principles and Practice in Defense of Our Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 54-55.

¹⁴⁹ Craig Blomberg, "Matthew," vol. 22, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 431.

the doctrine that has been taught and conducts one's life accordingly.¹⁵⁰ Far more than a profession of faith is required of the true disciple of Christ.¹⁵¹

At the core of orthodox Christianity is Christian theism, the worldview described in the definitions section of this paper, rooted in the triune God and the incarnation of His Son Jesus as the Savior of the world. As shown in the introduction to this paper, the worldview that is dominant in the academy and prevalent in the media is metaphysical naturalism. Metaphysical naturalism contradicts Christian theism and infiltrates western culture along many avenues. As prophesied by Paul, in later times some will abandon the faith, following deceiving spirits (1 Tim 4:1). Moreover, the exodus of congregants from liberal mainline churches is resulting in a substantial increase of those who claim to be spiritual but not religious, and who are open to new age beliefs. Furthermore, new age beliefs have made significant inroads into the evangelical church as a syncretic added extra.

Metaphysical naturalism (naturalism hereafter) and new ageism are “philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ” (Col 2:8). As such, they are lofty things raised against the knowledge of God. (2 Cor 10:5). When confronted with worldly philosophies, the Apostle Paul uses martial metaphors to indicate how strongly they must be challenged.¹⁵² Paul's goal was not merely to destroy false arguments, but to bring all things into subjection to Christ, that the gospel

¹⁵⁰ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

¹⁵¹ Craig Blomberg, “Matthew,” 431.

¹⁵² David E. Garland, “2 Corinthians,” vol. 29, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 433.

might advance and the lost be saved by the lordship of Christ.¹⁵³ In these referenced passages from Paul's letters, we see his zeal for the truth, for souls were in danger of being destroyed by hollow worldly philosophies.

At odds with the claims and presuppositions of naturalists and new ageists is strong evidence for original monotheism that has been dismissed, disregarded, and overlooked in the academy. As will be presented in Chapter 4 of this paper, the reality that God exists and that He revealed Himself to His creatures is plain to see among ancient peoples and tribes separated by vast distances and geographic barriers. Among the least culturally advanced tribes of the world and among the ancient Chinese is found a record of an eternal, omniscient God of unlimited power, who is the author of the moral law, and who is the master and Lord of all things reigning in the heavens. This God of the ancients holds humans accountable for their moral actions and behavior. Thus, it is seen among these peoples that, consistent with the biblical record, God exists and has revealed Himself. Original monotheism is consistent with the biblical claim that all humans trace their origin to Noah and his family and, subsequently, at the Tower of Babel, dispersed to populate the world from the Mesopotamian plain.

Moreover, flood stories abound among these ancient peoples containing the most critical aspects of the Genesis flood account. These facts stand as strong support for the existence of God who revealed Himself, for how else could detailed knowledge of God be expected among these ancient peoples? The foundation of Christian theism found in Genesis 1-11 is well-affirmed by these facts, yet atheistic and pantheistic philosophies are in vogue and are lacking in similar affirming evidence. Chapter 5 presents other signals of transcendence, including an unrefuted

¹⁵³ Colin G. Kruse, "2 Corinthians," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 1201.

argument for the truth of the resurrection of Jesus, which bolsters the case for the truth of Christian theism.

The hollow, false, and deceptive philosophies of the world, naturalism, and new ageism included are among the tools employed by Satan to deceive humans and deflect them from a proper view of the existence of God, the human condition and the salvation Christ offers to the world. As Jesus says, Satan “is a liar and the father of lies”¹⁵⁴ who blinds the minds of unbelievers (2 Cor 4:4). Naturalism and new ageism, as a preoccupation of the world, represent a means by which Satan deceives many and snatches away the truth that has been sown in the heart of individuals (Matt 13:19).¹⁵⁵ Those whom God has given the church as evangelists, pastors, and teachers must labor to equip the saints (Eph 4:11-12). Correspondingly, that pastors and teachers should continually reinforce the truth and sound doctrine, is a recurring theme in Scripture, as the following paragraphs will demonstrate.

In the Book of Exodus and the Book of Deuteronomy, the law was set before the sons of Israel, and they were given the Ten Commandments (Deut 4-5). Deuteronomy 6 could not be much more emphatic in encouraging persistence in the truth. The Israelites and their sons and grandsons, all future generations, were to keep all the statutes of the Lord and His commandments that their days might be prolonged (Deut 6:1-3). They were called to love the one true God, the Lord, with all their heart, soul, and might remembering the words of the Lord (Deut 6:4-6). Furthermore, the Israelites were to teach God’s commands diligently to their sons, speaking of them throughout the day and amidst the ordinary aspects of life. The lives of the

¹⁵⁴ John 8:44.

¹⁵⁵ Richard T. France, “Matthew,” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 921.

Israelites and their sons were to be imbued and deeply permeated by the truth of God's commands, to the extent that they were to bind them as frontals on their foreheads (Deut 6:7-9).

The goodness of the Lord was about to befall them, and when this came about, they were not to forget the Lord who brought them out of slavery; rather, they were to fear Him and worship Him, forsaking all other gods, holding to His commands, testimonies, and statutes (Deut 6:10-17). If chapters four through six of the Book of Deuteronomy failed to make an impression on the Israelites about the importance of keeping God's command, the call to obedience is repeated throughout the remainder of the Book of Deuteronomy (cf. Deut 8:1; 10:13; 11:1; 13:4). Reminders to keep the commands of God can be found through the end of the Book of Deuteronomy.

Since the naturalist and new agers presuppose there is no personal God, they cannot be concerned with the commands of God and are thus violating the commands of Scripture. As David announces in Psalm 14, it is the fool who says there is no God and has no need for God (Ps 10:4; 53:1). Such individuals devour the people of God and are workers of wickedness. According to Proverbs 16:20, the one who follows the Word will find good, and the one who trusts in the Lord is blessed.

What is known about God is evident to all. David tells of the glory of God revealed in creation (Ps 19:1). Paul writes, "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse" (Rom 1:20). Naturalist and new ageist can only deny the existence of God by suppressing the truth of the existence of a creator that should be obvious to all (Rom 1:18).

The danger of the naturalism and new ageism is that acceptance of either of these places creatures created in the image of God in jeopardy of judgment by God and eternal separation from Him. The temporal consequences of disobeying and denying God are revealed throughout Scripture. Saul lost his kingdom and his throne because of his disobedience (1 Sam 13:14). The Israelites wandered for 40 years in the wilderness because they did not listen to the voice of the Lord (Josh 5:6). If a kingdom or nation does evil in the sight of God by disobeying Him, the blessings promised will be withheld (Jer 18:9-10). The Israelites were warned of curses that would result from disobedience to the commands of God (Deut 28:15). God gave Israel over to plunderers because of its sin of turning from Him (Is 42:24-25; Dan 9:10-11). Immorality, impurity, covetousness, and idolatry occasion the wrath of God on the disobedient and result in the loss of inheritance of the kingdom of God (Eph 5:5-6). The wrath of God will be on those who suppress the truth of God's existence (Rom 1:18).

The eternal consequences of denying the God of the Bible, as naturalists and new ageist do, are weighty and devastating. Many who die will awake to "disgrace and everlasting contempt" (Dan 12:2). False prophets who craft deceptive heresies and deny Christ bring swift destruction upon themselves (2 Pet 2:1). Idolaters will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9-11). Unbelievers will suffer the second death in the lake of fire (Rev 21:8). Those who reject God's law will be thrown into the furnace of fire (Matt 13:41-43).

Naturalism and new ageism are an affront to the God of the Bible, and a denial of the truth revealed in Scripture. Naturalism is a poison that seeps into western culture through the education system and the secular media and acts to draw people away from God. Restoration and rebuilding knowledge of the one true God, honors Him and opens doors to changing hearts, minds, and advancing the gospel. Following the reign of Manasseh and Amon, (evil kings who

came after the godly king Hezekiah in the reign of Judah), Josiah initiated reforms, and with the discovery of the book of the law, banished the worship of idols and restored the worship of the true God. As a result, the wrath of God which burned against Judah, subsided during Josiah's reign (2 Kings 22-23).¹⁵⁶ Naturalism and new ageism are idols for modern times. Pastors, teachers, and Christian apologists must challenge them so that the truth about God and His kingdom plan for humanity may be known.

Further support for undertaking this thesis project is found in the New Testament. In Matthew 10, Jesus refers to Himself as the good shepherd. The good shepherd protects his sheep at all costs from robbers, thieves, and wolves who seek to destroy and scatter the flock. Jesus says that all who came before Him are thieves and robbers (John 10:7-15). Here Jesus is referring the string of evil kings, false prophets, and fake messiahs that had come before Him in the nation of Israel (Jer. 10:21-22; 12:10; Zech. 11:4-17).¹⁵⁷ Christ, the good shepherd protects the sheep and willingly lays down His life for them (John 10:15). Furthermore, at the recommissioning of Peter, three times, Jesus tells Peter that his love for Him will be demonstrated in tending to and shepherding His sheep (John 21:15-17). The imperative for the pastor or Christian teacher to care for the flock, which is the church, protecting it from false teaching, cannot be ignored or understated.

Naturalism and new ageism represent beliefs that are completely opposed to Christ, and thus, must be challenged and shown to be false to promote the conditions for the advancement of the gospel. Paul writes that those disseminate doctrines that do not agree with the teaching of

¹⁵⁶ John J. Bimson, "1 and 2 Kings," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 382-83.

¹⁵⁷ Edwin A. Blum, "John," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 310.

Jesus are conceited and understanding of nothing (1 Tim 6:3-4). Paul warns that in later times some will fall away heeding the doctrines of demons (1 Tim 4:1). Naturalism denies the existence of God, the creation of the universe and all life, and the existence of a transcendent supernatural realm. If a demon were to devise a false doctrine opposed to God, it is difficult to imagine a better one. Naturalism and new ageism must be confronted and exposed for their lack of supporting evidence. Those who have been appointed as pastors, teachers, and evangelists, must equip the saints with a view to building up the body of Christ (Eph 4:11-12). In training the faithful of the church, the teaching of others will be facilitated, and thus opportunities for the advancement of the gospel (2 Tim 2:2).

Finally, the work of this thesis project must be attended to with perseverance and commitment, for souls are in jeopardy of being misled and lost for eternity. Jesus laid down His life for His sheep. The Apostle Paul was whipped, beaten, stoned, and suffered many hardships for the advancement of the gospel (2 Cor 11:23-28). Returning to a military metaphor, he calls Timothy to suffer with him as a good soldier of Christ in the proclamation of the gospel (2 Tim 2:1-3). The faithful church leader in modern times must do no less if necessary.

Theoretical Foundations

Many books have been written defending or challenging aspects of worldviews. On the Christian theist side, important works have included William Lane Craig's *The Cosmological Argument*, Norman Geisler's *Christian Apologetics*, Gary Habermas' *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope* and *The Historical Jesus*, Habermas and J. P. Moreland's *Immortality*, Philip Johnson's *Darwin on Trial*, Stephen Meyer's *Signature in the Cell*, and William Dembski's *Intelligent Design*. Moreover, excellent anthologies, collections of evidence, and encyclopedias of Christian theist apologetics have been written. These volumes have defended Christian theism

against evolution, substance monism, naturalistic theories of the origin of life, denials of the resurrection and the existence of Jesus Christ, atheism, and denials of the reliability and inerrancy of Scripture, to name but a few challenges. Similarly, naturalists, atheists, skeptics, and scientists have written many volumes attacking the existence of God, and the veracity and reliability of the Bible and the narrative it affirms. Implicit and explicit in new age writings, is a rejection of orthodox Christianity, the theistic God, and the divinity of Jesus Christ.

One early article, Gary Habermas' "Paradigm Shift: A Challenge to Naturalism," published in 1989 reveals concern in the naturalists' ranks regarding the validity of empiricism as the sole arbiter of truth, advances in the origin of life studies, and what is implied by near-death experiences (NDEs). In this article, Habermas suggested that the influence of naturalism may be declining, but not all skeptics of naturalism were embracing Christian Theism. While Habermas suggests a shift toward religion, he indicates that eastern (new age) religions are a competitor to Christian theism.¹⁵⁸ Habermas' "Paradigm Shift: a Challenge to Naturalism" appears to be prescient as will be shown below.

Naturalism: A Critical Analysis, edited by William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland, presents a series of essays by leading theist scholars challenging naturalism and encouraging its abandonment because of substantive objections to its methods and presuppositions.¹⁵⁹ A similar volume, *To Everyone An Answer: A Case for the Christian Worldview*, argues at a scholarly level, the positive case for Christian theism. Published in 2004, and edited by Francis Beckwith, William Lane Craig, and J.P. Moreland, it offers a compendium of essays on the existence of

¹⁵⁸ Gary R. Habermas, "Paradigm Shift: A Challenge to Naturalism," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 146, no. 584 (1989): 437-450.

¹⁵⁹ William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland, *Naturalism: A Critical Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2000).

God, the resurrection of Jesus, the case for miracles, the problem of evil, naturalism, Darwinism and eastern thought.¹⁶⁰

However, naturalism is not the only challenge to Christianity. As shown in the introduction, many Americans are affirming belief in the core elements of new ageism. In 2008, New York Times columnist David Brooks argued that recent brain and mind research would not undermine belief in God, but rather it will undermine belief in the Bible. Brooks saw Buddhism taking hold as an explanation of scientific and philosophical observations about the mind that seem to defy naturalistic explanations. According to Brooks, Buddhism helps explain what naturalism does not about the universe and human existence, without the complication of special revelation and the doctrines of Christian theism. Although he does not take sides in the matter, like Habermas, he does say Christian theists will need to rise to the challenge.¹⁶¹

While Thomas Nagel, in *Mind and Cosmos*, published in 2012, is in no way advocating religion, he does suggest panpsychism, the concept that the material of the universe is imbued with a mental aspect. Nagel seeks a solution to the failures of naturalism, but as an atheist, he prefers to find it within the confines of the universe, which seems to be why he suggests panpsychism.¹⁶²

Panpsychism is compatible with eastern pantheistic and new age philosophy, which posits that all is God.¹⁶³ It appears there may be a link between the failure of naturalism and the increase of new-age religious practice in America. David Brooks writes that we are living in a

¹⁶⁰ Beckwith, Craig, and Moreland, *To Everyone an Answer: A Case for the Christian Worldview*.

¹⁶¹ David Brooks, "The Neural Buddhists," *New York Times*, May 13, 2019.

¹⁶² Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos*, 57-63.

¹⁶³ Norman Geisler, *Worlds Apart: A Handbook of World Views* (Grand Rapid, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), 75.

religious revival, but it is not of the traditional sort. Brooks cites the 2018 Pew Poll mentioned in chapter one, which indicates that “29 percent of Americans say they believe in astrology.” He adds, “That’s more than are members of mainline Protestant churches.”¹⁶⁴ Habermas argues that this shift toward religion should encourage Christians to become more active in Christian apologetics.¹⁶⁵

In a more recent lecture, Habermas expanded on the challenges faced by naturalists. Habermas cites ten challenges to naturalism that are not easily explained in the naturalist paradigm. These include: (1) Big Bang cosmology which posits that the universe had a beginning; (2) the apparent intelligent design of life and the universe; (3) the fine-tuning of the universe to statistically improbable levels; (4) evidential near-death experiences where activity of the mind continues beyond brain death; (5) medically documented miracles; (6) successful double-blind prayer research conducted with orthodox Christians; (7) the almost unanimous acceptance by New Testament scholars, liberal and conservative, that Jesus was a miracle worker; (8) acceptance of Jesus as predicting His resurrection beforehand, thus making Him part of a theistic plan; (9) increasing acceptance among New Testament scholars of the resurrection of Jesus; and finally (10) the enigmatic image which defies naturalist explanation on the Shroud of Turin that has recently been re-dated to the first century AD, plus or minus 250 years.¹⁶⁶ An important point in Habermas’ lecture is that one does not have to accept as true all of these points of challenge to naturalism, but if even one of them is true, it is difficult to escape the conclusion

¹⁶⁴ David Brooks, “The Age of Aquarius, All Over Again! Belief in astrology and the occult is surging,” *New York Times*, June 10, 2019.

¹⁶⁵ Habermas, “Paradigm Shift,” (1989): 450.

¹⁶⁶ “Beeson Divinity School and Tactical Faith Ministries: A Symposium on Miracles with Craig Keener and Gary Habermas,” Youtube, accessed July 12, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-gIIUJTjk0>.

that naturalism is false.¹⁶⁷ Likewise, the truth of any of these points also precludes the truth of new ageism.

The Gap in the Literature

This paper will address a gap in the literature regarding original monotheism, which will be argued to be a fact of history. Original monotheism demands the existence of a transcendent and personal God and thus can only be accommodated by the Christian theist worldview. This paper will argue that original monotheism is yet another fact of observed history that is best explained by the truth of the Bible and Christian theism. Furthermore, if Christian Theism is true, naturalism and new ageism must be false.

¹⁶⁷ “Beeson Divinity School and Tactical Faith Ministries: A Symposium on Miracles with Craig Keener and Gary Habermas,” Youtube, accessed July 12, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-gIIUJTjk0>.

Chapter 3: Original Monotheism

In the late 1800s, evolution was all the rage, and scholars sought to apply Darwinian principles in several fields of endeavor. Among these were the origin and diversity of life, the social sciences, and at issue for this paper, the origin and growth of religion. While many presupposed the evolutionary development of religion from animism to monotheism through intermediate stages, Andrew Lang, Wilhelm Schmidt, and others have built a case supported by evidence collected by early ethnographers and anthropologists that the form of religion found in the least sophisticated, oldest, least materially advanced, earliest hunter-gatherer cultures, is monotheism.

In the context of research into the origin of religion of the last two centuries, the word primitive is used liberally by the writers and researchers. According to Corduan, the word primitive is no longer considered as an appropriately descriptive term in the field of ethnology and cultural studies because of the negative connotations associated with it.¹⁶⁸ The word primitive will be used as sparingly as possible in this paper but it is difficult to eliminate it completely given the prevalence of its usage by early scholars in this field. When it is used, the intention is strictly to convey the meaning defined in the Oxford Dictionary: “Relating to or denoting a preliterate, nonindustrial society or culture characterized by simple social and economic organization.”¹⁶⁹

This chapter will lay out the case for the existential reality that the earliest religion of human beings was monotheism (referred to as original monotheism). The response of the critics of Lang and Schmidt will also be presented. Moreover, this chapter will show that the original

¹⁶⁸ Corduan, *In the Beginning God*, 119.

¹⁶⁹ “Primitive,” Lexico, accessed December 31, 2019, <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/primitive>.

monotheism, as proposed by Lang and Schmidt stands, substantially undiminished and unaffected by the arguments of the critics.

Conclusions of Andrew Lang and Others

In *The Making of Religion*, Andrew Lang writing in the late 1800s presented his research on the religions of primitive peoples and found that the supreme god among these people was regarded as fatherly, creative, beneficent, and the source of the moral code.¹⁷⁰ As an example, Lang describes the beliefs of the Australian Kurnai tribe. The Kurnai refer to their god Mungnan-gaur (meaning Our Father) as one who destroyed the earth by water but hence ascended to the sky where he remains. Mungnan is immortal, and his precepts include, listening to the older men, sharing with and living peaceably with friends, a prohibition from promiscuous behavior, and obedience to food restrictions.¹⁷¹

Important observations made by Lang from the ethnographic data for many tribes of Australia include, (1) there is no evidence of evolution of a supreme god from a polytheistic context,¹⁷² (2) the supreme god did not evolve from an animistic spirit,¹⁷³ (3) the supreme being cannot be a dead former chief since many tribes (in Australia) have no such chief,¹⁷⁴ (4) the supreme being is aware of all that transpires in the life of the individual,¹⁷⁵ (5) the supreme

¹⁷⁰ Andrew Lang, *The Making of Religion* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1900).

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 181.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 184.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 185.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 178.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 179-180.

being's name is held in reverence, "his abode is the heavens, he is the Master and Lord of things; his lessons soften the heart."¹⁷⁶

Lang concludes, "there are two chief sources of religion, (1) the belief, how attained we know not, in a powerful, moral, eternal, omniscient Father and Judge of men; (2) the belief in a human afterlife."¹⁷⁷ Lang's work contradicted the prevailing evolutionary theories of religion and was received with skepticism or silence.¹⁷⁸

Lang based his work on the anthropological reports of scholars and travelers. One such important source for Lang was *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia* by A. W. Howitt. Howitt's findings are based on his research and the research of many other individuals (named in the preface of his work) studying the primitive tribes in Australia in the late 1800s. Howitt catalogs the observations of researchers concerning tribal life, social organization, beliefs, customs, and practices.¹⁷⁹

General Characteristics of Australian High Gods

While variation and differentiation exist among the supreme gods of the Australian tribes as noted by early researchers, Corduan summarizes what is generally true. First, anthropomorphic traits are generally attributed to the supreme being but do not limit his divine powers. Further mythology has developed surrounding the supreme being which often is not taken seriously and plays little or no role in religious occasions.

¹⁷⁶ Lang, *Making of Religion*, 179-181.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 301.

¹⁷⁸ Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion*, 13.

¹⁷⁹ Howitt, *The Native Tribes*, vii-xii.

Second, transitions in religion and understanding of the supreme being are not in evidence as would be expected if the evolutionary model of the development of religion were true.¹⁸⁰ In Lang's words, it is unclear how "non-polytheistic, non-monarchical, non-Manes-worshipping savages evolved the idea of a relatively supreme, moral, and benevolent Creator, unborn, undying, watching men's lives,"¹⁸¹ who can be in all places and do all things.¹⁸²

Third, the supreme god is best described as a being. He is not an animistic spirit. Where the spirits of animism required feeding and attention, the high god of the Australian tribes was self-sufficient. Unlike animistic spirits, his interaction with the world apart from the punishment of moral failing is limited and usually through an intermediate such as a son.¹⁸³

Fourth, Lang argued that the supreme being could not be a deceased chief since these tribes were managed by a collaborative group of elders. Moreover, the supreme being could not be a deceased hero or ancestor because the supreme being is not believed to have ever died.¹⁸⁴

Fifth, the supreme god is aware of all things, and although the term was resisted by some researchers because of its association with Christianity, he is best described as omniscient. Other terms for the supreme god resisted by researchers include omnipotent, creator, and eternal, although Corduan argues the data collected by researchers supports these appellations.¹⁸⁵

Sixth, the supreme being made all things, including the cosmos and life; there is not a time when he did exist nor a time when he will not exist. His power to act is unlimited.

¹⁸⁰ Corduan, *In the Beginning God*, 71-73.

¹⁸¹ Lang, *Making of Religion*, 184.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Corduan, *In the Beginning God*, 73-75.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 74-75.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 73-75.

Furthermore, the supreme god is the originator and enforcer of the morals law. As an example, Baiame, the supreme god of the Kamilaroi tribe, prohibits murder, lying to a tribal elder, adultery, and requires love and caring of neighbors and the elderly.¹⁸⁶

Corduan notes that among the Australian tribes, there is no regular worship of the supreme being. Thus, it is illogical that the supreme being evolved from animistic or polytheistic predecessors who would have required regular worship in the form of attention and the feeding through sacrifice. Moreover, among these tribes, there are no sorcerers or shamans that would have been associated with spirit worship. However, given the relative inaccessibility of the supreme being of the Australian tribes, Corduan suggests that degeneration from monotheism might be expected if lesser gods and spirits might be viewed as potentially providing more assistance to the tribal members. While Lang accepted the possibility of degeneration, evolutionary theorists such as Tylor stood in strong opposition.¹⁸⁷

Notwithstanding Tylor's protestations, Lang's analysis led him to the conclusion that the tribes of Australia could be placed into two groups. The first group had a less materially developed culture and exhibited true monotheistic religion. The second group had a slightly higher material development of their culture, and while monotheism in some instances was still present, polytheistic and animistic elements were also present. In this second group, in some cases, polytheism and animism had displaced monotheism. Lang suspected that the least materially developed culture was the earlier culture which would mean that the earliest religion of humanity was monotheism, but he could not prove it and suggested this type of culture sequencing to determine the earliest culture could not be accomplished. Suspicions regarding

¹⁸⁶ Corduan, *In the Beginning God*, 76-77.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 77-79.

which group had the earliest culture would not settle the scholarly question.¹⁸⁸ The resolution of the matter would wait for the application of the cultural-historical method by Wilhelm Schmidt.

Wilhelm Schmidt and the Cultural Historical Method

The seminal work advancing the theory of original monotheism is Wilhelm Schmidt's *Der Ursprung der Gottesidee (The Origin of the Idea of God)*. In this twelve-volume set, Schmidt lays out the case for original monotheism as well as other competing theories. *Der Ursprung* is written in German and was never translated into English. In 1931, to provide a more compact work on comparative religions, Schmidt published *The Origin and Growth of Religion: Facts and Theories*, a volume of a few hundred pages.

In *The Origin and Growth of Religion*, Schmidt examines the succession of theories regarding the origin of religion, including nature myths, fetishism, ancestor worship, animism, most of which assume the evolution of religion. Schmidt shows that all these theories fail to explain the monotheism found among the most primitive cultures and earliest tribes. Schmidt applied the cultural-historical method of the Vienna School, where the traits of cultures placed them in the chronology of history. Schmidt demonstrated that the least developed cultures (which are materially less sophisticated and expected to be most similar to the earliest human cultures) worship one god who shares many attributes with the God of the Bible.¹⁸⁹

Schmidt establishes the ethnological priority of the most primitive peoples as meeting several criteria. First, most primitive peoples tend to be geographically isolated by mountain ranges, seas, locations on islands, rivers, or primeval forests. Second, ethnologically primitive

¹⁸⁸ Corduan, *Making of Religion*, 79-80.

¹⁸⁹ Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion*, vii.

peoples are food-gatherers at the initial stages of economic development, who have not exploited, farming, or breeding animals. Third, the most ancient cultures have developed only primitive, housing, clothing, and tools. Fourth, the most primitive cultures lack any indication of the development of more advanced cultural elements such as farming, weaving, pottery, or metallurgy.¹⁹⁰ Each of these four criteria will be considered in more detail in the paragraphs that follow.

Geographic Locations of the Oldest Cultures

Tribes possessing the oldest culture are located in remote habitats and isolated regions where no signs of earlier inhabitants can be found. The tribes in question appear to be the first inhabitants of the region they are in, which are in locations that are often undesirable very difficult to access. The Pygmies and Pygmoids of Asia are found in the remote south-east islands of the continent and can only be accessed by crossing mountain ranges and forests. According to Schmidt, the same can be said for the oldest Australian tribes, the Kulin and the Kurnai. The Tasmanian tribe was confined to the remote island of Tasmania, though they were exterminated by the Europeans before much was known about their culture. The African Negrillo inhabit dense primeval forests, while the Bushmen have been pushed to the far south and southeast part of Africa. The Samoyeds, the Koryaks, and the Ainu have been forced to the far north-east by the advancing, more advanced pastoral and agricultural tribes. The Caribou Eskimo are found west of Hudson Bay in the inhospitable Arctic circle. North American tribes, such as the Algonquins were driven to remote Islands off of the north-east coast while the Old Californian tribes were driven to the region between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific. At the farthest southerly

¹⁹⁰ Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion*, 251-255.

location of the South American continent are found the tribes of Tierra del Fuego. In each of these cases, there are no signs of older cultures in the regions inhabited by these tribes.¹⁹¹

Other Attributes Affirming Ethnological Antiquity of the Oldest Tribes.

Three other attributes affirm the ethnological priority of the oldest tribes. First, all the tribes designated as the oldest are hunter-gatherers and are found to be in the initial stage of economic development. There is no evidence among these tribes of farming or pastoral pursuits. Second, the oldest cultures inhabit the most rudimentary types of housing and similarly have access to the simplest weapons, tools, and clothing. Third, the tribes of the oldest culture have not attained advanced hunting, totemism, mother-right succession, cattle breeding, advanced housing, metallurgy, pottery, or weaving skills, all or many of which are present in more advanced cultures.¹⁹²

Referring to the tribes exhibiting these four indicators of the greatest antiquity, Schmidt concludes, “these peoples, and therefore their religions, belong ethnologically to the most ancient period.”¹⁹³

Identification of Tribes Possessing the Oldest Culture

Applying the cultural-historical method to tribal cultures, Schmidt identified the oldest tribes with the least materially advanced cultures. Among the least materially sophisticated, ethnologically earliest cultures, Schmidt includes the Pygmy tribes, the Tierra del Fuegians, the Bushmen, the Southeast Australian tribes including the Kurnai, Kulin, and Yuin, the Arctic culture (except the Korayaks), and the early North American Indian tribes. Schmidt concludes

¹⁹¹ Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion*, 251-254.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 254.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 254-255.

that the character of the supreme being of these tribes is monotheistic.¹⁹⁴ Among these peoples, the supreme being is less connected with the sky than the pastoral nomads, and it is believed that at one time he lived on earth and instructed the people in “social and moral laws.”¹⁹⁵ Schmidt concludes that the location of the supreme being at one time on the earth is indicative of a close connection between people and the supreme being.

The following is an overview of the characteristics of the supreme being found among the peoples belonging to the earliest culture circle. Subsequent paragraphs will address the variation of beliefs among these tribes.

The Supreme Being of the Oldest Human Cultures

In comparing the earliest human cultures with later ones, Schmidt concludes that the belief and understanding of a supreme being is so clear and vivid, the like of which cannot be found in later cultures. The supreme being, according to Schmidt is found among all peoples of the earliest culture circle. While variation is found in devotion to, and nature of this being, his importance in these cultures is unmistakable.¹⁹⁶ Table 1 provides a summary of tribes within various cultural locations of the oldest culture where a distinct supreme being is found, according to Schmidt’s research.

According to Schmidt, all these people groups are found in “their last refuges, whether distant islands, extreme verges of continents or inaccessible wooded mountains . . . wherever remnants of the primitive peoples are still discoverable over this huge area, they show belief in a

¹⁹⁴ Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion*, 262.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 264.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 257.

Table 1. Presence of a supreme being in the oldest human cultures (food-gatherers) ¹⁹⁷

Oldest Culture Group	People Groups and Tribes	Location
Central Culture	Boni Negrillos Ajongo and Nkule Batwa Bagielli Batwa Babutti Andamanese Pygmies Semang Pygmies Negritos	East Africa West Africa Urundi Cameroon Rwanda Ituri Asia Asia Philippines
Southern Culture	Bushmen Fuegians Various Tribes	Southern Africa Tierra del Fuego South-EastAustralia
Arctic Primitive Culture	Samoyeds Koryaks Eskimo Ainu	North-Central Russia Far East Russia Northern Canada, Alaska, Greenland, and Eastern Siberia Japan
North American Culture ^a	Hoka Penuti Yuki Dene and Algonquin Tribes Joshua Inland Salish Eastern Algonquin Central Algonquin Western Algonquin Sioux	North Central California Interior North-West Canada and Northern United States

^a Schmidt concludes that the North American culture is related to the Arctic Culture.

¹⁹⁷ Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion*, 257-261.

Supreme Being . . . which must have been deeply and strongly rooted in the dawn of time, before the individual groups had separated from one another.”¹⁹⁸

While the existence of a supreme being is clear to the point of being obvious, differentiation and later additions have resulted in the multiplication of gods in some cultures. To the supreme being, some tribes of the Arctic culture later added a divine protector of beasts. Among the earliest human cultures noted in the table, the supreme being is central, and the originators of the race are the first father and mother. The supreme being is completely good, and thus, some tribes, especially those of North America, have added a superior being to account for the origin and existence of evil. Additional superior beings emerge when the supreme being is conflated with the first father whose union with the first mother results in the birth of children. While cases where the superior being is found to have a family, examples are found in all the oldest cultural groups where that is not the case and thus, most likely the original belief. Schmidt asserts that where the supreme being is found to have a family, it is likely the result of later accretions. Schmidt concludes that even where the addition of superior beings is found, they owe their existence and position to the supreme being, and thus, the true nature of original monotheism in the oldest, earliest human culture is preserved.¹⁹⁹ For comparison, one might consider the angels and demons found in the great monotheistic beings of the world. In Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the addition of created spirit beings in no way diminish the monotheistic nature of these religions.

¹⁹⁸ Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion*, 261.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 262-264.

The Nature of Supreme Being of the Oldest Cultures

The supreme being is often associated with the sky but he is independent of it. Among most of the tribes referenced above, it is said that the supreme being once lived upon the earth with human beings and that he imparted social and moral laws to the people. Among some North American tribes, the supreme being is said to have left the earth for heaven, where he now lives, due to the sin of mankind. In some tribes, lightning is viewed as a weapon of the supreme being and thunder and storm a manifestation of his anger. In the Arctic culture and the associated North American tribes, these manifestations are shifted to the thunderbird.²⁰⁰

According to Schmidt, some tribes view the supreme being as having human form but possessing a personality beyond human experience. Others say he cannot be perceived by the senses. The Fuegians assert that “their deity was like the wind and could not be grasped.”²⁰¹ Others say he is invisible.

With regard to form, among some, he is said to be like a man with, in some cases, a long beard. Among some tribes, the skin color of the supreme being corresponded to that of the tribe, although among the Semang tribes, he is said to be white in color. Many tribes recall the supreme being as shining white like fire and some say that he shines so bright that he cannot be looked upon. No images of the supreme being are found among the tribes of the oldest culture except for where he is also believed to be the first father and progenitor of the race.²⁰²

²⁰⁰ Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion*, 264-266.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 266.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 266-267.

Names of the Supreme Being

The names of the supreme being in these oldest cultures vary greatly. Schmidt identifies three groups of names for the supreme being related to his paternal, creative power, or abode in the sky. All tribes of the oldest culture address the supreme being as a father, taking the form as simply father, my father, or our father. The name of the supreme being is spoken in reverence and only as need dictates. Schmidt concludes that appellation of the supreme being is not to denote physical paternity, but rather “an attitude of the greatest reverence, of tender affection and steadfast trust on the part of man towards his god.”²⁰³

So too, the supreme being is referred to regarding his creative power, but this is not as common as father. He is called the creator by the Wiradyuri-Kanilaroi of South-East Australia. He is most often called creator, creator of the earth, or creator of the world among the North American tribes. He is called the creator of life by the Samoyeds. The Ainu refer to the supreme being as the divine maker of the world. Beyond these instances, the supreme being is not called the creator.²⁰⁴

Schmidt notes a more common basis for the naming of the supreme being as related to his place of dwelling. The most common of names related to the dwelling are he that is above or that lives above or in some cases, he that is in the sky. Other names for the supreme being are indicative of the eternal existence from of old. Among tribes of the oldest culture, he is referred to variously as the old one, the old one above, the primeval, the one above, the master above, the divine sky lord, the giver, the upholder, the cradle, the inspirer and protector, the great and supreme spirit, the good old one, the most high, the most mighty, the slayer in the sky, he who is,

²⁰³ Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion*, 268.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 268.

overseer, power, he who is outside, and universe. He is also given names related to storms, thunder, sky, weather, and power.²⁰⁵

Attributes of the Supreme Being Among the Oldest Culture

Tribes of the oldest culture variously apply the notion of eternity to their supreme beings. Some affirm that he preexisted all things or that he does not die. Others say that he has always been, and he will always be. In the few cases where supreme being is said to die, Schmidt asserts that the supreme being has been crossed with the first father of humanity who is mortal. Baiame is the supreme being of the Waradyuri of South-East Australia, to whom they specifically apply a word in their language meaning eternity.²⁰⁶

Omniscience

The supreme being is omniscient and takes great interest in matters of morality. He monitors sins of commission and sins of omission and is capable of punishing wrongdoers. He knows all things, even thoughts. The Sun and Moon are viewed as the eyes of the supreme being, attentive to matters, day and night. Some tribes view the stars as his ears or eyes; thus, he is always capable of observing man. Some tribes speak of the omnipresence of the supreme being, while some say he relies on spirits of his creation. In some cases, the birds inform the supreme being of all things.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion*, 268-269.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 270.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

Omnibenevolence

So too, the supreme being is beneficent or all-good, and in some cases desires humans to live in paradise. The Algonquins say that the supreme being does not want sickness or death to exist among human beings. The supreme being of the Andamanese, Puluga, is sympathetic toward the needs of men and desires to help. The supreme being of the Wiradyuri-Kamilaroi, known as Baiame is pleased to forgive sins and the punishment of them upon repentance. In some cases, the supreme being counseled humans to pray, and in response, he is helpful and kind.²⁰⁸

Omnipotence

The omnipotence of the supreme being is consistently found in the oldest culture. He is a being of “enormous power, which indeed is often said to be boundless.”²⁰⁹ Some tribes say he is capable of doing all things and being in all places. In general, in the oldest culture, the supreme being exceeds all other beings and is unmatched in his capabilities. No other being can match the supreme being in feats which demonstrate strength or power.²¹⁰

Creative Power

Schmidt notes that no supreme being of the oldest culture is explicitly said to lack creative power. This creative power is expressed in the creation of the universe. Among the tribes which attribute creation to the supreme being are the Pygmy tribes, the Arctic Culture Ainu tribe, the South-East Australian tribes, the oldest Fuegian tribes, and the North American

²⁰⁸ Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion*, 271.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 272.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 272.

Tribes. Schmidt states that the North American tribes attribute *ex nihilo* creation to their supreme being. Among the Asiatic Pygmies, the Bushmen, the Ainu, the Samoyeds, the North American tribes, Halakwulup of Tierra del Fuego, and the South-East Australian tribes, the creation of the earth and universe is a deed attributed to the supreme being. In general, these same tribes recognize the supreme being as the creator of humanity or the first father and mother.

For some tribes, the way the supreme being created humans lacks definition. Among other tribes, the manner of creation varies with some tribes sharing similar stories. The North Central California tribes variously claim that man was created from bird feather (Schmidt believes this is due to totemic influences), or that man was made of sticks which took on human form overnight, or, that the body of the first man was made of clay which came to life in the presence of the sweat of the supreme being. Among some South-East Australian, Semang, and Pygmy tribes, the body of the first humans are made of clay and brought to life by the breath or word of the supreme being. Other tribes say that humans were made from fruits, or wood-filled in with earth. In a few tribes, the supreme being is not explicitly said to possess creative power, this being the case among some Bushman tribes, the Koryaks, the Samoyed, and the Fuegian Yamana and Selknam tribes.²¹¹

Morality

The supreme being of the oldest culture is the righteous giver of the moral law who may discipline those who disobey it. The supreme being is incapable of evil and cannot countenance it. In some tribes, another being opposes the work and mandates of the supreme being and instigates evil. However, the supreme being is far stronger and more important than the evil being. For this reason, Schmidt concludes that this understanding of the supreme being cannot be

²¹¹ Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion*, 272-273.

equated with the dualism associated with the Greeks because of the superior nature of the supreme being to all other beings. The origin and existence of evil are shrouded in mystery as is the case among the Arctic and North American tribes.²¹²

Schmidt notes that there are a few tribes, such as the Bushmen, the Koryaks, and the Eskimo, who do not associate the moral code with the supreme being. For the remainder, morality is authored by the supreme being. Important elements of the moral code found among these tribes include, “avoidance of unjustified homicide, sexual morality (avoidance of adultery, fornication, unnatural vices, prenuptial unchastity), honesty, and readiness to help those who need it (the sick, weak, old, and those with many children).”²¹³ According to Schmidt, this moral code is rehearsed at the initiation ceremonies of young men in ceremonies; these ceremonies are viewed as the creation of the supreme being. The moral code among these tribes is the primary source of civil order; outside of the parent/child family relationship, no tribal authority is recognized capable of making pronouncements or rules for the entire tribe. Schmidt concludes that the moral code of the tribes of the oldest culture is by no means low.²¹⁴

Among the oldest culture of the earth, the supreme being is viewed as the author and enforcer of the moral law. He can reward morally good actions and he can punish departures from the moral code he has established. Among many tribes of the oldest culture, long life is seen as a reward for living a good life, and early death is the punishment for those choosing a morally bad life. Some tribes view death and disease as being sent by the supreme being. Many

²¹² Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion*, 271-272.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 274.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

tribes ascribe death to evil spirits employed by the supreme being, thus disassociating the supreme being from the carrying out of the death sentence.²¹⁵

Views of the Afterlife

According to Schmidt, “All primitive peoples without exception, believe in another life.”²¹⁶ Some tribes lack further information regarding the afterlife, but some provide a significant amount of detail. Some see the next world as a place that does not distinguish the destiny of those who have been good and those who have been bad. In this case, it may be believed that bad actions have been atoned for in earthly life. However, the great majority of the tribes of the oldest culture believe that there will be a distinction between morally good and morally bad in the afterlife. The morally good are generally said to go to the sky or heaven where the supreme being is believed to live where they will enjoy an afterlife filled with happiness and free of pain, sickness, and death. For some tribes, the afterlife is an improved version of earthly life. Among many tribes, it is held that there will be no more childbearing consistent with the fact that death will be abolished. Certain Andamanese and Fuegian tribes hold that departed souls will be required to give an accounting for their lives and how they have lived.²¹⁷

The destiny of the morally bad is often described as “painful punishment, by fire and heat.”²¹⁸ Among other tribes, the lot of the morally bad is existence without happiness. Some tribes believe that the evil will also inhabit the sky but that they will be separated from the good.

²¹⁵ Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion*, 274-275.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 275

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 275-276.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 276.

The most common location of the evil in the afterlife is said to be under the earth or the far western reaches of the earth.²¹⁹

Worship of the Supreme Being

Schmidt's contemporaries asserted that there was little worship of the supreme being. Schmidt concurs that this is true concerning younger primary and secondary cultures far removed from the oldest culture. Concerning the oldest human culture, Schmidt asserts that a vibrant connection with the supreme being remains, dating to primeval times when the supreme being lived on the earth instructing them. Upon departure from the earth, the supreme being has maintained an active interest in the affairs, morality, holy festivals, and initiation rituals of men. Schmidt notes that the Halakwulup, Semang, Koryaks, and Ainu assert that the supreme being sends the soul of each individual into the human body. While Schmidt affirms that the relationship of the supreme being varies in intensity, its pervasiveness among these tribes argues against the distant relationship that may be observed in younger, more materially advanced cultures.²²⁰ Schmidt contends that the oldest tribes of earth show genuine reverence of the supreme being and fear his judgements. Care is taken in the use and pronunciation of the supreme being's name in a manner that is not seen for other objects and entities.²²¹

Prayer, Sacrifice, and Formal Ceremonies

The acts of devotion to the supreme being constitute, along with prayer, sacrifice, formal ceremonies, and worship of the supreme being. Schmidt notes several kinds of prayers which

²¹⁹ Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion*, 276-77.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 276-277.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 277-278.

may easily be missed by observers which include, unspoken petition, gestures, and spontaneous verbal prayers which may invoke the name of the supreme being. Schmidt notes that prayer gestures are found among the Semang, Yuin, and Wiradyuri-Kamilaroi of South-East Australia, and perhaps others. Spontaneous informal prayer has been observed among the Negritos of the Philippine Island, the Fuegian Yamana and Halakwulup tribes, and the Batwa of Rwanda, and the Bushmen. In some cases, substantial liturgies are rehearsed at night.

Schmidt notes that prayers are for the purposes of making petitions known before the supreme being, but also, prayers of thanksgiving have been observed among the oldest tribes. Schmidt concludes, that of the oldest tribes, prayer has been observed in all but the Andamanese, Kurnai, and Kulin, where still, ceremonies are celebrated which are shrouded in mystery, and may contain prayer. Among the Arctic tribes, prayers may be short but are also found to accompany sacrifice. Some tribes view the levels of prayers observed among their white visitors as superfluous because of the benevolent nature of the supreme being. Some tribes say, the supreme being sends blessing without the need for requests. Among the Yamana, Algonquin, Gabon, and Batwa tribes, prayer is abundant in comparison to the other of the oldest tribes.²²²

The incorporation of sacrifice to the supreme being is not as pronounced as other forms of worship, but it is still widespread, being found among the Arctic tribes, the North American Algonquins, the Asiatic and African Pygmies, the Bushmen, the Fuegian Selknam tribe, and the Veddas tribe of Sri Lanka. Among these tribes, the offering is of first fruits, which is a small portion of the food that has been gathered or hunted. Schmidt notes that among these tribes, it is believed that all things are the property of the supreme being who provides for the people. Schmidt emphasizes that these sacrifices cannot be attributed to the feeding of the dead since this

²²² Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion*, 278-279.

practice is virtually unknown among the tribes of the oldest culture. First fruit offerings among the Semang of Malacca have not been observed. However, a blood sin offering is made.

Thunder is believed by the Semang to be the voice of Kari, their supreme being, and when it is heard, the tribesmen make a small cut with a bamboo knife on the knee and mix the blood with water and broadcast it toward the sky while praying for “pardon of their sins.”²²³

While some of the tribes of the oldest culture do not offer sacrifices, other types of ceremonies can be found among them which may last weeks or months and were ordained by the supreme being himself. A youth initiation ceremony is observed among the Fuegian tribes, the South-East Australian tribes, and the Andamanese. Among some of these tribes, the ceremony includes youth of both sexes in preparation for the formation of families, with a view to impressing moral, social, and religious virtue and may include mention of the supreme being’s name. Among these tribes, the family is viewed as an institution of the supreme being. Other ceremonies are found among the oldest culture. The arctic tribes conduct seasonal ceremonies which incorporate prayer and sacrifice where the object is thanksgiving and the seeking of guidance. Nocturnal litanies and prayer ceremonies are also found among the tribes of the oldest culture.²²⁴

Reactions of Critics and Response of Lang and Schmidt

The climate in the academy in the 1800s was such that the search for scholarly solutions to the origin of religion by default ruled out the possibility of the supernatural playing a role. According to E. E. Evans-Pritchard, in finding a solution to the origin of religion problem, scholars sought to fashion a weapon against Christianity in order to discredit it, and furthermore

²²³ Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion*, 279-281.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 281-282.

that scholarly work in the field of the origin of religion, rooted in a rationalistic approach, was biased by anti-supernatural presuppositions.²²⁵

Writing in 1871, E. B. Tylor articulated support for the evolution of religion from animism to monotheism in his work, *Primitive Culture: Researches Into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom*.²²⁶ Max Muller²²⁷ theorized that religion originated from the confusion and misunderstanding due to the development of language.²²⁸ Thus Lang's publication of *The Making of Religion* represented a substantial departure from the prevailing theories of the time and was seen as a new theory.

Lang's theory of original monotheism in the oldest cultures elicited a strong response from E. S. Hartland who wrote, "On the antecedent improbability that naked savages, without any organized system of government, and incapable of counting up to seven, could have attained a philosophical conception so lofty, there is no need to argue. It is obvious that the theory demands cogent proof."²²⁹ But here, Hartland's response appears to presuppose the correctness of the evolutionary model of religion, in suggesting that sophisticated religious thoughts can only be had by advanced cultures with organized governments and a developed understanding of mathematics. Hartland, in this response, completely discounts the possibility of divine revelation. He demanded proof for Lang's theory, but he offered no proof of his antecedent presupposition which denies the possibility of divine revelation as a source for the original monotheism found

²²⁵ E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Theories of Primitive Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 15.

²²⁶ E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches Into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom* (London: Murray, 1920).

²²⁷ F. Max Muller, "Comparative Mythology" in *Chips from a German Workshop*, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner, 1871), 1-141.

²²⁸ Corduan, *In the Beginning God*, 29-30.

²²⁹ E. S. Hartland, "The High Gods of Australia," *Folklore* 9, No. 4 (Dec. 1898), 293. p. 290-329.

by Lang among the Australian tribes. Moreover, in demanding proof, Hartland ignores the proof for original monotheism that Lang cites in *Making of Religion*, rooted in the ethnological field reports collected by Howitt as noted above.

Lang had been a student of E. B. Tylor. As mentioned earlier, Tylor had advanced the theory of the evolution of religion, beginning with animism. Lang's research and conclusions in contradistinction postulated that monotheism was the earliest form of religion. When Lang published his conclusion, Tylor did not respond directly. However, Tylor did revise his earlier work to preserve the viability of his evolutionary theory in the light of Lang's monotheistic conclusions. Tylor had earlier argued against missionary influence as having corrupted the religions of ancient tribes, particularly with respect to the Native American tribes. According to Tylor, the supreme being described by the tribes potentially impacted was far too different from the God of the missionaries to have been the result of contact with Christians and missionaries. Tylor's rejection of missionary influence is found in the first edition of his book, *Primitive Culture*, published in 1874.²³⁰

After receiving the field reports of Howitt, which reported high gods among the ancient Australian tribes, Tylor revised his views of missionary influence in two ways. First, in the second edition of *Primitive Culture*, he removed references and discussion denying missionary influence as a possible reason for the finding of high gods among the oldest tribes. Second, in the 1892 publication of "The Limits of Primitive Religion," he completely reversed course from his earlier approach and stated that where monotheism was found in the earliest cultures, it was a result of missionary influence. The problem for Tylor was that his original arguments against missionary corruption were sound, and Lang and Schmidt exploited this fact in defending their

²³⁰ Corduan, *In the Beginning God*, 97-100.

findings.²³¹ As Corduan points out, the situation was that the missionaries had failed to make conversions to Christianity. Therefore, it seems illogical that tribes often hundreds of miles away from the missionary activity had “altered their mythology to include a benevolent creator god, though they did not get any benefit from him.”²³²

In short, substantive criticisms of Lang’s *Making of Religion* were in short supply. The same can be said of Schmidt’s analysis of data and conclusions published in *Der Ursprung der Gottesidee* as will be shown below. Schmidt was criticized for the verbosity of his writings and the fact that he was a Catholic priest as if none of his critics came to the dialogue without some form of worldview bias and presuppositions which were often anti-supernatural.²³³ Corduan concludes, “the obvious reason for the rejection of Schmidt is that he found at the origin of human culture . . . marital faithfulness in monogamy, straightforward honesty, altruistic sharing while respecting the other person’s property, and the general aversion to the shedding of human blood unnecessarily. And, of course, . . . submission to the will of one God.”²³⁴ Such findings on the part of Schmidt were at odds with the conception of the evolution theory of the origin of religion that presupposed that savagery dominated the oldest human cultures.

Raffaele Pettazzoni of the University of Rome leveled criticism of Schmidt based on what Pettazzoni perceived to be the definition of monotheism. In assessing the great monotheistic religions of the world, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Pettazzoni asserted a new

²³¹ Corduan, *In the Beginning God*, 97-100.

²³² *Ibid.*, 100.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 224-226.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 227.

definition of monotheism, and that is, that it is the negation of polytheism.²³⁵

Thus, Pettazzoni concluded that what was observed by Schmidt about the supreme being of the oldest tribes could not be monotheism because they failed first to exhibit polytheism. Since monotheism is universally believed to be the belief in one god, Pettazzoni's conclusion based on his private definition of monotheism is irrelevant. Schmidt's conclusions remain unblemished in the light of Pettazzoni's criticism.²³⁶

Paul Radin, an American cultural anthropologist, leveled objections regarding the cultural-historical method and the work of Wilhelm Schmidt. Radin contends that "the search for chronology became an obsession, and the obsession a dogma?"²³⁷ In this criticism of Schmidt and the cultural-historical method, Radin criticizes the use of the number of cultural artifacts to determine the temporal relationship between cultures.²³⁸ In making this criticism, Radin oversimplifies the cultural-historical method which involves assessment of a far broader range of characteristics including geographic location, level of economic development, types of housing, weapons, tools, clothing, metallurgy, pottery, and weaving skills, as described above.

As Corduan points out, cultural forms are what distinguish cultures. According to the cultural-historical method, all aspects of a culture are part of its cultural forms, including weapons, technology, pottery, housing, religion, rituals, and mythology. Thus, the prevalence

²³⁵ Raffaele Pettazzoni, "The Formation of Monotheism," in *Essays on the History of Religions*, trans. H. J. Rose (Leiden: Brill, 1954), 9.

²³⁶ Corduan, *In the Beginning God*, 229-233.

²³⁷ Paul Radin, *The Method and Theory of Ethnology* (New York: Basic Books, 1933), 167.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 130-133.

and the type of cultural forms in a culture cannot be ignored. Accordingly, Corduan sees Radin as presenting a straw man argument in this regard.²³⁹

A second criticism leveled by Radin against the cultural-historical method is concerned with the criteria used to establish the chronology and priority of cultures. Radin writes that the cultural-historical method is an effrontery in that it “lays down laws that govern cultural growth, and this is probably the reason for his [Graebner] very great influence in Germany and Austria.”²⁴⁰ As Corduan points out, contrary to the evolutionary approach to religion, where religion by necessity began with animism and evolved to monotheism, the cultural-historical methods offered no laws of cultural development, only a methodology for establishing the chronological development of culture.²⁴¹ Radin’s suggestion that laws for cultural development were appealing to the Austrian and German mind appears to be an unsupported and fallacious ad hominem attack. Moreover, Corduan, a native speaker of German, shows that Radin’s paraphrase of Schmidt’s words is not faithful to their intent.²⁴² Thus, it difficult to find a substantive objection to Schmidt’s work in Radin’s critique.

Interestingly, Radin was an early proponent of monotheism among the oldest tribes. In his *Primitive Man as Philosopher*, published in 1927, Radin refers to Lang as “that most courageous thinker”²⁴³ saying:

In 1898, he published *The Making of Religion*, in which he claimed that the evolutionary school in ethnology was hopelessly wrong in one of its fundamental assumptions, namely, that belief in a supreme deity did not now and never had existed among so-called

²³⁹ Corduan, *In the Beginning God*, 235-236.

²⁴⁰ Radin, *Method and Theory*, 79.

²⁴¹ Corduan, *In the Beginning God*, 236-237.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 239-242.

²⁴³ Paul Radin, *Primitive Man as Philosopher* (New York: D. Appleton and Company), 345.

primitive tribes. He contended that ethnologists, misled by certain preconceptions, had misinterpreted those indications pointing in such a direction, crediting to Christian influences those definite instances where the facts could not possibly be denied.²⁴⁴

In the same volume, Radin concludes that Lang's "intuitive insights" had been "abundantly corroborated" and that the ethnologist in their evolutionary presuppositions had been quite wrong.²⁴⁵ Radin continues to say, "That many primitive peoples have a belief in a supreme creator no one to-day seriously denies."²⁴⁶ However, Radin rejects divine revelation as an explanation for the existence of monotheism and argues that monotheism exists in all cultures only because all cultures possess individuals whose personality lends itself to speculation and reflection, who are thus likely to conclude that there is only one god.²⁴⁷ Thus, Radin suggests that monotheism is an invention of humans that can occur in any culture.

Furthermore, Lang and Schmidt posited degeneration as the reason monotheism had faded from many cultures.²⁴⁸ Degeneration being, the concept that over time, clear and distinct monotheism as is found in the oldest cultures fades as animism and secondary gods are introduced. Radin, on the other hand, suggests that what Lang, Schmidt, and others viewed as degeneration was the "projection of the image of the Transformer upon that of a supreme creator and vice versa."²⁴⁹ According to Radin, the Transformer is a culture-hero or trickster, who in his nature, is antithetic to the supreme deity of a culture. Radin sees what others referred

²⁴⁴ Radin, *Primitive Man as Philosopher*, 345.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 346.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ Paul Radin, *Monotheism Among Primitive Peoples*, (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1924), 55-60.

²⁴⁸ Corduan, *In the Beginning God*, 244.

²⁴⁹ Radin, *Primitive Man as Philosopher*, 347.

to as degeneration as the elevation of the trickster in some cultures, and the superposition of his characteristics upon the supreme deity.²⁵⁰

Corduan notes several problems with Radin's critique. Radin rejects the possibility of establishing cultural chronology as dogma, yet Radin himself is dogmatic in his assertion about the development of monotheism being the result of personality types and in his promotion of the trickster as the explanation for degeneration. Not all cultures that Radin considers have a trickster character in their legends. Also, Radin seems to know with great precision and dogmatism, the reasoning and thoughts of the earliest humans. Moreover, Radin infused his ethnology with the presuppositions of the psychoanalysts of his day.²⁵¹ As evidence of this, the final part of Radin's book *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology* is written by Carl Jung, who describes the psychology of the trickster.²⁵² Corduan argues that the "psychological frame of reference, which Radin posits not only without evidence but even without the possibility of evidence since he took such a strong stand against the possibility of identifying the oldest cultures."²⁵³

While the totality of Schmidt work, conclusions, and attempts to reconstruct the history of humanity have been questioned, Ernest Brandewie, after investigating Schmidt's work reached this conclusion,

Schmidt's factual investigations led him to conclude that the oldest groups of people (always?) had a notion of a high god and often expressed very little animistic thinking. Therefore, animism could not have been original or first, but had to be later. And this, as

²⁵⁰ Radin, *Primitive Man as Philosopher*, 347-348.

²⁵¹ Corduan, *In the Beginning God*, 245-247.

²⁵² Paul Radin, *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology* (Pickle Partners Publishing: 2015), 3150, Kindle.

²⁵³ Courduan, *In the Beginning God*, 247.

an aside, is a point, I think, which can be accepted without having to accept the rest of Schmidt's elaborate methodology.²⁵⁴

Indeed, acceptance of this point supports the conclusion that high gods were at the core of the oldest human cultures, which were monotheistic.²⁵⁵

Having failed to find "solid criticisms of Schmidt's work,"²⁵⁶ Corduan considers the question as to whether revisions of Schmidt's anthropological conclusions are required in the light of more recent scholarship. Schmidt's conclusions regarding the development of later primary cultures, the origin of humanity in Asia, and the domestication of the horse, have yielded to revisions. Notwithstanding these revisions, contemporary ethnologists would concur with Schmidt that the oldest human culture and economy is one based on hunting and gathering.²⁵⁷ Brandewie challenges Schmidt's assumptions regarding culture circles and the connection of tribes, but here again, as noted above in Brandewie's words, Schmidt's conclusion that original monotheism is commonly found in the oldest, least materially developed human cultures, can be accepted apart from his overall cultural development conclusions.

Having failed to discredit Schmidt's thesis of the monotheistic nature of religion among the oldest tribes, scholars moved to reject the possibility of finding the origin of religion in human culture.²⁵⁸ In *The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion*, Mircea Eliade lays out several criticisms of Schmidt's work and conclusions. Eliade rejects Schmidt's rationalistic approach in

²⁵⁴ Ernest Brandewie, *Wilhelm Schmidt and the Origin of the Idea of God*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 49.

²⁵⁵ Corduan, *In the Beginning God*, 175.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 248.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 247-452.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 266.

the light of the prevailing scholarly irrationalism of his day.²⁵⁹ Thus according to Eliade, the rational examination of the history of religion must give way to irrationality because rationality is no longer fashionable.²⁶⁰ Eliade adds to his critique of Schmidt's affirmation that high gods are found among the oldest cultures, positing that it is "safer to assume that religious life was from the beginning rather complex and that 'elevated' ideas coexisted with 'lower' forms of worship and belief."²⁶¹ However, Eliade does not say why it is safer to inject lower forms of worship where field researchers have not reported them. Corduan surmises that Eliade's injection of lower forms of worship "betrays an evolutionist commitment," which is not supported by the evidence.²⁶² Eliade asserts that there is no way to investigate early religion because no documents are available from preliterate times.

Nevertheless, as Corduan observes, this can be said of many fields of study, but this does not preclude the possibility of making inferences and sequencing events.²⁶³ In a moment of candor, Eliade concludes that Schmidt, "though a very able scholar, was also a Catholic priest and the scientific world suspected him of apologetic intentions."²⁶⁴ Corduan concludes, other scholars conducted their research and, in the process, promoted atheism or agnosticism. Since all scholars come to their work with presuppositions, what is at issue is whether what they write and conclude is correct. In the case of Schmidt, his contemporaries were not interested in contending

²⁵⁹ Mircea Eliade. *The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), 46.

²⁶⁰ Corduan, *In the Beginning God*, 274.

²⁶¹ Eliade, *The Quest*, 25.

²⁶² Corduan, *In the Beginning God*, 271.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 270

²⁶⁴ Eliade, *The Quest*, 45-46.

with his facts and conclusions, thus bringing about the death of the search for the origin of religion.²⁶⁵

Original Monotheism in A More Advanced Culture

Chan Kei Thong became a Christian at the age of 19, but to some degree, felt that he had abandoned his Chinese heritage. A subsequent move to Beijing in 1995 allowed him to research the cultural heritage of China. Thong discovered that strong similarities exist between the God of the Bible and Shang Di (god of the ancient Chinese) and that the border sacrifice performed by the ancient Chinese significantly paralleled the sacrifices made by the ancient Hebrews. Moreover, Thong found considerable agreement between the Chinese and Hebrew understanding of moral truth and man's responsibility to the divine. Thong's investigation led him to conclude that his ancient forefathers worshipped the God of the Bible, the knowledge of whom came to China as the descendants of Noah repopulated the Earth after the flood described in Genesis.²⁶⁶ The following paragraphs will present the evidence that led Thong to his conclusions.

Oracle Bone Inscriptions

The antiquity-doubting movement of the early twentieth century raised issues regarding the historicity of the Shang dynasty, which would soon be put to rest. With the discovery of the "dragon bones," the existence of the Shang dynasty (c. 1600-1046 BC) was dramatically confirmed. The "dragon bones" were, in reality, ox and turtle bones that were ground up and sold by Chinese apothecaries for medicinal purposes.²⁶⁷ In 1899, scholars noted that some of the

²⁶⁵ Corduan, *In the Beginning God*, 271-273; 297-298.

²⁶⁶ Chan Kei Thong, *Faith of Our Fathers: Finding God in Ancient China* (Singapore: Cru Asia Limited, 2018), Kindle, 22-24.

²⁶⁷ John S. Major and Constance A. Cook, *Ancient China: A History* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 91-92.

“dragon bones” bore inscriptions of early Chinese writing. Many of these bones were used for divination in a process where they would be inscribed with characters and subjected to heat. The reading would be given according to how they cracked. Often referred to as “oracle bones” because of their use for divination, tens of thousands of these bones were discovered near Anyang in Henan Province. In reading the archaic Chinese inscriptions, scholars corroborated the historical existence and succession of kings noted in Sima Qian’s *Records of the Grand Historian* dating to approximately 100 BC.²⁶⁸

The Supreme God of Ancient China

Divination in the Shang dynasty was conducted to enlist the guidance of ancestral spirits of the deceased kings of the Shang dynasty who could be enticed to aid and direct their royal successors upon the earth. While the use of oracle bone divination is indicative of a belief in the transcendent realm in the Shang dynasty, there was one who ruled above all spirits, which were the supreme God believed by the Shang people to rule all heaven and earth. Of the thousands of oracle bone sacrifices that have been discovered and deciphered, only a few have been found to have been directed to Shang Di, the supreme god of the Chinese. Scholars have suggested that perhaps this is the case because Shang Di was viewed to be above being bribed by sacrifices.²⁶⁹

The Shang believed in three types of spirits: ancestor spirits (zu xian), nature spirits (shen), and the lord or lord on high (Di or Shang Di). Shang Di rules far above all spirits as the one supreme god. It should be noted that Shang in Shang dynasty, and Shang, in Shang Di, are represented by different Chinese characters; thus, Shang Di is not regarded as the progenitor of

²⁶⁸ Major and Cook, *Ancient China*, 92.

²⁶⁹ Ginger Tong Chock, *Genesis in Ancient China: The Creation Story In China’s Earliest Script* (Honolulu: Eastward Garden Publishing, 2015), 2.

the Shang people, and he is far above humanity. Shang Di was revered as the supreme god from the earliest times among the Shang people with no evidence of evolution from polytheistic gods.²⁷⁰ During the Zhou dynasty, which superseded the Shang dynasty, Shang Di was also known as Tian which means heaven. The names Shang Di and Tian were used interchangeably in Zhou literature.²⁷¹ As Thong observes, the intermixing of God and heaven is not a foreign one. It is not unusual for it to be said, “may heaven help us” when one is seeking to enlist the help of God. Han Dynasty (206 BC-220AD) scholar Zheng Xuan, in a commentary on the *Historical Records*, states that Shang Di and Tian are interchangeable names for the Lord. Di can be used also to refer to emperors, as in the case of English where earthly masters may be referred to as lord, but in the Chinese language, Shang Di or Tian always refer to the creator god, or the supreme god.²⁷²

Thus, the cognates “di” or “ti” are associated with deity in the Chinese language. These root cognates are found throughout the world linked to the idea of God; in English, deity is used about God or gods; in Latin is found Deus; in Italian Dio refers to God; in French, Dieu; in Spanish Dios; in old Irish Dia; in Welsh, Duw; in Breton Doue; in Lithuanian Dievas; in Lettish Dieus; in Sanskrit Dyu; in Greek Theos.²⁷³

The Written Record Regarding Shang Di

The existence and attributes of Shang Di can be ascertained from the oracle bone inscriptions, the *Five Chinese Classics* compiled by Confucius, and the Historical Records of

²⁷⁰ Thong, *Faith of our Fathers*, 93-94.

²⁷¹ Chock, *Genesis in Ancient China*, 4.

²⁷² Thong, *Faith of our Fathers*, 98-99.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 96.

Sima Qian. The five Chinese Classics were written much earlier than the 6th century BC in which Confucius lived and included: *The Classic of Changes (I Ching)*; *The Classic of History (Shu Jing or Shang Shu)*; *The Classic of Poetry (Shi Jing)*; *The Record of Rites (Li Ji)*; *The Spring and Autumn Annals (Chun Qiu)*.²⁷⁴ Shang Di is referred to 175 times in the *Chinese Classics*. Only a single instance is found where Shang Di is used to refer to a human ruler and only one time where it is used in a less than positive way. Shang Di is the supreme Ruler, distinct from the heavens who must not be represented by images or figures in temples.²⁷⁵

Nature of Shang Di

Drawing on what is learned from the oracle bones and the Five Classics, the following can be ascertained. Shang Di governed weather, climate, and the success or failure of crops. He ordained the victors of war, the rise and fall of cities, and the welfare of human beings. Thus, Shang Di was viewed as transcendent in that he was above heaven and earth, but also immanent in that he controlled the affairs of humans. Shang Di is the creator of the universe and the supreme ruler of it. The emperor served according to the mandate of heaven or the will of the lord on high; thus, the emperor served at the pleasure of Shang Di. Shang Di or Tian viewed the circumstances on earth through the eyes of the people. If the emperor lacked virtue, his power and authority might be removed. Shang Di was considered by the ancient Chinese to be eternal, and as having no beginning or end. Because of their sins, according to *The Classic of History*, Tian destroyed the Xia Dynasty and thus executed judgment on the affairs of the world.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁴ Thong, *Faith of our Fathers*, 34-37.

²⁷⁵ W. H. Medhurst, *A Dissertation on the Theology of the Chinese: With a View to the Elucidation of the Most Appropriate Term for Expressing the Deity in the Chinese Language* (Shanghai: Mission Press, 1847), 273.

²⁷⁶ Thong, *Faith of our Fathers*, 93-99.

The Identity of Shang Di

According to James Legge (1815-1891), the Scottish Missionary, sinologist, Oxford professor, and translator of the *Four Books and the Five Classics* of Confucianism, Shang Di is the one true God known to the Hebrews. Legge writes:

Do the Chinese know the true God? Among all Beings whom they worship, does one stand forth so pre-eminent in his attributes, so distinguished from all others, that we cannot but recognize in him the high and lofty One, who doeth according to His will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, the blessed and only Potentate of whom and through whom and to whom are all things? These questions I answer unhesitatingly in the affirmative. The evidence supplied by Chinese literature and history appears to me so strong, that I find it difficult to conceive how any one, who has studied it, can come to the opposite conclusion.²⁷⁷

Legge reached this conclusion by substituting God in every location in the *Chinese Classics*, where Shang Di is referenced. Legge found that the use of God in these contexts was entirely appropriate, given what is known about the Hebrew God. For promoting this view, Legge was criticized by William Boone who accused Legge of begging the question by assuming that God could be substituted for Shang Di. However, here, Legge is not making the apriori assumption that Shang Di is the same as God, but instead, showing that the use of God in place of Shang Di fits perfectly when the substitution is made in the Chinese documents. Legge concludes, “the Chinese know Him who is the Creator, the Preserver, and the Governor of the Universe.”²⁷⁸ According to Legge, Shang Di is self-existent and he existed before the creation of the universe, and his years are without end. In their 4000 years of history, never has an image of Shang Di been fashioned by the Chinese.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ James Legge, *Notions of the Chinese Concerning God and Spirits* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Register Office, 1852), 7.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 7-9.

²⁷⁹ Legge, *The Notions of the Chinese*, 32.

Legge was not alone in his conclusion that Shang Di is the Hebrew God. William Henry Medhurst, a missionary who produced Chinese-English and English-Chinese dictionaries concurred with Legge. According to Medhurst, Shang Di is the supreme ruler described in the Chinese Classics, but whose name was later corrupted and applied to other lesser deities, “but these are different from him who in the ancients worshipped under the title of Supreme Ruler.”²⁸⁰

If Shang Di is an essential part of Chinese history, why is this fact not obvious to modern Chinese? Thong elucidates the matter saying, “Many of the modern translations of these ancient Chinese texts have excised the passages that mention Shang Di. This is one reason why so many Chinese themselves, even scholars of these texts, are ignorant of the truth of the prevalence and the dominance of the belief in Shang Di in ancient times.”²⁸¹

The Attributes of Shang Di

Systematic theology is an effort to establish doctrines or truth by studying the available texts. Theologians have labored to understand the attributes of God, as communicated in the Bible. Similarly, it is possible to establish the attributes of Shang Di by studying the information presented in the *Chinese Classics* and other Chinese writings. C. K. Thong has undertaken to discern the attributes of God as communicated in the Chinese Classics using the complete and unaltered translation completed by James Legge in the 1800s. To assess the correlation of the attributes of Shang Di to the Hebrew God, Thong selects attributes relating to the Hebrew God, natural attributes which he alone possesses, and moral attributes which he imparts partially to his created beings. The tables below summarize the natural and moral attributes of Shang Di extracted from the Chinese Classics related to each of the attributes noted of the Hebrew God. It

²⁸⁰ W. H. Medhurst, *A Dissertation on the Theology of the Chinese*, 273.

²⁸¹ Thong, *Faith of Our Fathers*, 102.

should be noted that Thong provides several quotations from the *Chinese Classics* in support of each attribute, but herein, only a summary will be provided.²⁸²

Table 2. The natural attributes of Shang Di as derived from the *Chinese Classics*²⁸³

Attribute	Supporting Evidence
Sovereign	He is the one who rules the world, establishes kingdoms, rulers, and dynasties. All earthly authority is established by the mandate of heaven, which is the sovereign will of Shang Di and is absolute. Shang Di possesses majesty.
Eternal	The mandate of heaven, the will of Shang Di, is eternal. Nowhere in the <i>Historical Records</i> of Sima Qian is the origin of Shang Di or Tian described. The Chinese believed that virtuous emperors would live in heaven forever. Since Shang Di is the ruler of heaven, it may be concluded that he reigns eternally.
Immutable	The stability of Chinese society is rooted in the nature of Shang Di, who blesses those who do good and sends calamity on evildoers.
All-Powerful	Shang Di establishes dynasties. He removes power from the unworthy and gives it to those who are worthy.
All-Knowing	Heaven knows all and observes all. Heaven sees the actions of the mighty but also sees and hears as the people see and hear. Shang Di knows all that is happening and is concerned for the peace of the people.
Ever-Present	Nothing escapes heaven. Shang Di's will extends to all places.
Infinite	Heaven governs all creation according to rules and principles. The mandate of heaven, the will of Shang Di, is infinite.

Table 3. The moral attributes of Shang Di as derived from the *Chinese Classics*²⁸⁴

Attribute	Supporting Evidence
Love	Heaven loves and protects people. The love of heaven is found in the universal enlightenment of the people.
Holy	Heaven is moved by virtue. The way of heaven is humility. Pride will result in loss. Heaven is due awe, reverence, and fear. Disobedience brings the demise of nations.
Grace	Shang Di provides abundance and is gracious to those he favors.

²⁸² Thong, *Faith of Our Fathers*, Kindle, 101-102.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 102-107

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 108-117.

Faithful	Heaven is faithful, and its ordinances are unceasing.
Good	Shang Di provides in the form of abundant crops. He leads men to peace and tranquility. Shang Di blesses his creation.
Mercy and Compassion	Heaven has compassion for all people. Heaven is discerning and great and thus can show compassion.
Just	Heaven's scrutiny of men focusses on their righteousness. Shang Di destroys and shortens the lives of a sinner. That men do righteousness is the mandate of heaven. Shang Di causes evil times and calamity for those who do not heed him.
Wise	Heaven is very intelligent in its rule of the people below. Heaven provides wisdom to the king to rule the nation.

From the evidence summarized in Tables 2 and 3, Thong garners much from the Chinese writings that reveal a god ruling from heaven, exhibiting many of the attributes associated with the Hebrew God. The supreme god of China did not evolve from lower gods or spirits. Thong concludes that Shang Di is the one true creator God of Hebrews revealed in the Bible who was known from the earliest times of Chinese civilization.²⁸⁵ In this matter, Thong, Legge, and Medhurst concur.

Sacrifice to Shang Di

For 4,000 years, through 18 dynasties, and up until AD 1911, the Border Sacrifice, in worship and acknowledgment of the supremacy of Shang Di, has been carried out in China. The most recent location where this sacrifice was performed is the Temple of Heaven complex in Beijing, which consists of a round prayer hall which rises to the height of 32 meters (108 feet) and a large circular altar mound where sacrifices were offered. This large complex is situated on a site that covers 273 hectares (674 acres). The name Temple of Heaven is a mistranslation of the Chinese (Tian Tan), which should be rendered Altar of Heaven. The Altar of Heaven is

²⁸⁵ Thong, *Faith of Our Fathers*, 118.

dedicated to Shang Di, but it is not a place that he inhabits, for he cannot be contained in any man-made structure. A similar altar has been discovered in the ancient Chinese capital of Xi'an from whence at least five dynasties ruled. Records indicate that at the Altar of Heaven in Beijing, 654 sacrifices were carried out over approximately 500 years, by 22 emperors.²⁸⁶

In ancient China, and up until 1911, at the time of the collapse of the Qing dynasty, sacrifices at the Altar of Heaven to Shang Di were to be carried out three times per year by the emperor. The timing of the sacrifices was as follows: a spring sacrifice was offered in prayer for a good harvest, a summer sacrifice was offered in prayer for rain, and a sacrifice to heaven at the winter solstice. The winter solstice was the most important of these and is also known as the Border Sacrifice or the Sacrifice to Heaven and could only be carried out by the emperor. The one who performed the sacrifice held the Mandate of Heaven, and thus, it was not delegated to underlings. The Border Sacrifice is traced to the earliest Chinese dynasties and suffered corruption and the worship of false gods during the Qin dynasty enduring to the Ming dynasty. In AD 1368, the Ming emperor commissioned committees to investigate and restore the ancient practices of the Border Sacrifice.²⁸⁷

Preparation for the Border Sacrifice involved the selection of animals (usually calves) to be sacrificed, a proclamation by the emperor six days before the sacrifice at the Altar Mound, and an inspection of the sacrificial animals five days before the ceremony. The emperor fasted for three days in advance of the sacrifice. Two days in advance of the ceremony, the prayers and offerings were inspected by the emperor. On the day preceding the ceremony, the emperor's

²⁸⁶ Thong, *Faith of Our Fathers*, 125-128.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 130-131.

entourage accompanied by a cavalry of 5000, along with guards, eunuchs, ministers, and other attendants, proceeded solemnly along the 4.5 km (3 miles) route to the altar complex.

Those assisting in the ceremony proceeded to the Hall of Abstinence, while the emperor went directly to the Imperial Vault of Heaven, where a tablet was inscribed with symbols, which translated say, Supreme Lord of the Great Heaven. Here, the emperor would kneel three times, kowtowing three times during each kneeling as a sign of humility before Shang Di. The emperor then inspected the Altar Mound and proceeded to the Divine Treasury House and the Divine Kitchen to inspect preparations for the sacrifice. The animals to be sacrificed were required to be of a solid color and without blemish. The animals to be slain in the Slaying Pavilion would pass through the Gate of Hell. From there, the emperor proceeded to the Hall of Abstinence for a bath of purification.

In the morning, the emperor washed and dressed and proceeded to the Altar Mound, where the tablet inscribed Supreme Lord of Heaven and a separate tablet, in a secondary position for spirits and the imperial ancestors, were sheltered by a blue tent. The spirits and the ancestors were represented in order to join in the worship of Shang Di in a ceremony that was dedicated to Shang Di alone. The ceremony of sacrifice involved singing, offerings of gems and silk, burnt offerings, ceremonial wine toasts to Shang Di, martial dance, civil dance, and prayers, all in honor of Shang Di. Thong cites many details of the ceremony, including translations by James Legge of songs and prayers, all dating to the Ming dynasty. The following song welcomes Di at the opening of the ceremony of the Border Sacrifice:

Of old in the beginning, there was great chaos, without form and dark. The five elements [planets] had not begun to revolve, nor the sun and the moon to shine. In the midst thereof there existed neither form nor sound. Thou, O spiritual Sovereign camest forth in Thy presidency, and first didst divide the grosser parts from the purer. Thou madest heaven; Thou madest earth; Thou madest man. All things with their reproducing power, got their being.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁸ Legge, *The Notions of the Chinese Concerning God and Spirits*, 28.

A second song is sung as follows:

O Te [Di], when Thou separated the Yin in the Yang (i. e. heavens and earth), Thy creative work proceeded. Thou didst pronounce, O Spirit the sun and the moon and the five planets, and pure and beautiful was their light. The vault of heaven was spread out like a curtain, and the square earth supported on it, all things were happy. I, Thy servant, venture reverently to thank Thee, and, while I worship, present the notice to Thee, O Te, calling Thee Sovereign.²⁸⁹

After kneeling before Shang Di and presenting broth, a fourth song was sung by the musicians:

The great feast has been set forth, and the sound of our joy is like thunder. The Sovereign Spirit vouchsafes to enjoy our offering, and my heart feels within me like a particle of dust. The meat has been boiled in large caldrons, and the fragrant provisions have been prepared. Enjoy the offering, O Te, then shall all the people have happiness. I, Thy servant, receiving Thy favours, am blessed indeed.²⁹⁰

Another song of the Border Sacrifice includes these lyrics:

The great and lofty One vouchsafes His favour and regard; all unworthy are we to receive it. I, His simple servant, while I worship, hold this precious cup, and praise Him, whose years have no end.²⁹¹

A ceremonial prayer was to be written by the emperor during his three-day fast and recited as part of the ceremony. An excerpt of the prayer written by Emperor Jia Jing (AD 1522-1566) is as follows:

O awesome Creator, I look up to You. How Imperial is the expansive heavens. Now is the time when the masculine energies of nature begin to be displayed, and with the great ceremonies I reverently honor You. Your servant, I am but a reed or willow; my heart is but that of an ant; yet have I received Your favoring Mandate, appointing me to the government of the empire. I deeply cherish a sense of my ignorance and foolishness, and am afraid lest I prove unworthy of your abundant grace. Therefore will I observe all rules and statutes, striving, insignificant as I am, to be faithful. Far distant here, I look up to Your heavenly palace. Come in Your precious chariot to the altar. Your servant, I bow my head to the earth, reverently expecting Your abundant grace. All my officers are here arranged with me, dancing and worshipping before You. All the spirits accompany You as guards, from the East to the West. Your servant, I prostrate myself to meet You, and reverently look up for Your coming, O Di. O that You would promise to accept our offerings, and regard us, while we worship You because your goodness is inexhaustible!²⁹²

²⁸⁹ Legge, *The Notions of the Chinese Concerning God and Spirits*, 28.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

Finally, an excerpt from a ceremonial song is as follows:

When Te, the Lord, had so decreed, He called into existence heaven, earth, and man. Between (heaven and earth) He separately disposed men and things, all overspread by the heavens. I, His unworthy servant beg (favouring) decree, to enlighten me His minister—so may I forever appear before Him in the empyrean.²⁹³

Thong concedes that even though the Border Sacrifice was carried out for thousands of years, it was without a full understanding of its meaning. The passing of the sacrificial animals through the Gates of Hell seems to imply an understanding of the substitutionary nature of the animal sacrifice according to Thong. Likely, these ceremonies were carried out as honored traditions rather than true worship of Shang Di, yet through the prayers and songs it contained, the Border Sacrifice appears to have maintained a witness to the one true God in ancient China for parallels to Old Testament understanding of God and man are manifest in it.²⁹⁴ Thong concludes, “The fact that the Border Sacrifice had to be repeated annually clearly demonstrates that the shed blood of an innocent and seemingly perfect animal provided only temporary reconciliation with Shang Di.”²⁹⁵

Reactions to Legge and Thong

Thong’s and Legge’s views have met with objections, but the objections were not about whether the ancient Chinese worshipped a high supreme God. The main controversy revolves around what Chinese name should be used for God in Chinese Bible translations. A secondary controversy concerns whether the monotheistic God Shang Di possessing the attributes described

²⁹² Thong, *Faith of Our Fathers*, 152.

²⁹³ Legge, *The Notions of the Chinese Concerning God and Spirits*, 29.

²⁹⁴ Thong, *Faith of Our Fathers*, 132-162.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 175.

above by Legge and Thong, can be equated with the God of the Bible. Neither of these controversies defeats the thesis that the God of ancient China known to the Shang dynasty and perhaps earlier dynasties was monotheistic. Thus, for this paper, the controversies about correct Chinese name for God, and whether Shang Di can be equated to the God of the Bible, do little if anything to detract from the notion that monotheism was the religion of ancient China. However, to validate this premise, the following paragraphs will describe in more detail the substance of the two points of controversy mentioned in this paragraph.

The Chinese words which are used in Chinese Bible translations and in discourse to represent God include Shang Di, Tian, Shen, Tianzhu. Shang Di meant Supreme Lord and was used during the Shang dynasty or earlier. Tian means heaven and was introduced during the Zhou dynasty, and Shen means spirit. Shang Di, Tian, and Shen, all appear in the *Chinese Classics*. Tianzhu is a name that was coined by Catholic missionaries to counter the possibility of viewing Tian in a polytheistic or impersonal context. The suffix zhu added to Tian means Lord; thus, Tianzhu means Heavenly Lord. In the *Chinese Classics*, Shang Di and Tian are used interchangeably.²⁹⁶

Matteo Ricci (AD 1552-1610), a Catholic Jesuit missionary to China initially favored the use of Shang Di and Tian as names for God, but later, continued to use Shang Di, but adopted Tianzhu instead of Tian since the influence of Daoism and Buddhism had conflated Tian with impersonal nature force. Ricci viewed the God revealed in the Chinese Classics to be consistent with the God revealed in the Bible and linked Tianzhu, the term coined by Catholic missionaries, and Shang Di.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁶ Sung-Deuk Oak, "Competing Chinese Names for God: The Chinese Term Question and Its Influence Upon Korea," *Journal of Korean Religions* 3, no. 2 (2012): 91.

Legge argued that Shang Di is the true God Elohim of the Bible and that Shen, meaning Spirit should only be used to translate *ruach* and *pneuma*. Legge used Shang Di in his translation work as an equivalent for Elohim and Theos.²⁹⁸ Legge supported the use of Tianzhu but preferred Shang Di because Tianzhu seemingly limited God to heaven. Legge later rejected Tianzhu as an invention of popery.²⁹⁹ Legge was supported in his use of Shang Di by most of the British and European missionaries, including W. H. Medhurst.³⁰⁰

William Boone (1811-1864) and other American missionaries advocated the use of Shen for translating God. Boone maintained that Shang Di was not the God of the Bible and that the Chinese did not have a being who could be rightly called God, and thus, a more general term like Shen should be used for God in Chinese Bible translations. Legges's response to Boone is found in his *The Notions of the Chinese Concerning God and Spirits*. Legge argues that the evidence provided in the *Chinese Classics* is strong. As noted above, Legge provides an extensive description of the Border Sacrifice and extensive quotation of prayers and songs associated with it. Legge argues that all that is said of Shang Di in the Border Sacrifice is consistent with what is revealed about God in the Bible.

Furthermore, Legge argues that Shang Di is self-existent because based on the prayers referenced, He existed before the universe, which He created. Shang Di, Legge argues from the description of the Border Sacrifice, is above the ancestors which occupy an inferior place in the ceremony. Prayers to the ancestors are written in black whereas prayers to Shang Di are written

²⁹⁷ Oak, "Competing Chinese Names for God: The Chinese Term Question and Its Influence Upon Korea," 91.

²⁹⁸ Legge, *Notions of the Chinese*, 1-2.

²⁹⁹ Oak, "Competing Names for God," 98.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 94.

in vermilion; music is played in the ancestral temple seven times, whereas in the Border Sacrifice to Shang Di, music is played nine times. Gems are offered to Shang Di whereas no gems are offered to the ancestors. Legge provides several examples of prayers used in ancestral worship which show that the ancestors were subservient to Shang Di. Legge views the practice of ancestor worship as foolish but argues that this does not negate the fact that the ancient Chinese worshipped one sovereign God.³⁰¹

The controversy continues to the present era, and the argument for the use of the word Shen for God has been taken up by G. Wright Doyle, Director of the Global China Center. Doyle appears to support the view that the ancient Chinese worshipped a supreme being who shared much in common with the Hebrew God, yet Doyle disagrees with the use of Shang Di as the Chinese name for God; he prefers the use of Shen since Shang Di is devoid of plurality.³⁰² Thong responds that the reality of the Trinity does not come from the name of God, for there is no plurality in the names Yahweh or Jesus, but rather it is inferred from numerous verses in the Bible referring to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In Thong's view, Legge's work, *The Notions of the Chinese Concerning God and Spirits*, addresses the appropriate name for God in Chinese and the arguments it makes have not been addressed or refuted.³⁰³ Though Doyle offers several other criticisms (as well as commendations) of Thong's *Faith of Our Father*, he appears to agree that the ancient Chinese god was monotheistic. He does not agree, however, with Thong and Legge that this ancient monotheistic Chinese god is the God of the Bible.

³⁰¹ Legge, *The Notions of the Chinese Concerning God and Spirits*, 7-43.

³⁰² "Chinese Christianity: An Introduction to the Literature," China Institute, accessed February 1, 2020. <http://www.reachingchineseworldwide.org/chinese-christianity-literature>.

³⁰³ "Defending Faith of Our Fathers," Creation Ministries International, accessed February 1, 2020. <https://creation.com/defending-faith-of-our-fathers>.

Modern Skepticism About Shang Di

Some scholars in the last century and to the present have argued that Shang Di was not the monotheistic high god of the ancient Chinese. Shang Di has been viewed variously as an elevated ancestor who inhabits the upper sky, the personification of the pole star in the sky who was elevated to deity, or perhaps the Jade Emperor, also known as Yü Huang, a figure who emerges during the Han dynasty (AD 25-220) and becomes part of the Daoist pantheon. It should be noted that these assertions regarding Shang Di are hypothetical and not rooted in specific textual evidence.³⁰⁴ As Corduan notes, “There is nothing to connect Shang Di directly to any specific ancestor (even a previous emperor) or ancestor worship in general.”³⁰⁵

Furthermore, Shang Di is described in the Chinese Classics, portions of which are traditionally attributed to Wen Wang, the founder of the Zhou Dynasty in the twelfth century BC, and thus, long before Lao Tzu, the founder of Daoist philosophy and the sixth-century BC contemporary of Confucius.³⁰⁶

While early Daoism did affirm star deities, this comes long after the historical records professing knowledge of Shang Di and descriptions of him. Likewise, the Jade Emperor, a member of the Daoist pantheon of God originated in the Han Dynasty (AD 25-220) and was not accorded status as the supreme deity of Daoism until the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907). Thus, the Jade Emperor or the Daoist pantheon of gods cannot be the source for Shang Di who emerges from Chinese prehistory.³⁰⁷ While Daoist and other innovations corrupted the worship of Shang

³⁰⁴ Corduan, *In the Beginning God*, 329-331.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 331.

³⁰⁶ Thong, *Faith of Our Fathers*, 34-35.

³⁰⁷ Corduan, *In the Beginning God*, 330-331.

Di, Shang Di continued to be worshipped through the end of the Chinese Empire in 1911. During the Qing Dynasty (AD 1644-1911), worship of Shang Di alone was reinstated and the religion of China was purged of other gods.³⁰⁸

The Prevalence of Flood Accounts Throughout the World

Creation and flood accounts are ubiquitous among ancient tribes the world over which seems to support the validity of biblical narrative, for it is not credible that all people developed a common mythical account of the events related to the origin of humans. One such account is that recited to this day by the Miao tribe of southern China. The Miao Tribe creation and flood account were translated by a missionary, E. A. Truax, who spent many years among them.

The Miao creation story contains many parallels to The Book of Genesis. Light appears at the outset, then the sun and the moon. Earth and sea creatures are created, followed by the creation of man from the dirt. The woman was formed from man. This account of creation is followed by a genealogy that includes a patriarch named Nuah. The tribes fill the earth, but they forgot God. So, God sent a flood; it poured for 40 days which was followed by mist and drizzle for another 55 days, covering the mountain ranges. Nuah and his wife Gaw Bo-lu-en were righteous; they built a large ship and their family was saved from the deluge. On the ship were male and female animals mated in pairs. The floodwaters receded, and God blessed the survivors and they began to repopulate the world, all speaking the same language. The people decided to build a tower to heaven, but God confused their languages and the tower was never completed. Thus, they scattered over the earth to disperse over the circle of the globe.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁸ Corduan, *In the Beginning God*, 334.

³⁰⁹ John D. Morris, *The Global Flood: Unlocking Earth's Geologic History* (Dallas: Institute for Creation Research, 2012), Kindle, 1595-1653.

John Morris has studied 200 stories that describe a flood event in human history. Morris extracted answers to questions from these 200 stories and tabulated the percentage of stories that affirm the specific facts shown in Table 4 below. From this table, it is seen that flood narratives found throughout the world affirm many of the key facts found in the Genesis flood account.

Table 4. Percentage of flood accounts affirming specific details noted.³¹⁰

Fact Affirmed	Percentage (%)
Is there a favored family?	88
Were they forewarned?	66
Is flood due to the wickedness of man?	66
Is catastrophe only a flood?	95
Was the flood global?	95
Is survival due to a boat?	70
Were animals also saved?	67
Did animals play any part?	73
Did survivors land on a mountain?	57
Was the geography local?	82
Were birds sent out?	35
Was the rainbow mentioned?	7
Did survivors offer a sacrifice?	13

Conclusions Regarding Original Monotheism

From the evidence presented in Chapter, there is strong evidence that monotheism was the original religion of the most ancient hunter-gatherer cultures. Schmidt was attacked on many fronts for his methods and conclusions, yet none of these attacks succeeded in discrediting his central thesis that monotheism was the earliest religion of humans. As Corduan concludes, “original monotheism based on a historical sequencing of cultures (i.e., an application of a culture-historical method) stands, not unscathed, but unrefuted.”³¹¹

³¹⁰ Morris, *The Global Flood*, Kindle, 1682-1693.

³¹¹ Corduan, *In the Beginning God*, 298.

Furthermore, the worship of Shang Di in ancient China provides further evidence of the presence of monotheism, even in more advanced ancient cultures. Here again, attempts to diminish early monotheism by dismissing Shang Di as an ancestral spirit, the Jade Emperor, or the embodiment of the pole star have been substantially challenged by the Chinese Classics, the discovery of the oracle bones and their validation of Sima Qian's *History*. Still another area of difficulty for those who doubt monotheism as the original religion of humanity is the prevalence of flood accounts, found the world-over showing significant commonality with the biblical flood account.

The Implications of Original Monotheism

What is the source of the original monotheism that is found in the earliest human cultures? Is it possible that numerous ancient cultures independently developed a god who was the creator of all things, imbued with attributes of omniscience, omnipotence, eternity, who is the author and enforcer of the moral law? To assert that the cultures of the world developed similar notions of God independently strains credulity to the breaking point. To the author's knowledge, no viable naturalistic explanation has been proposed for the monotheist nature of human religion. One might argue that science, given enough time, will devise an explanation for original monotheism, but to argue in this way seems to avoid the best explanation.

The best explanation for the repeated occurrence of a monotheistic creator god (sharing many attributes with the God of the Bible) in ancient human cultures, separated by tens of thousands of miles and by the natural barriers of mountain ranges, oceans, and dense forests, is that the biblical God described by Christian theists revealed Himself to His creation and his creatures in earlier times. The similarity of the god of ancient tribes and the ancient Chinese to the God of the Bible strongly suggests the truth of Genesis 1-11, which is at the core of Christian

theism. Furthermore, the common understanding of the nature of God and the presence of flood accounts in the memory of 200 early people groups is as would be expected given the biblical account found in Genesis 1-11 and affirms its truth.

Thus, the creator exists in the memory of ancient peoples the world over, and by these peoples, he is said to be the creator of all things, imbued with attributes of omniscience, omnipotence, eternality, who is the author and enforcer of the moral law. An eternal being must be a transcendent being for the created universe is temporal. That the universe is temporal is uncontroversial given the present affirmation of Big Bang cosmology by modern science. In order to create the universe, a being would need to exist before its creation and apart from it, thus that being would need to be transcendent, which is precisely what is said of the theistic God.

The Dangerous Departure from Christian Theism

Original monotheism undermines the validity of naturalism and new ageism. The following table summarizes what is generally held by theists, naturalists, and new ageists, to be true about God, reality, the origin of the universe, the origin of life, the cause of the diversity of life, the nature of mind and body, the source of ethics, and the possibility of an afterlife.

According to Christian theists, the God who is the source of original monotheism found the world over, is the creator of the universe, who has revealed himself to his creation. He possesses attributes of omniscience, omnipotence, eternality, and he is the author and enforcer of the moral law. Since he is an eternal being, he must be a transcendent being, for the created universe is temporal. Thus, the god affirmed by the ancient Chinese and the world's most ancient cultures is of the same nature as the God affirmed by theists.

Table 5. Theist, naturalist, and new ageist beliefs

	Theism	Naturalism	New Ageism
God	God exists	God does not exist	All is God
Reality	Universe and Transcendent God	Universe Only	Universe Only
Origin of the Universe	Created by God	Uncreated	Impersonal Energy ³¹²
Origin of Life	Created by God	Chemical Evolution/ Panspermia	Chemical Evolution/ Panspermia
Diversity of Life	Created by God	Evolution by Natural Selection	Evolution by Natural Selection
Mind and Body	Two separate things (Dualism)	The same thing (Material Monism)	The same thing (Spiritual Monism) ³¹³
Source of Ethics	God	Humans	Humans
Afterlife	Soul and mind continue in eternity	No afterlife	Reincarnation, spiritual evolution to divinity ³¹⁴

However, if original monotheism is accepted based upon the evidence presented in this paper, significant support is provided for theism, but the opposite is true for naturalism. If God exists, the naturalist presupposition that there is no God must be false. If God exists, there is more to reality than the material of the universe. Theism, supported by original monotheism, affirms the creation of the universe and life by God, which contradicts the materialist view of the origin of the universe and life. If God exists, there is more to reality than material and energy, leading to the falsity monism, and thus, a distinction between mind and body and an afterlife is

³¹² Ankerberg, *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*, xiii.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, x.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, xii.

possible. Likewise, the naturalist view of morality, that humans are the source of ethics, is untenable if a creator God exists.

So too, if theism, as affirmed by original monotheism, is accepted based upon the evidence presented in this paper, then new ageism is falsified. The theist God is distinct from his creation; the creation is the work of a creator; it is not the creator. Thus, there is more to reality than the universe. The origin of the universe from impersonal energy is challenged in that the theist God is intelligent and personal, creating life in his image. Spiritual monism is contradicted in that the creation is not an illusion, but rather, an actual reality, thus both the material and spiritual are real. According to the theist view, the creator imparts a moral code to his creation. Thus, humans are not the source of ethics. Among the tribes who affirm the God of original monotheism, there is no mention of reincarnation or the divinity of humans, and likewise, Christian theists affirm that humans have but a single life to live.³¹⁵

³¹⁵ Hebrews 9:27.

Chapter 4: Signals of Transcendence

In his seminal work, *A Rumor of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural*, Peter Berger suggests that signals of transcendence may be a vehicle to set a course in motion that leads to the rediscovery of the supernatural which transcends observed reality. By signals of transcendence, Berger refers to phenomena observed in the natural world that seem to point beyond the natural realm.³¹⁶ As Habermas observes (see chapter 2), the list of evidence and phenomena that cannot be explained within the context of the naturalist or new ageist worldviews is growing. A partial list of signals of transcendence identified by theists may be considered to be the following:

1. Original monotheism.
2. The origin and fine-tuning of the universe.
3. The origin and complexity of life.
4. The human mind and consciousness.
5. Morality, altruism, and justice.
6. The growing evidence for the resurrection of Jesus.

Original monotheism has been considered at length in the previous chapter. Thus, the following paragraphs will move to elucidate and summarize the implications of points two through six.

The Origin and Fine-Tuning of the Universe

The period from the enlightenment until today has been one of the amazing advancements in science and understanding in the natural world. One of the greatest scientific

³¹⁶ Peter L. Berger, *A Rumor of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural*, (New York: Open Road Media, 2011), Kindle, 52.

enigmas of our age is the origin of the universe and fine-tuning of its physical laws and constants. According to the latest scientific estimates, the universe began to exist about 13.7 billion years ago. In what is referred to as the “Big Bang,” the universe began as an infinitesimal point of exceedingly high temperature and density and rapidly expanded. With the Big Bang, all matter and energy that currently exists in the universe came into being. The universe has been expanding ever since. Strong evidence for the Big Bang was provided by the discovery of cosmic microwave background radiation in 1964 by Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson. The observed cosmic microwave background radiation is consistent with the origin of the universe as described by the Big Bang theory.³¹⁷

Further study of the universe has revealed that the physical laws and constants embedded in the fabric of the universe are fine-tuned such that even very small changes would result in a vastly different universe unable to support life. Minor changes in the fundamental forces of the universe would result in disastrous effects. In *The Creator of the Cosmos*, astrophysicist Hugh Ross states, “four different characteristics of the universe must be fine-tuned to better than one part in 10^{37} for life of any kind to exist.”³¹⁸ As Paul Davies concludes, “A really big question is why the universe is fit for life; it looks like it has been ‘fixed up.’”³¹⁹ An increase or decrease of the ratio of the electromagnetic force constant to the gravitational force constant of just one part in 10^{40} will result in either only large stars being produced or only small stars being produced.

³¹⁷ Douglas C. Giancoli, *Physics: Principles with Applications* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2009), 933-935.

³¹⁸ Hugh Ross, *The Creator and the Cosmos* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001), 154.

³¹⁹ Paul Davies, *The Goldilocks Enigma: Why Is the Universe Just Right for Life?* (First Mariner Books: New York, 2008), 16 Kindle.

Both types of stars are needed to support advanced life. Large stars produce heavier elements, and small stars like the Sun, burn long enough to sustain a planet with life.”³²⁰

Pondering these questions, Ross provides an example to help visualize fine-tuning to one part in 10^{37} . If one were to cover a million continents the size of the United States to a depth of 239,000 miles (the distance to the moon) with dimes, the probability of selecting a specific dime out of all the dimes would be about one chance in 10^{37} . Ross describes his interaction with astronomers, “In all my conversations with those who do research on the characteristics of the universe, and all of my readings of articles or books on the subject, not one person denies the conclusion that somehow the cosmos was crafted to make it a fit habitat for life . . . on the issue of the fine-tuning or careful crafting of the cosmos, the evidence is so compelling that I have yet to hear of any dissent.”³²¹

The uniqueness of a solar system capable of supporting intelligent life is often not appreciated. Parameters of critical importance to providing the proper life-supporting environment on a planet in such a solar system include galaxy location, galaxy type, proximity to supernovae, star type, star age, star luminosity, planet distance from star, planet surface gravity, inclination of orbit, axial tilt, rotation period, seismic activity, oxygen to nitrogen ratio, tectonic activity, mass and distance of neighboring planets, and moons, to name but a few.

According to Hugh Ross, this list of parameters is growing rapidly as knowledge of the universe increases, and as of 2001, the list included 128 parameters, which must be fine-tuned in order to result in a life-sustaining planet. Ross has assigned probability values to each of the 128 parameters, that they will fall into the range required to support life on a given planet. Probability

³²⁰ John C. Lennox, *God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* (Oxford: Lion, 2009), 70 Kindle.

³²¹ Ross, *The Creator and the Cosmos*, 160.

values range between 0.5 and 0.00001 for the various parameters. According to Ross's calculations, the probability of all 128 parameters falling in the required range to support life is one in 10^{166} . Thus, there is an infinitesimally small probability that a planet such as earth should be found in the entire universe, which becomes especially clear when the number of total planets in the universe is considered. Current estimates of the total number of planets in the universe stand at 10^{22} . From these values, Ross concludes that the chances of a planet such as earth existing in the entire universe are 1 in 10^{144} .³²² According to Ross, "the remoteness of the probability of finding a planet fit for life suggests that the Creator personally and specially designed and constructed our galaxy group, our galaxy, our sun, Jupiter, Saturn, Earth's collider, the moon, and the Earth for life."³²³

Philosopher William Lane Craig states the teleological argument as follows:

1. The fine-tuning of the universe is due to physical necessity, chance, or design.
2. It is not due to physical necessity or design.
3. Therefore, it is due to design.³²⁴

As Craig explains, the fine-tuning of the universe cannot be attributed to necessity, since according to M-Theory (super-string theory), 10^{500} different possible universes are postulated.³²⁵ Given the probabilities described by Ross and Lennox above, chance seems to be a highly unlikely explanation for the fine-tuning of the universe. With chance and necessity eliminated, design is the only remaining choice, thus leading to the conclusion that there is a designer of the universe.

³²² Ross, *The Creator and the Cosmos*, 169-198.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 198.

³²⁴ Craig, *Does God Exist?* 540.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 563.

In recognition of the difficulties involved in obtaining a single fine-tuned universe capable of supporting life without a designer, some have advanced the multiverse theory, which states that the present universe is but one of a large ensemble of many universes. Several objections to the multiverse hypothesis have been raised. First, according to theoretical physicist and theologian John Polkinghorne, there is no scientific evidence that the multiverse hypothesis is true.³²⁶ Second, as Richard Swinburne observes, “To postulate a trillion-trillion other universes, rather than one God, in order to explain the orderliness of our universe, seems the height of irrationality.”³²⁷ Finally, even if the complex multiverse theory were true, one might ask how it came to be, thus suggesting a designer after all.

The Origin and Complexity of Life

Supporters of the Theory of Evolution affirm that all life evolved by natural selection operating on random mutations, and would affirm that the diversity and complexity of life are completely attributable to natural selection operating on random mutation over billions of years. One often overlooked requirement for the process of evolution even to begin, is a fully functional, self-reproducing, living cell. One theory for the origin of the first living cell is that it arose by chemical evolution.

Chemical evolution is a “theory of how the first living cell arose from simpler chemicals in the primordial ocean.”³²⁸ One experiment aimed at simulating the conditions in the primordial ocean, where it was supposed that the first living cell arose, was conducted by Stanley Miller. In

³²⁶ Lennox, *God's Undertaker*, 74..

³²⁷ Richard Swinburne, *Is There a God?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 68.

³²⁸ Meyer, *Signature in the Cell*, 25.

a glass apparatus, Miller introduced a mixture of hydrogen, methane, ammonia, and water vapor, the supposed atmosphere of the early earth, and stimulated it with electric sparks to simulate lightning. Remarkably, Miller's experiment produced important protein building blocks of life. Not long after Miller's conducted his experiment, however, the consensus regarding the nature of the atmosphere of the early earth changed. Hydrogen is believed to have escaped into space because of its low molecular weight. The likely atmosphere of the early earth was viewed to be carbon dioxide, nitrogen, and water vapor.³²⁹ When Miller's experiment was repeated with the correct gases, it no longer produced proteins.³³⁰ Research into the origin of the first living cell continued, but chemical evolution as an explanation for the origin of the first living cell has been virtually abandoned.³³¹ Recent estimates of the probability of a minimally complex cell by arising by random chance and chemical evolution is one in $10^{41,000}$. Stephen Meyer, the author of *Signature in the Cell*, concludes "The probability of producing the proteins necessary to build a minimally complex cell . . . by chance is unimaginably small."³³²

Without a first living cell capable of self-reproduction, the process of evolution by natural selection could never begin. Given the improbability of chemical evolution, researchers turned to investigate the possibility that complex molecules necessary for life arose by self-ordering due to bonding affinities, thus building complex molecules like DNA. According to Meyer, scientists soon came to realize that "amino acids didn't demonstrate these bonding affinities."³³³ Moreover,

³²⁹ Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 19; 37.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 38.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 229.

³³² Meyer, *Signature in the Cell*, 213.

³³³ Strobel, *The Case for a Creator*, 233.

Meyer concludes, self-organization would not yield a genetic message, only a repetitive mantra.³³⁴ Some have even argued that life was seeded in our solar system by a more advanced alien lifeform and perhaps arrived on earth riding on meteorites. However, even if life did arise on the earth by these means, it only moves the origin of life problem to another place in the universe.

Another significant challenge to the origin of life by naturalistic means is the question of the origin information found in the DNA of living organisms. According to the National Human Genome Research Institute, “DNA molecules are made of two twisting, paired strands. Each strand is made of four chemical units, called nucleotide bases. The bases are adenine (A), thymine (T), guanine (G) and cytosine (C) . . . The human genome contains approximately 3 billion of these base pairs”³³⁵ A vast amount of information is contained in each of the trillions of cells found in the human body. Meyer argues that wherever information is found, it can be traced to an intelligent source. For instance, the inscriptions found on the Rosetta Stone are thought to have been made by intelligent beings.³³⁶ Meyer concludes, “molecular biologists have identified information-rich sequences and systems in the cell, suggesting, by the same logic, the past existence of an intelligent cause for those effects.”³³⁷ Meyer reasons as follows. The only known source of information is intelligent beings. The human genome contains a vast amount of information. Therefore, the source of the human genome is an intelligent being. Considering the

³³⁴ Strobel, *The Case for a Creator*, 233.

³³⁵ “The Human Genome Project Completion: Frequently Asked Questions,” National Human Genome Research Institute, accessed August 10, 2018, <https://www.genome.gov/11006943/human-genome-project-completion-frequently-asked-questions/>.

³³⁶ Meyer, *Signature in the Cell*, 345-344.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 344.

complexity of the human genome and human life, and the uniqueness of each individual, the human genome contained in DNA molecules must be the product of a highly intelligent and personal designer. Thus, the complexity of the human genome also suggests a creator.

When all that has been made is considered, the information available to us from science seems to be pointing to the existence of a super-intelligent designer who is able to initiate and orchestrate the universe, form a planet capable of supporting human life, and design the human genome and all life. It seems that the best explanation of the origin and complexity of life and the universe is a creator

The Human Mind and Consciousness

One of the great debates of modern philosophy, psychology, and neuroscience is the nature of the mind.³³⁸ Materialistic monism affirms that there is only one type of thing in the universe, and that is matter. Dualism posits that there are two kinds of things in the universe, matter, and minds. If monism is true, all that occurs in the universe can be explained by the laws of physics and chemistry, and life apart from the body seems untenable. If dualism is true, then not all can be explained by natural laws, and the possibility that the mind survives bodily death in an afterlife is tenable.³³⁹ As noted above, naturalists generally reject the possibility of an afterlife, for if the mind is purely the proper organization of matter, upon death, the mind must cease to exist as the body decomposes.

According to Thomas Nagel, “Consciousness is the most conspicuous obstacle to a comprehensive naturalism that relies only on the resources of physical science.”³⁴⁰ Nagel

³³⁸ Mitchell S. Green, *Engaging Philosophy: A Brief Introduction* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2006), 1298, Kindle.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 1407.

concludes that consciousness cannot simply be reduced to the physical realm, for “human consciousness is not merely passive but is permeated, both in action and in cognition, with intentionality, the capacity of mind to represent the world and its own aims.”³⁴¹ While Nagel identifies the difficulty associated with materialistic monist views of the mind, he stops short of embracing dualism, and encourages the “aim of finding an integrated naturalistic explanation of a new kind.”³⁴²

In the last fifty years, new insight into the mind-body problem has been sought through the study of near-death experiences (NDEs). In *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope*, Gary Habermas suggests that NDEs present a substantial challenge to naturalism by demonstrating that the mind continues to function when a patient has suffered clinical and brain death.³⁴³ Habermas distinguishes evidential from non-evidential NDEs and focusses on evidential NDEs. Evidential NDEs take place on earth, when sometimes long after death, a resuscitated individual who was formerly brain dead, is able to provide significant details of their treatment that occurred when their eyes were closed and they were completely incapacitated. In some cases, resuscitated individuals were able to report on events that took place elsewhere in the hospital, and even in their homes which were at significant distances from where they were treated, all while they were dead by all measures of modern science. In some cases, the individuals who suffered NDE’s were legally blind from birth, and yet they were still able to report events that occurred when they had suffered clinical and brain death. NDE cases are common; thousands of

³⁴⁰ Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos*, 35.

³⁴¹ Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos*, 168.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 68-69.

³⁴³ Habermas, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope*, 60.

cases have been reported. Habermas concludes that NDEs provide a strong argument for an afterlife, thus falsifying naturalism.³⁴⁴ Consciousness researchers Enrico Facco, Daniela Lucangeli, and Patrizio Tressoldi defend the legitimacy of NDEs saying, “The idea that NDEs are merely the result of a brain going awry when it is damaged remains elusive, and is possibly a plain attempt to bring unexplained facts down to fit in with our available knowledge, and our endorsed axioms and theories.”³⁴⁵ Thus, it seems that NDEs point to non-material existence which defies naturalistic explanations.

Morality, Altruism, and Justice

Immanuel Kant sought proof for the existence of God “on the premise that the moral law is the foundation of a duty to promote the highest good.”³⁴⁶ If humans have moral duties within, then they are imbued with moral law. Craig articulates C. S. Lewis’s moral argument for the existence of God in this way:

1. If God does not exist, objective moral values and duties do not exist.
2. Objective moral values and duties do exist.
3. Therefore, God exists.³⁴⁷

Regarding the first premise, this very sentiment was affirmed by atheist William Provine in chapter two of this paper. From a naturalist view, the only things that exist are the materials of

³⁴⁴ Habermas, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope*, 60-61.

³⁴⁵ Enrico Facco, Daniela Lucangeli, and Patrizio Tressoldi. "On the Science of Consciousness: Epistemological Reflections and Clinical Implications." *Explore: The Journal of Science and Healing* 13, no. 3 (2017): 163-180.

³⁴⁶ Courtney Fugate, "The Highest Good and Kant's Proof(s) of God's Existence." *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (2014): 137-158.

³⁴⁷ Craig, *Does God Exist?* 709.

the universe, and the material does not embody a moral state. Some non-theist might argue that morality evolved to enhance survival. However, even if that were the case, it does not mean that the present state of human morality is in any way special or objectively true; it is merely the product of the random accidents of evolution. Under different circumstances and pressures, a completely different moral code might have evolved. Thus, from a naturalistic perspective, no objective moral law can be claimed.³⁴⁸ As Timothy Keller notes in *Making Sense of God*, Nietzsche argues that since there is no God, there are no moral absolutes. Nietzsche viewed “Kant’s categorical imperative as ‘smuggling in a Christian view.’ He likewise mocks utilitarianism, which holds that an action is moral if it brings ‘the greatest happiness for the greatest number’”³⁴⁹ It is this very thing that Christian Smith affirms in *Atheist Overreach: What Atheism Can’t Deliver*. Concern for human rights and social justice emerged from the Judeo-Christian foundations of Western civilization, steeped in a belief in a transcendent monotheistic God who had revealed Himself and His moral law in Scripture. Smith concludes that it is illogical to believe that naturalism can provide the foundation for promoting benevolence and human rights.³⁵⁰ While Smith hopes that he is wrong in his conclusion, he says what is needed is a “compelling account for high moral standards of benevolence and right”³⁵¹ as a product of metaphysical naturalism. Apart from this, future generations are at risk of being deprived of a humanistic society.³⁵²

³⁴⁸ Craig, *Does God Exist?* 751.

³⁴⁹ Timothy Keller, *Making Sense of God: An Invitation to the Skeptical* (New York: Viking, 2016), 188.

³⁵⁰ Christian Smith, *Atheist Overreach: What Atheism Can’t Deliver* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 84-86, Kindle.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 86.

³⁵² *Ibid.*

Affirming that God exists, theists, on the other hand, see morality as rooted in the nature of God, and would argue that evils like human trafficking, child abuse, and rape have always been, and will always be wrong because they represent an assault on creatures created in the image of God. The theistic worldview makes sense of the longing for justice, moral awareness, and the spirit of altruism found in humans, as these are seen to flow from the love and perfection of God.

As Francis Collins notes, “Agape, or selfless altruism, presents a major challenge for the evolutionist. It is quite frankly a scandal to reductionist reasoning. It cannot be accounted for by the drive of individual selfish genes to perpetuate themselves.”³⁵³ The survival of the fittest cannot account for the fireman who runs into a collapsing burning building to save a child.

In *Science and the Good: The Tragic Quest for the Foundations of Morality*, James Hunter and Paul Nedelisky describe the results of scientific attempts to discover the good. While more is known about the neurological aspects of decision making, claims of success outstrip the results obtained.³⁵⁴ While scientists in the field press on, they no longer search for “mind independent morality . . . They no longer believe such a thing exists.”³⁵⁵

It seems that the existence of objective moral laws and duties is best explained by the existence of a theistic God who created humans and imbued them with His moral law.

³⁵³ Collins, *The Language of God*, 27.

³⁵⁴ James Davison Hunter and Paul Nedelisky, *Science and the Good: The Tragic Quest for the Foundations of Morality*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 74-102, Kindle.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 103.

The Growing Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus

Given the diversity of worldviews, religions, and cultures in our modern world, an approach to assessing the truth of the resurrection not appealing to the inerrancy of the Bible is needed. Gary R. Habermas and Michael R. Licona have developed such an approach and refer to it as the “minimal facts approach.”³⁵⁶ According to Habermas and Licona, “This approach considers only those data that are so strongly attested historically that they are granted by nearly every scholar who studies the subject, even the rather skeptical ones.”³⁵⁷ Habermas and Licona identify four minimal facts that meet these criteria:

1. Jesus died by crucifixion.
2. Jesus’ disciples believed that He rose and appeared to them.
3. The church persecutor Paul was suddenly changed.
4. The skeptic James, the brother of Jesus, was suddenly changed.³⁵⁸

The following paragraphs give a brief overview of each of the four minimal facts above and supporting evidence.

First, Jesus died by crucifixion. Roman crucifixion was about killing people in a gruesome, horrible way to send a message to anyone who might want to rebel against Roman authority. It was extremely painful and torturous and ended in death. That Jesus died by crucifixion is recorded in all four Gospels (Matt 25; Mark 15; Luke 23; John 19). Furthermore, there are several non-Christian sources of the period that affirm the crucifixion of Jesus as well, including Josephus, Tacitus, and Lucian of Samosata, Mara Bar-Serapion, and the Jewish

³⁵⁶ Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection*, 44.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 75.

Talmud. However, it should be noted that Mara only says that Jesus died, and the Talmud indicates that Jesus was hung on a tree, which is a first-century description of crucifixion.³⁵⁹

In addition to the early and eyewitness testimony of Jesus' death by crucifixion, in 1986, three individuals, including a pathologist, published an article in the peer-reviewed *Journal of the American Medical Association* on the physical death of Jesus Christ. The authors concluded, on review of the evidence and what is known about Roman crucifixion, that Jesus died on the cross. They concluded that Jesus' death was from hypovolemic shock and exhaustion asphyxia and was ensured by the thrusting of a spear into his side which brought forth water and blood. According to the article, the water was likely from the pericardial sac surrounding the heart and the blood was probably from the right atrium or ventricle of the heart.³⁶⁰

Second, Jesus' disciples believed that He rose and appeared to them as is recorded in the Gospels (Matt 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20-21). Moreover, following the crucifixion, the disciple were transformed from fearful to boldly proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus. Many would suffer for this proclamation and some would die as martyrs. In addition to the Gospels, the New Testament includes oral tradition that dates to the very early days of the church. An example of an early Christian creed is 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 which reports the death, burial, resurrection, and appearances of Jesus.³⁶¹ While 1 Corinthians has been dated to A.D. 55, William lane Craig argues that this section of text dates to A.D. 36, just a few years after the crucifixion of Jesus. According to Craig, this early Christian creed forms the basis of the death, burial, resurrection, and appearance account contained in the Gospel of Mark and the Book of

³⁵⁹ Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection*, 48-49.

³⁶⁰ William D. Edwards, Wesley J. Gabel, and Floyd E. Hosmer, "On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 255, no. 11 (March 21, 1986) 1455, 1463.

³⁶¹ Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection*, 49-52.

Acts. Craig concludes that the proximity of this 1 Corinthians creed to the death of Jesus ensures the reliability of this account.³⁶² Furthermore, the resurrection and appearance claims made by the disciples of Jesus are recorded in the writings of the apostolic fathers, who were the leaders of the church following the apostles, beginning with a letter written by Clement (circa A.D. 95) who was the bishop of Rome and a disciple of the apostles himself.³⁶³

That the disciples believed Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to them is affirmed by their willingness to suffer and die for their beliefs as many did, including Peter and Paul. In support of this conclusion, Habermas and Licona identify written accounts corroborating this fact in the Book of Acts, and in the writings of the early church (Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Tertullian, Ignatius, Origen, Dionysus of Corinth).³⁶⁴

Third, the church persecutor Paul was suddenly changed. Paul's conversion experience is well documented in Paul's letters (1 Cor, 2 Cor, Gal, Phil) and the Book of Acts. Paul changed from a deadly opponent of the church to the greatest evangelist of the church. Habermas and Licona see Paul's conversion experience as different from the general conversion experience in that Paul claimed that it came as a result of a personal appearance of the resurrected Christ. Thus, Paul's conversion was not based on the testimony of others. The change in Paul was such that he was willing to suffer and die for his beliefs as is affirmed in his writings as well as those of Luke, Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Tertullian, Dionysus of Corinth, and Origen.³⁶⁵

³⁶² William Lane Craig, *The Son Rises* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2000), 47-52.

³⁶³ Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection*, 53-54.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 56-63.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 64-66.

Fourth, the skeptic James, the brother of Jesus, was suddenly changed. James was Jesus' brother. Before the crucifixion, James was skeptical of Jesus and did not believe in Him. In Mark 3:21, Jesus' family concludes He has lost his mind and attempt to take custody of Him. In John 7:5, John reports that even Jesus' brothers did not believe in Him. After the crucifixion however, James became a leader of the early church in Jerusalem.³⁶⁶ Like Paul, James's conversion follows an appearance by the resurrected Jesus as recorded in 1 Corinthians 15:7. That he truly believed, Habermas and Licona conclude, is demonstrated by his willingness to die a martyr's death as recorded in the writings of Josephus, Hegesippus, and Clement of Alexandria.³⁶⁷

Habermas and Licona present a fifth fact: the tomb was empty. While it does not meet the requirements for the minimal facts presented above, Habermas's research indicates that seventy-five percent of the scholars who study the resurrection would accept that Jesus' tomb was empty as a historical fact.³⁶⁸ In support of the empty tomb, Habermas and Licona offer the following evidence. First, the disciples began to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus about fifty days after the crucifixion. If Jesus were still in the tomb, His body would have been exhumed and put on display to counter the claims of the disciples. A recent theory that the corpse was decomposed beyond recognition has been proposed to explain why the body was not exhumed to refute the claims of the disciples. This theory fails to explain the Jewish leaders' hesitance since the distinctive wounds, stature of the corpse, and hair would have served as adequate identifying marks.³⁶⁹ Furthermore, given the report in Acts 2:41 that on the day of Pentecost, 3000 souls in

³⁶⁶ Acts 15:12-21; Gal 1:19.

³⁶⁷ Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection*, 67-69.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 70.

Jerusalem were added to the rolls of Christianity, it seems that the Jewish leaders would have taken the risk of producing the body to stem the tide of conversions if they had it. Second, the enemies of Christianity accused Jesus' disciples of stealing the body, as is recorded in Matthew 28 and affirmed in the second-century writings of Justin Martyr, Trypho, and Tertullian. If the body had been in the tomb, there would have been no need to accuse the disciples of stealing it. Third, the empty tomb was discovered by women. If the empty tomb story had been made up by the disciples, given the low status of women as trustworthy witnesses in the first century, the disciples would not have fabricated a story where women discovered the empty tomb.³⁷⁰

Habermas and Licona conclude, because of the strong evidence for it, the empty tomb should be viewed as historically certain even if virtually all scholars do not accept it in the field. They suggest that those who deny the empty tomb do so for reasons other than a lack of evidence.³⁷¹

With the solid evidential basis for affirming the four minimal facts and the fifth fact, which is well attested by historical data yet not accepted by as many scholars who study the resurrection, Habermas and Licona conclude that the best explanation for these five facts is that Jesus rose from the dead. Naturally, skeptics have proposed alternative theories to explain the minimal facts. These will be considered below.

Objections to the Resurrection

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to consider all attempts to explain the minimal facts on a naturalistic basis, the most common ones will be addressed herein. Some have

³⁷⁰ Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection*, 70-71.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 73.

suggested that Jesus' resurrection was a mythical account or legend, yet this is contradicted by the clear evidence that the disciples began to proclaim the resurrection shortly after the crucifixion. As such, the many years required for legends to develop were not available, thus defeating this theory. Moreover, legends or mythological accounts do not explain the very early conversion of Paul from church persecutor to chief evangelist or the conversion of James, the brother of Jesus from skeptic to believer. Nor do they explain the resurrection appearances to these same individuals, or the disciple's true belief that they had seen the risen Jesus affirmed by their willingness to die as martyrs for their beliefs.³⁷²

As mentioned above, early Jewish opponents of Christianity claimed that the disciples stole Jesus' body from the tomb (Matthew 28:11-15) or that perhaps someone else stole the body. These theories, once again, fail to explain the resurrection appearances of Jesus to His disciples or their willingness to die for their beliefs.³⁷³

Some have suggested what is known as the swoon theory, which remains popular to this day among Muslim apologists.³⁷⁴ This is the theory that Jesus was still alive when he was put into the tomb, and that somehow, he got out of the tomb and appeared to his followers, and thus the Christian church was born. The swoon theory is contradicted by minimal fact one that Jesus died on the cross and findings published in the Journal of the American Medical Association discussed above. Thus, it has been rejected by scholars for these reasons. Furthermore, it fails to explain Jesus' heavenly appearance to Paul on Damascus road described in Acts 9 which led to his conversion. Moreover, for it to be true, it would have been necessary for Jesus to somehow

³⁷² Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection*, 84-92.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 93-97.

³⁷⁴ Nabeel Quereshi, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 148-149.

escape the tomb in order to return to the disciples. Jesus would have been in terrible bloody shape, severely in need of serious medical attention, and in this deplorable condition, hardly able to inspire the disciples to die as martyrs for a lie, claiming that He rose from the dead. Because it fails to explain the minimal facts and lacks credibility, the swoon theory has been discarded by scholars.³⁷⁵

Other skeptics, including Gerd Ludemann, affirm the hallucination theory and suppose that the disciples hallucinated that they saw the risen Jesus.³⁷⁶ The hallucination theory fails because groups of individuals do not experience the same hallucination since they are private in nature. Further, the psychological conditions which typically produce hallucinations are belief, expectation, and excitement. That the disciples saw their beloved leader die on a Roman cross (minimal fact one) would not engender these feelings, but rather despair. Moreover, if the disciples experienced hallucinations, that would have meant that Jesus was still dead in the tomb, a fact that would have been obvious for all to see. People could have just walked to the tomb to see that the disciples were lying. If the body were still in the tomb, the disciples would not have proclaimed the resurrection, risking death to do so. Again, the hallucination theory fails to explain the minimal facts and available evidence.^{377,378}

The problem for the skeptics is that the naturalistic explanations for the resurrection of Jesus fail. They all fail because they are contradicted by one or more of the widely accepted

³⁷⁵ Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection*, 99-103.

³⁷⁶ Paul Copan and Ronald K. Tacelli, *Jesus' Resurrection Fact or Figment?* (Downers Grove, IL, 2000), 79.

³⁷⁷ Habermas, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope*, 10-12.

³⁷⁸ Copan and Tacelli, *Jesus' Resurrection*, 49-51.

minimal facts. Only this is left after consideration of objections to the resurrection; the best explanation for the events of that first Easter morning is Jesus rose from the dead.³⁷⁹

The Resurrection Affirms the Existence of God

A dead body would not have been able to reanimate itself. If there were nothing beyond the material universe, a dead man would not have been able to raise himself from the dead. The fact that Jesus did rise from the dead points to a transcendent God, beyond the material universe and thus eternal. If we consider the nature of this transcendent God, it is clear that in order to raise Jesus, He would need to have great power, knowledge, and control over natural laws and the material universe. Such a God would have to have had concern for Jesus, who was innocent which speaks to His love and sense of justice, goodness, and wisdom. Thus, the resurrection points to the existence of God. Moreover, the resurrection of Jesus confirms His message and authority. As Habermas observes, God would not have raised a heretic. Furthermore, the Old and New Testament Scriptures are affirmed to be from God for it was Jesus' message that He came to fulfill the prophets, not to abolish them (Matt 5:17) and that the disciples would be guided into all truth by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13).^{380,381}

Thus, it is concluded that the universe was created by an intelligent, incredibly powerful, moral God who existed in eternity before the foundation of the time-space universe. The creator of the universe must be able to intervene in the universe; thus, miracles such as the resurrection

³⁷⁹ Habermas, *The Risen Jesus*, 14-15.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 53; 78-80.

³⁸¹ Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection*, xiii.

are possible. As Habermas concludes, “Prospectively, if this is a theistic universe, it is very likely that God performed a miracle in raising Jesus from the dead....”³⁸²

³⁸² Habermas, *The Risen Jesus*, 79.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

While theists have developed credible arguments for the existence of God, evidence showing the failure of naturalism has been mounting. Likewise, the demise of naturalism carries with it the negation of new ageism, for both deny the existence of a transcendent God. William Dembski observes that naturalists fail to explain “the origin of life, the origin of the genetic code, the origin of multicellular life, the origin of sexuality, the scarcity of transitional forms in the fossil record, the biological big bang that occurred in the Cambrian era, the development of complex organ systems, and the development of irreducibly complex molecular machines.”³⁸³

A Hasty and Ill-founded Departure from Christian Theism

As Charles Taylor suggests in the introduction to this paper, in less than a century, western culture has transitioned from a time when it was virtually impossible not to believe in God to one where belief in God is only one of many options. Western society is rapidly divesting itself of its theist heritage and embracing naturalism and new ageism. The looming question becomes, has western culture divested itself of the truth only to embrace a lie? Many signals of transcendence point to the veracity of theism, and in particular, Christian theism. However, many existential realities challenge naturalism and new ageism. As a result, humans, the highest lifeform of naturalism and the divine lifeform of new ageism, have become the sole arbiters of ethics, the right and the wrong, and the good and the bad, for the immanent realm is a closed system according to these worldviews. No input from a transcendent realm is sought, nor is any expected. While humans may relish the freedom to make their own rules, all indications are that the Christian theist God exists in a transcendent realm, zealous for the moral code with which He

³⁸³ William Dembski, *Intelligent Design* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 113.

imbued His creation, and according to which it will be judged. The sober course of action for those with an open mind is to reconsider Christian theism, the worldview which best explains existential reality, original monotheism, and the resurrection of Jesus. Should Christian theism prove to be true as is strongly suggested by the evidence presented in this paper, the consequences of ignoring the Christian theist God who has revealed Himself will be devastating for the culture, and creatures created in the image of God in the immanent realm and the transcendent realm.

Appendix A

Unscientific Postscript

As a pastor and Christian high school teacher of science, apologetics, and philosophy, the author is frequently confronted with questions regarding the validity of Christian claims and beliefs. Christian schools are filled with students of diverse backgrounds, including many international students who are unfamiliar with the Bible and do not believe it is the Word of God. To earn the opportunity to share the gospel with these non-traditional Christian school students, one must be prepared to defend the rationale for paying attention to the Bible and its teachings in the first place. Given the growing acceptance of naturalist and new ageist presuppositions and beliefs among professing Christians, the need to provide a rational basis for the authority of the Bible is much needed in the church as well.

In this secular age, the truth of the Bible is continually challenged and regarded as the mythology of long-dead uninformed forebears. Signals of transcendence are an excellent tool for opening the hearts and minds of students to the possibility, perhaps even the reality that the Bible presents the true story of the origin and development of human culture. Once this opening is made, the potential exists for understanding the brokenness of humanity and the individual's need for a personal Savior.

Upon introduction to original monotheism, students and church members quickly grasp the implications for the truth of the Bible and often ask, if this is true, why is it not better known or publicized? Original monotheism must not be left to languish in scholarly tomes, for it is persuasive evidence in support of the claims of Christianity and the revelation of God to humanity. When made aware of original monotheism and the other signals of transcendence

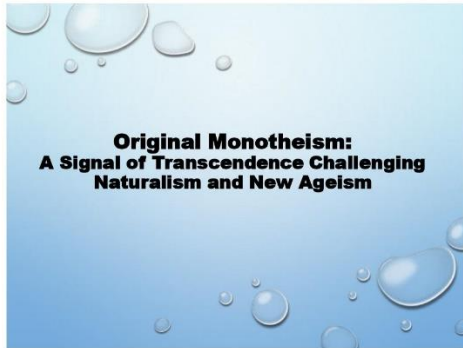
reported in this paper, some individuals report the strengthening of faith and others, a new openness to hearing more about Christianity.

The Apostle Peter calls Christians always to be prepared to give a reason for the hope within them (1 Pet 3:15). Moreover, the Apostle Paul calls followers of Christ to challenge and destroy worldly philosophies that are raised against God (2 Cor 10:5). Original monotheism provides strong support for the Genesis origin and flood narrative, the truth of the Bible, and the reality that in the distant past, God did reveal Himself to His creatures. Christian teachers and pastors must be better prepared to share the evidence for original monotheism, for it inspires hope in God, belief in the truth of the Bible, and the need of the Savior God has provided, Jesus Christ.

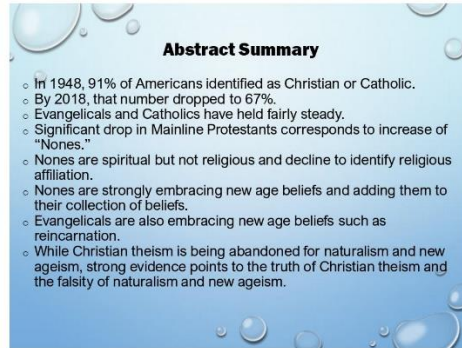
Appendix B

Concise Summary of this Paper

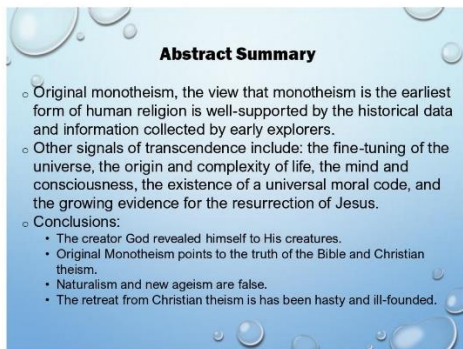
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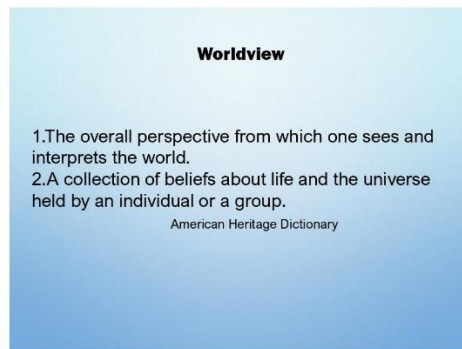
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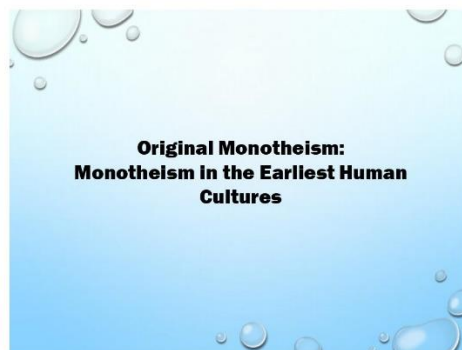


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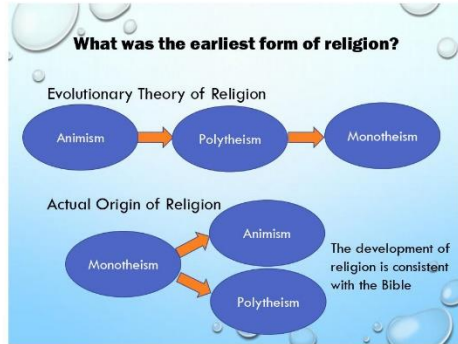
Worldviews and Beliefs

	Theism	Naturalism	New Ageism
God	God exists	God does not exist	All is God
Reality	Universe and Transcendent God	Universe Only	Universe Only
Origin of the Universe	Created by God	Uncreated	Impersonal Energy
Origin of Life	Created by God	Chemical Evolution/ Panspermia	Chemical Evolution/ Panspermia
Diversity of Life	Created by God	Evolution by Natural Selection	Evolution by Natural Selection
Mind and Body	Two separate things (Dualism)	The same thing (Material Monism)	The same thing (Spiritual Monism)
Source of Ethics	God	Humans	Humans
Afterlife	Soul and mind continue in eternity	No afterlife	Reincarnation, spiritual evolution to divinity

5



6



7

Implications of Biblical Truth

If the Bible is true:

- All people currently alive trace their lineage back to eight people, Noah and his family.
 - All people spoke same language
 - All people knew about God and His attributes
 - All people were aware of the flood
 - All people share a common moral code
- If the Bible is true, we should see what it says reflected in ancient culture and history.
- That is in fact what we find as will be shown.

8



9

God of the Earliest Human Cultures

- First, the most primitive peoples tend to be geographically isolated by mountain ranges, seas, locations on islands, rivers, or primeval forests.
- Second, ethnologically primitive peoples are food-gatherers at the initial stages of economic development, who have not exploited, farming, or breeding animals.
- Third, the most ancient cultures have developed only primitive, housing, clothing, and tools.
- Fourth, the most primitive cultures lack any indication of development of more advanced cultural elements such as farming, weaving, pottery, or metallurgy.

Wilhelm Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion: Facts and Theories* (Wythe-North Publishing, 2014), 251-255.

10

Supreme Being found in the most ancient human cultures

Table 3. Presence of a supreme being in the oldest human cultures (first gatherers/oldest culture group)

Older Culture Group	People Groups and Tribes	Locations
Celtic Culture	Bantu Negroes	East Africa
	Ashango and Shilluk	West Africa
	Bamun	Uganda
	Banapha	Cameroon
	Bantu	Rwanda
	Bahutu	Tanz
	Ardahanian/Puganin	Asia
	Semang Pygmies	Asia
	Negritos	Philippines
	Thakians	Southern Africa
Southern Culture	Fergana	Tianshan del Paropos
	Yakuts Tribes	South Kamovskaya
Arctic Primitive Culture	Samojeds	North-Central Russia
	Koryaks	Far East Russia
		Northern Canada, Alaska, Greenland, and Eastern Siberia
		Japan
North American Culture	Hoka	North Central California
	Pewas	
	Yuki	North Central California
	Dene and Algonquian Tribes	
	Jochin	Western North-West
	Sakud-Sakud	
	Eastern Algonquian	Canada and Northern United States
	Western Algonquian	
	Siyux	United States

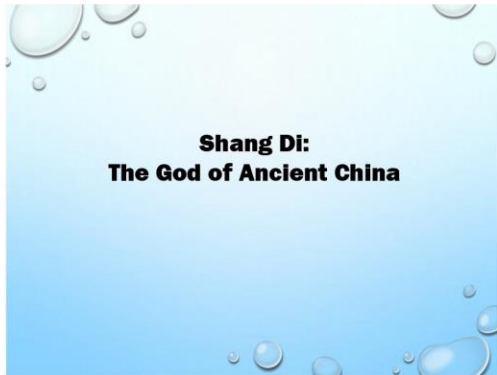
Wilhelm Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion: Facts and Theories* (Wythe-North Publishing, 2014), 257-261.

11

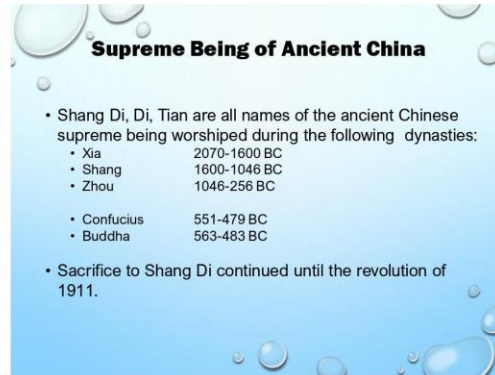
The Supreme Being of These Oldest Human Cultures

- Monotheistic
- Current abode: heaven or sky
- Name: father, sky-father or some variation
- Attributes: eternity, omniscience, morality, omnipotence, creative power
- Creator of universe and earth
- Author and enforcer of the moral code: rewards and punishments
- He is worshipped, prayed to, and offered sacrifices in varying degrees
- Flood stories are common in these tribes

12



13



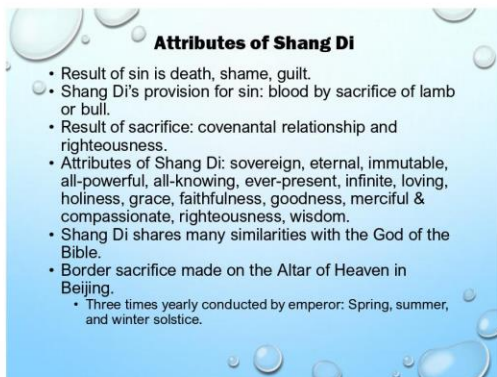
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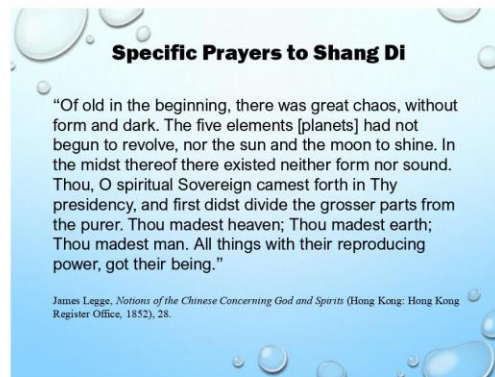
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16



17



18

Specific Prayers to Shang Di

“O Te [Di], when Thou separated the Yin in the Yang (i. e. heavens and earth), Thy creative work proceeded. Thou didst pronounce, O Spirit the sun and the moon and the five planets, and pure and beautiful was their light. The vault of heaven was spread out like a curtain, and the square earth supported on it, all things were happy. I, Thy servant, venture reverently to thank Thee, and, while I worship, present the notice to Thee, O Te, calling Thee Sovereign.”

James Legge, *Notions of the Chinese Concerning God and Spirits* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Register Office, 1852), 28.

19

Implications of Original Monotheism

- o Ancient people all over the world had knowledge of things described in Genesis 1-11
- o They were aware of specific facts of creation and the flood
- o Affirms the truth of the Bible that all human cultures trace their origin to one place (Tower of Babel)
- o Affirms that monotheism is the original religion of humanity
- o Affirms God’s revelation to humans
- o Affirms the truth of the foundation Christianity is built upon
- o Falsifies the idea that monotheism is a late invention of humans
- o Strongly challenges atheism, evolution, naturalism, and new ageism

20

Flood stories similar to Noah’s Flood are found worldwide

21

200 Ancient Flood Stories Collected From Ancient cultures

- o Is there a favored family? 88%
- o Were they forewarned? 66%
- o Is flood due to wickedness of man? 66%
- o Is catastrophe only a flood? 95%
- o Was flood global? 95%
- o Is survival due to a boat? 70%
- o Were animals also saved? 67%
- o Did animals play any part? 73%
- o Did survivors land on a mountain? 57%
- o Was the geography local? 82%
- o Were birds sent out? 35%
- o Was the rainbow mentioned? 7%
- o Did survivors offer a sacrifice? 13%
- o Were specifically eight persons saved? 9%

John D. Morris, *The Global Flood: Unlocking Earth’s Geologic History* (Dallas: Institute for Creation Research, 2012), Kindle, 1595-1653.

22

Putting them all together, the basic story would read something like this:

“Once there was a worldwide flood, sent by God to judge the wickedness of man. But there was one righteous family which was forewarned of the coming flood. They built a boat on which they survived the flood along with the animals. As the flood ended, their boat landed on a high mountain from which they descended and repopulated the whole earth.”

John D. Morris, *The Global Flood: Unlocking Earth’s Geologic History* (Dallas: Institute for Creation Research, 2012), Kindle, 1595-1653.

How could flood stories with similar important details be found in diverse cultures unless the flood is a historical event?

23

Implications of Ubiquity of the Flood Narrative

- o That the story is common in the history of diverse cultures implies that it is in the heritage of all individuals on the earth.
- o This supports the biblical claim that all individuals trace their heritage back to one family.
- o Affirms the truth of the Bible.
- o Affirms God’s revelation to humans.
- o All of the above are consistent with Christian theism.

24

Other Important Signals of Transcendence

- The fine-tuning of the universe
- The origin and complexity of life
- The mind and consciousness
- The existence of a universal moral code
- The growing evidence for the resurrection of Jesus.
- Many others have been suggested

25

The Fine-Tuning of the Universe

- "four different characteristics of the universe must be fine-tuned to better than one part in 10^{37} for life of any kind to exist."
- One part in 10^{37} :
 - If a million continents the size of U.S. were covered in dimes stacked to the moon, one of those dimes would be 1 in 10^{37} .
- The ratio of the gravitational force to the electromagnetic force must be tuned to 1 in 10^{40} for life to exist.
- At least 128 parameters must be fine-tuned to result in a life sustaining planet.
 - Assigning probabilities to these parameters, Ross calculates the probability of a single life sustaining planet on the basis of chance as 1 in 10^{186} , yet only 10^{22} planets are estimated in the entire universe.
- These levels of fine-tuning cry out of an intelligent designer of the universe.

Hugh Ross, *The Creator and the Cosmos* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001), 153-198.

26

The Origin and Complexity of Life

- A recent estimate of the probability of the correct elements combining to form a single cell by random chance is 1 in $10^{41,000}$.
- Thus, chemical evolution experiments have been virtually abandoned.
- The human genome consists of roughly 3,000,000,000 base pairs containing vast amounts of information.
- Meyer reasons:
 - The only known source of information is intelligence.
 - The human genome contains a vast amount of information.
 - Therefore, the source of the human genome is an intelligent being.

Stephen C. Meyer, *Signature in the Cell: DNA and the Evidence for Intelligent Design* (New York: Harper One, 2009), 212-344.

27

The Origin and Complexity of Life

- The Theory of Evolution postulates that complex life arose by natural selection operating on random mutations.
 - Requires a fully-functioning living cell to commence
- Chemical evolution fails to explain the origin of life.
- Some have suggested panspermia which only move the problem of the origin of life to somewhere else in the universe.

Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 233.

28

The Mind and Consciousness

- Monism posits that mind and body are the same thing.
 - Brain produces the mind and they die together
- Dualism posits that mind and body are distinct.
 - Mind/soul survives the body
- Significant existential evidence supports dualism.
 - Consciousness is not an attribute observed in matter from which humans are made
 - The experiential and the physical are not the same things
 - The taste of sugar to a human cannot be determined from its chemical formula
- Many evidential NDE cases where the mind of brain-dead individuals continues to function while brain-dead.
 - Able to recall details occurring while brain dead.

29

The Existence of a Universal Moral Code

- If there is no God then there is no universal objective moral code
- Yet a universal moral code exists
 - Child abuse is always wrong
 - All hate to be treated unfairly
 - Murder of innocents is wrong
- Some argue that morality evolved
 - Different evolutionary pressures might have produced different sense of right or wrong; not an absolute moral code which is found among cultures.
- Altruism defies Darwinian evolution of morality
 - Why would someone run into a burning building to save another individual they do not even know?

30

Strong Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus

Habermas's Minimal Facts approach:

1. **Jesus died by crucifixion.**
2. **Jesus' disciples believed that He rose and appeared to them.**
3. **The church persecutor Paul was suddenly changed.**
4. **The skeptic James, the brother of Jesus, was suddenly changed.**

These four facts are accepted by virtually all scholars (liberal and conservative) in the field of NT studies.

5. The tomb was empty on Sunday morning
A fifth fact accepted by the large majority of NT scholars

- The best explanation for these historical facts is that Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to His disciples
- No viable explanation has been advanced that accounts for these facts on a naturalistic basis.

Gary Habermas and Michael Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2004).

31

Strong Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus

Objections to Habermas's conclusions:

- Jesus' body was stolen
 - Contradicted by the change in Paul and James and resurrection appearances.
- Swoon theory (Jesus survived and escaped from the tomb)
 - Fails to explain why the apostles would go to their death proclaiming the resurrection of someone who never died.
 - Contradicted by the 1986 JAMA report.
 - Fails to explain Jesus' heavenly appearance to Paul on Damascus Road
- Someone else died in Jesus' place
 - Contradicted by minimal fact 1
- The disciples hallucinated that they saw the risen Jesus
 - Hallucinations are an individual phenomena, not a group phenomena

Gary Habermas and Michael Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2004).

32

Conclusions

- The presence of monotheism in diverse ancient cultures argues for a common source of the information about God.
 - The best explanation: the creator God exists and has revealed Himself to His creatures.
- Original Monotheism and other signals of transcendence are consistent with the claims of the Bible and expectations for post-flood society.
 - Thus, they point to the truth of Christian theism.
- Naturalism and new ageism are false.
- The retreat from Christian theism has been hasty and ill-founded.

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