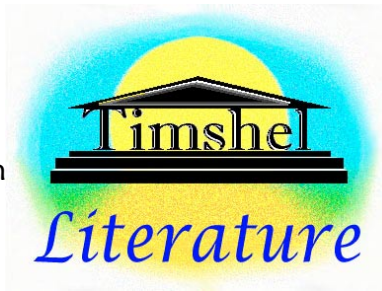


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The Physics of the Antichrist, a Theory of Everything, V of VI:

The Word of God and a Commandment of Contradiction

by Justin Katz

Truth Is Where We Look for It

Human beings have a knack for finding genius and the pronouncement of profound Truth where they have been told to look for it, even if what they laud is, in fact, nonsense. This ability works in reverse: people will often label real genius as nonsense where it is discovered without third-party promotion. For essential truths to be broadly understood as such, they must be presented so as to encourage consideration, but the filter for encouragement must be broad-based and mustn't be fickle.

Herman Melville's life's work illustrates multiple angles of this point. In his day, *Moby-Dick* was little known, and his subsequent novels were sometimes taken as indication of insanity in the author. Given no encouragement to seek the underpinnings of Melville's writing, these critics declared it nonsense. Yet, whereas it was once taken to be an oddity, the book has come to be touted as almost the prototype of literary genius. In ways general and specific, this treatment can have the effect of giving readers license to read into the book whatever they, themselves, consider to be "deep" ideas, whether socialism or capitalism, atheism or religion. Part of what Melville did with *Moby-Dick*, as I've written in the past, was to confound various common strategies for

reading. A book filled with quirks and inexplicable shifts in narrative format, with long chapters of intricate detail that close by dismissing the entire inquiry, and with ambiguous handling of the very concept of profundity is a book that allows readers to follow their preconceptions into dead-ended interpretations.

In many respects, Melville's masterpiece tapped into a dynamic that is most dramatically expressed in the Bible. Being a book penned by various authors over multiple centuries, the Bible is not a continuous narrative. Parts are prose, and parts are verse. Several books overlap and seem to contradict in some particulars. These factors preclude what a literary analyst might call "a straight reading."

However, just as the consensus that *Moby-Dick* is a profound work encourages exegesis of it, much broader faith that the Bible contains divine Truth gives believers reason to resolve apparent contradictions. Of course, both the Truth and the faith in it are much more significant with the Bible than for any other literary work, and that means that the purely intellectual dangers of handling a book like *Moby-Dick* become much more profound, much more real, with the religious text.

The Force of the Word

If we believe that humanity has a purpose, and if we accept that social constructs influencing humanity's behavior are therefore akin to laws of physics, then the Bible is a force of nature. The Bible, the Word of God, acts in the world, causing human society to become what it needs to be. Other writings, such as those of the ancient Greeks, have had comparable foundational influence to those of ancient Hebrew society, but the key difference is the faith that the words in the Bible have some extra — divine — Truth.

We accept and act on the ideas of most ancient cultures, from any period and any geography, to the extent that they continue to be proven true. An arch and columns will still support weight in architecture; some ancient forms of government have proven to be effective, if properly evolved, to this day; and certain basic methods of logic will still support an argument. With reference to the different forms of knowledge explored in the preceding essay of this series, these cultures discerned and applied basic tendencies of reality – whether physical, social, or psychological.

In contrast, we act on religious texts because we are confident that they are inherently true in some way that transcends their practical utility. They contain a significance, a substance, beyond the words themselves and literal meaning itself. Using the metaphor of the Eucharist, the texts are indeed *accident*, but they are also *substance*. Contradictions don't invalidate the lessons; instead, faith gives us confidence that they are not *only* contradictions, because they are made in a language that is not *only* words.

One possible response to this suggestion is that there is nothing special about the Bible – that, as a matter of logic, any book could have fallen into these circumstances. Various unrelated trends merely came together in such a way as to make the Judeo-Christian texts of particular historical significance. The writers of the Bible just got lucky. Similar things have been said, in “objective” historical documentaries, about Jesus and other professed prophets of his day. The implication in that case is that Jesus was merely the fortunate one to become a celebrity among a pool of candidates.

As with application of an “anthropic principle” to explain our life-sustaining universe, such arguments against the uniqueness of the Bible are not valid – particularly for supposedly objective scientific inquiry – because the only book that *has* actually had the Bible's impact has been the Bible. The assertion that it has no additional properties that make it stand out is demonstrably

false, because it is what it is. The only way to even come close to refuting this obvious evidence of distinction is to limit the analysis unjustifiably to the words on the page, without reference to their interaction with society, let alone the possibility of divine substance.

One factor contributing to the Bible's influence is that it is the religious text for Western civilization. Skeptics would treat this as evidence of the book's good fortune, saying that the ascendance of Western civilization is what gave the Bible its status. But this treats religion as if it does not contribute to culture. Far from arguing against the book's primacy, the contrary is true: something unique in the Bible, in the form to which it congealed, helped to bring about Western civilization as it exists.

It could be said that other professedly holy books could overtake the Bible, globally, and that, in any case, to believers in those books, they are more true. In some ways, these suggestions are absolutely correct, as I'll explore in the final essay in this series. For now, suffice to say that there are differences between the various cultures that adhere to separate religious texts, and if culture matters as a force determining the direction of humanity, those differences and their origins in essential documents are important.

Retrospective Resolution of the Counterintuitive

Whereas we can individually test the intellectual validity of the secular contributions of ancient cultures for ourselves, resolving the complexities of the Bible requires tradition to guide us in our interpretation. In the former case, we can think or observe the same processes or phenomena as the ancients did. In the case of the latter, the faith-based resolution of apparent contradictions requires input from too broad a field for the individual reader to consider, running the entire gamut of human society.

Because of its complexity, and the degree of intuitive interpretation, independent readers can have the same problem as arises with *Moby-Dick*: in searching for God's transcendent Truth, they find only their own biases. Tradition and the structured theology of a (small-c) catholic Church ground the ideas and revelations of individuals in a larger field of thought. Of course, tradition itself can veer off the correct course, but it does so much more slowly and less capriciously than does unmoored opinion, and it has an extensive history to which to return when the error is discovered.

Simply put, since it is obvious that the Bible's message cannot be completely comprehended with even the immediacy of a generation, then it must be a study that requires progress over the centuries. More interestingly, because this extended search must have been built into the process by God, it must be purposeful in itself. When discussing the false steps in verifying the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin, Frank Tipler suggests, in "The Omega Point and Christianity," that the delays could have been miraculous, preventing us from discovering a technology that human society is insufficiently evolved to handle. The same can be said of tradition itself. The puzzles of the contradictions and of those statements that seem counterintuitive act as sociological timers. Given the millennia across which these mysteries have — and continue to — run, it is likely that other, non-theological, advances in the knowledge of Earth's population will help toward the resolution.

Tipler provides a good example of this possibility when he graphs the Many Worlds Interpretation, in *The Physics of Immortality*, as multiple arcs on two axes. At zero, reality is at an initial singularity, the Holy Spirit; when the arcs return to the x-axis at some point in the future, they do so in a final singularity, the Father. This is reminiscent of Revelation 21:6, in which the Lord tells John, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End." Of course, progressive knowledge does not merely flow into the Christian tradition, but out of it as well.

Tipler has subsequently realized that the third person in the Trinity, the Son, can be seen as represented by the line along the x-axis connecting the two singularities. Here, we could look to Revelation 1:8, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

More than serving as a delay on human understanding, religious contradictions (very broadly defined) can be compared to compression algorithms. When one seeks to shrink the size of an image file, for example, it is necessary to compress it, a feat that can be accomplished by defining formulas by which the pixel-by-pixel information can be recorded using less memory. Any computer seeking to read the file will have to know how to interpret the algorithm.

Imagine I tell you that I am short when I begin a journey in the morning and tall when I begin a journey in the evening. Assuming that I am not apt to grow on a daily basis, this would seem a puzzling, contradictory statement – unless you have the context for interpreting it. Once the context is understood, various bits of information can be discerned. The key is that it refers to a hypothetical commute in a city, and my height is relative to the people who live in each neighborhood. Depending on what information you possess, you could discern my height, the likely ethnicity of the people in each neighborhood, where those neighborhoods are, where I work and live, and so on.

Tipler provides an example that is more to the point in his “The Omega Point and Christianity” when he notes the differing genealogies that Matthew and Luke give for Jesus. Luke gives 42 generations from David to Joseph (Luke 3); Matthew lists 26, but says that there were 28 (Matthew 1). Twenty-eight is the number of genes on a Y chromosome, which Tipler suggests might have had something to do with the Virgin Birth. Obviously, there is a significant amount of “data” presented in the genealogies that is not included in this analysis, considering that Matthew lists back to Abraham and Luke goes all the way to Adam. There could also be important

information “coded” in the various names. The point is that faith in the truth of the texts opens up the possibility – the likelihood – that such contradictions are not merely errors.

In Judas’s Shoes

When I was a teenage agnostic, I found the soundtrack to Andrew Lloyd Webber’s musical, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, to be particularly meaningful. Those whose faith has been lifelong might scoff at this admission, but I think the controversy over such pop-cultural productions underestimates the good that they can do for we who have drifted, along with our society, away from religion. There must be a spectrum of conversion, a path that leads from atheism to faith.

Even so, an objection could be made that such productions are not an advisable entry point for faith because they introduce dangerous ideas. Toward this argument, the sympathetic presentation of Judas in *Jesus Christ Superstar* could count as evidence. He objected to bodily indulgences of his leader and the company of Mary Magdalene. He goes to Annas and Chaiaphas seeking only to keep Jesus’ crowd from getting out of hand, and he strenuously objects to the “blood money” that he is offered. Just before he commits suicide, having been surprised by the brutal circumstances into which his betrayal thrust Jesus, he declares to God, “I’ve been used, and you knew.”

Of course, when addressing the musical itself, Webber’s intentions come into play. And they aren’t likely steeped in theological considerations. However, I continue to think this Judas raises two interesting problems that aren’t answered by the open-and-closed conclusion that Judas Iscariot is a manifestation of evil and sin. In *The Inferno*, Dante puts Judas at the very pit of Hell, eternally mangled in the maw of Satan, calling him the “soul that suffers most.” Is that fair?

The first of the problems of Judas has to do with honestly held intention. If Judas truly believed that he was doing the right thing and miscalculated the repercussions, suffering for all

eternity would seem an excessive punishment. As much as it might jar against the sense of appropriate credulity for a “rock opera,” consider Judas’s role in *Jesus Christ Superstar*: if he truly felt that Jesus’ movement was getting out of control and that turning in his leader might result in, say, just enough jail time to defuse the momentum of events, then from his point of view, he might have been averting a harsh and terrible outcome.

Moving outside of the world created by the show, one can suggest that part of Judas’s sin lay in his refusal to believe – his rejection of God even as He stood before him. Yet, even this merely adds weight to the second problem of Judas. As Judas laments, in *Superstar*, he doesn’t understand why God chose him for a crime that had to be committed according to God’s plan. The betrayal brought about Jesus’ capture, torture, and crucifixion, yes, but it also, in turn, brought about the Resurrection. Moreover, Jesus foresaw and submitted to the arrest. Where does Judas’s free will enter into this plan? As he asks Jesus before slipping away from the operatic Last Supper, “What if I just stayed here and ruined your ambition?”

Frank Tipler lays out a possible plot of God’s history that requires the Resurrection in such a way as to require also that Jesus’ death have been brutal (essentially so that the Shroud of Turin would stick in spots and carry His DNA to future scientists). Although any view of God’s history that requires the death and Resurrection of Jesus to fulfill the purpose of humanity will do, it was in response to Tipler that I developed my view of Many Worlds Interpretation, and it is useful to use his scenario to lay out a more broadly applicable principle.

I suggest that humanity is in Judas’s predicament. Following Tipler’s predictions, we must inevitably do evil – where the technology leading to the Omega Point conflicts with ethics – to further God’s plan. Yet, we can refuse to do so because, if reality is a mesh of optional universes that actually exist in some real way, whether we choose them or not, then the actions have, by definition, been taken.

The question is whether we allow our souls to follow those paths. Thus, free will is preserved, and punishment for what we — our essential selves — actually choose do is not unfair, because we are not punished for what soul-less versions of ourselves do. However, throughout history, while we must follow the ethics for which we have been instructed, we must simultaneously maintain the potential for evil.

The Cosmic Contradictions

Using Tipler's Omega Point Theory for context and my Many Worlds Interpretation as a key construct, an example of the ways in which the pieces begin to fall into place can be quickly presented. As I've explained, Tipler foresees a future in which humanity uses various technologies, many of which would transform our society almost beyond recognition, in order to populate the universe and cause it to collapse in just the right way to enable the Omega Point. The Omega Point will essentially be a super powerful computer that will proceed to "resurrect," as perfect copies, everybody who ever lived (and possibly some who did not).

I contend that this advancement would inevitably conflict with morality that is based on the value of each individual person — what Tipler calls an "implementation," or a continuous life. In this scenario, at every instance in which morality demands that we refuse to do what the Omega Point requires, we face a Judas choice.

Perhaps in Matthew 24, when the disciples ask Jesus how they will know when the final days are approaching, we find some descriptions of what will happen at some future date as humanity rushes to make itself immortal in the Omega Point. False prophets, in the form of scientists, will claim to be like Christ, deceiving many into believing that they can grant eternal life. Humanity will split along ethical and technological lines, and there will be wars, nations will turn on each other. "Such things must happen" (24:6). These battles will be particularly heated as Earth

approaches its own death; there will be earthquakes, “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken” (24:29).

Those who continue to follow Jesus, His teachings, will be hated and persecuted. When “the abomination that causes desolation” stands in the holy place, “Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak” (24:16-18). He “who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:13-14).

In the end, the “meek... will inherit the earth” and the “pure in heart... will see God”; for “those who are persecuted because of righteousness... theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:5-10). When the Many Worlds begin to converge toward the Omega Point, the emulated universe secured by those who had rejected God in pursuit of a mechanical deity will be given to those who remained faithful. If, as Tipler writes, the Omega Point “resurrects” emulated versions of everybody who has ever existed, perhaps the “pure” souls inhabit them in much the same fashion as our souls move through versions of bodies in each of the playing-board spaces of reality.

“And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first” (Matthew 19:29-30). Those who, trusting in God, risked the physical manifestations of their worldly loves and possessions will inhabit Heaven. There is no reason not to believe that this will hold for all people who’ve existed throughout history, so they will be brought into everlasting life; perhaps the Omega Point will “resurrect” in reverse chronological order (because more recent information will be nearest the Point).

The “first” will be those soul-less computer programs, and the humans who kept with them the longest, and they will be made last by being erased or, for the ensouled, having to go through Purgatory. The last to be “resurrected” in body will be those who died first in history, but their souls would have been prepared to enter their immortal bodies sooner in consecutive time as we experience it. Indeed, since all time is simultaneous to God, there need be no reason that those who merit a place in Heaven cannot go immediately there. In Luke 12, Jesus tells us that we cannot know the hour of the Lord’s coming; at the beginning of Revelation 1, John insists that “the time is near.” Of course, we do not know the hour of our deaths, but the time of the Last Days is *always* near. It’s always now.

As a matter of physics, perhaps souls continue along whatever path they inhabited upon death. Sinners might continue along a world that ends in the universal Heat Death; perhaps those in Purgatory take a path of the universe that leads to the Eternal Return. By suggesting that the universe is such that it will continue to expand without intervention from life, Tipler makes both outcomes logically possible among the Many Worlds. Purgatory requires the souls to redo the universe in order to find their way to God; if souls have continuous experience, then those repeating life will have some sense of what they did wrong in the previous attempt and must face it, discarding their excuses, and forgiving themselves. Hell would be never finding the way back to the universe inhabited by God.

Of course — and this is something that holds true independently of Tipler’s theory — the way is obvious, although difficult: it lies with the immortal soul; it is the decision to have faith. That’s the basic parameter. Tipler describes the Omega Point Boundary Condition as the rules that define the universes that will ultimately reach God; faith in God is the boundary condition defining the souls that will be brought into Heaven.

The worlds “outside” of God are like rough drafts of a book that will never be completed and never read. They exist in the imagination, in the accident, in the manifestation, but not in the essence, the substance, the Ultimate Reality of God. They have no divine soul. Thus, from our perspective, a reality that has turned from God to pursue the Omega Point is like a dim stage, and even at this hour, millennia before that turn has been decisively made, we must endeavor not to be actors upon it.

Tipler, Frank J. *The Physics of Immortality* (Anchor Books, 1994)