God Is A Woman

How God Uses This World
To Entertain Herself

Second Edition
The facts do not depend on our beliefs.

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Preface

This universe might be a virtual reality created by an advanced humanoid civilisation to entertain an individual we call God. And God could be a woman who can become an ordinary person and play a role in Her story.

Is God a woman who married Jesus and Muhammad? Did she lay the foundation of the Jewish nation in person as Judge Deborah? And which other women were God in disguise? This book looks into that.

Despite the investigation's speculative nature, its findings clarify the purpose of this world better than existing religions and science do. Thus, they could provide us with the best explanation for our existence.

The text may still contain errors and omissions. I am not an expert in the field. I investigated it due to personal circumstances. And despite the nature of the matter, I have made it an entertaining read. After all, we might exist just for fun.

There are things you may not want to know. I didn't desire to learn them either. Finally, I could have used words like perhaps, might, could, and may more often than I did, but that makes the text bland. Assume these words.

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On the origin of religions

We, humans, are the dominant species on Earth. That is because we collaborate flexibly in large numbers. Social animals like monkeys and dolphins work together flexibly but only in small groups. Ants and bees cooperate in large numbers but only in fixed ways. Language makes our large-scale flexible collaboration possible. Some animals use signs and calls, but we use far more words.¹ We cooperate in more ways and for more purposes than other animal species. Language also allows us to make agreements and communicate them. And we can go into detail. We can write, 'Please, read these safety instructions carefully before using model T2692.' And then follow pages of instructions. Butterflies do not observe a written list of safety instructions before leaving their cocoons like NASA does when launching a spacecraft. But that is not enough.

We are also imaginative creatures. We imagine laws, money, property, corporations and states. We believe there is a law, and that is why the law works. In other words, we imagine a law, and then it exists. The same is true for money and corporations. We humans say, 'Let there be corporations.' And lo and behold, there are corporations. But only humans do that. Nor can other species think of money and corporations. I can't give a dog a debit card to go to the supermarket to buy dog food. A dog lacks the imagination for that. A dog can't think of money, laws and corporations. You can't make dogs work together in a corporation to produce dog food by paying them money. Our fancifulness existed long before civilisations emerged. Archaeologists uncovered a 32,000-year-old sculpture of a lion's head upon a human body. These lion-men only existed only in the imagination of humans.

And we imagine gods, just like laws, property, corporations, states, and lion-men. That helps us to cooperate. People of the same religion can go on a holy war together. Faith can also motivate people to do charitable work and provide for poor people. Religions promote social stability by justifying the social order and promising rewards in the afterlife for those who support it. Our imagination makes us do things other species can't. You can't make a dog submit to you by saying obedient hounds will go to heaven and enjoy everlasting bliss after they die, and unruly canines will be fried forever in a tormenting fire. A dog lacks imagination. We have a religious nature. Faced with evidence to the contrary, we stick to our convictions or pretend we do. And that is rational. We are social beings and need a group to survive. Beliefs hold groups of humans together. If you have different views, you may soon find yourself an outcast without the protection of your fellows.

Small bands of people cooperate because their members know each other and see what everyone contributes. In larger groups, that becomes more difficult as people can cheat. That is where states, money, and religions come in. They facilitate collaboration between strangers. States do so by coercion, money by trade, and faith by inspiration. As there has always been a survival-of-the-fittest-like competition between societies, those who cooperated most effectively survived and subdued others. Religions forge bonds and help to keep the peace in a group or inspire group members to go to war. Religions were crucial for the survival of humans. If believing is surviving, it is rational to believe, no matter
how curious the belief is. It is in our nature to be religious, and usefulness rather than correctness is the essence of religion.

We make up stories and believe them. Hollywood films featured reptiles disguised as humans. Since then, some people have claimed, without any evidence, that reptiles live among us disguised as humans. You can see how we can go collectively crazy in this way. When we retell stories, they change. We forget parts of a tale, add new elements or alter their meaning. And so beliefs and religions evolve. The evolution of religions has been a process in which ideas emerged and interacted. Early humans were hunter-gatherers who imagined that places, animals, and plants have awareness, feelings and emotions. Hunter-gatherers felt they were more or less on an equal footing with the plants and animals around them.¹ Over time, people began to imagine fairies and spirits. A crucial step in the development of religions was ancestor veneration.

The first humans lived in small bands based on family ties. Their ancestors bound them together. And so, they may have begun to venerate the dead. It was a small step to imagine that the spirits of the dead are still with us and that our actions require the approval of our late ancestors. Ancestor veneration made it possible to envision a larger-scale relatedness in the form of tribes. A tribe is much larger than a band and held together by the belief that its members share common ancestors. Tribes are too large to identify their common ancestors. Tribespeople imagined their ancestors, and the stories about them are myths. The Romans started as a tribe. They had a myth about their founders, Romulus and Remus, saying a she-wolf raised them. Tribes are much larger and can muster more men for war. That is why tribes replaced bands. It helps when people attribute magical powers to their ancestors and fear the consequences of angering them. In this way, ancestor veneration turned into the worship of gods.

Hunter-gatherers can move on in the case of conflict, but farmers invest heavily in their fields, crops and animals. Losing their land, animals, or harvest meant starvation. With the arrival of agriculture, property and territorial defence became paramount. States defend their territory and can afford larger militaries. Kinship is an obstacle as states enlist the people within their realm, regardless of family ties. States thus needed a new source of authority, and the worship of gods may have replaced ancestor veneration. When humans subjugated plants and animals for their use, they needed to justify this new arrangement. And so, myths emerged in which the gods created this world and ordained that humans rule the plants and animals. In Genesis, God says, 'Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.' (Genesis 1:28)

The religions we now have originated in agricultural societies. The need to defend land and crops may explain why these religions are often patriarchal and restrict the freedoms of women. The men defended their property. They were more willing to protect women and children they consider their own. Men can never be sure they are a child’s father, so they desire to control the sexuality of women. Men can also walk out when they doubt their fatherhood. That gave them a position of power.

Religions may have emerged from ancestor worship so gods could be like mothers and fathers. People gave devotion to several ancestors. Each ancestor may have had a specific admirable quality. Consequently, early religions may have come with several gods and goddesses, each with a distinct role. That is called polytheism. Henotheist religions emerged later when people became emotionally attached to one particular deity.
Henotheists believe other gods exist but think theirs is the best. Even polytheists can believe there is a supreme deity who is more powerful than all the others.

The next step is monotheism. Monotheists believe that only one God rules the universe. Monotheistic religions were successful because monotheists, most notably Christians and Muslims, have missionary zeal. Converting others is an act of mercy, as unbelievers will end up in hell. The worship of other deities is an offence to monotheists. After all, it contradicts their belief, and not taking action against pagans could make God angry. Polytheists are less likely to feel offended when some people worship just one of the many deities. To monotheists, there is only one God. They tried to convert those who had different beliefs, sometimes by force.

In the first centuries AD, Christianity replaced the worship of local deities. To help pagans switch to Christianity, the Church transformed these deities into saints. In this way, the Christian religion incorporated local beliefs. Each saint had specific qualities, just like the previous deity. For instance, if you are on a voyage, you can pray to St. Christopher for protection because he is the patron of the travellers. Later on, Muslims and Protestants could build on this and abolish these customs in favour of pure monotheism.

Monotheism comes with a few logical difficulties. We hope that God cares for us and answers our prayers. But prayers often are not answered, and bad things are going on. So how can an almighty Creator allow this to happen? The obvious answer is that there is no god, or God doesn't care. That is not what we want to hear. And so people imagined Satan, God's evil adversary, who makes all these bad things happen. And we hope that the people we hate receive punishment if it is not now, then in the afterlife or a final reckoning on Judgement Day. Religions cater for our sentiments, a psychologist might say.

Religion facilitates large-scale cooperation, but we do not need religion for that. Civilisations can develop without a prominent role of religion. In China, faith never went beyond ancestor veneration and worship of nature, and religion never played a dominant role in Chinese history like in many other parts of the world. Instead, China had Confucianism, a moral philosophy centred around family values. Notwithstanding that, China featured the first modern states with rational institutions. It was the outcome of endless warfare with large armies that required the organisation of tax collection and provisioning of soldiers. By 200 BC, China had become the largest and most advanced country. Still, Chinese emperors had a mandate from heaven. The Chinese also had a religious belief in destiny. It helped to make the political order stable.

After the Middle Ages, a few educated Europeans began to doubt Christianity. And then came the party-pooper, Charles Darwin, who wrote On The Origin Of Species. He found evidence of our existence being the outcome of a struggle for survival between species. And despite frantic efforts of religious people, the evidence mounted. Religions proliferated because they promoted cooperation and contributed to the success of societies, not because there was an invisible fellow in the sky, or so it appeared. But human imagination reigns supreme. We may soon have the technology to become gods and create virtual reality universes for personal entertainment. But that could already have happened, and we might live in one of these universes ourselves. This world could have an owner we can call God. This investigation poops on the science party. No party can last forever.
The virtual universe

Religions claim that God or gods have created this world. But how could the gods have done that? In the Bible, God created everything by saying it exists from then on. That God said 'Be' and poof, there is a beehive with bees, is not a particularly convincing explanation for the existence of bees. The philosopher Nick Bostrom, known for his dry and incomprehensible wordings, gave us the simulation hypothesis. We might live inside a computer simulation run by an advanced humanoid civilisation. Our creators could have defined a class Bee and instructed the computer to create instances of this class.

Genesis might be closer to the truth than many of us think. It might even have happened 6,000 years ago. Bostrom didn't tell whether or not that is indeed the case or how likely it is. He doesn't speculate on that issue. Otherwise, his critics might have a field day and ridicule him for opening a backdoor to the paranormal and religion. That could be the end of his career. But it is not difficult to find out, at least if you venture into areas scientists anxiously avoid, like paranormal incidents, religious experiences, meaningful coincidences, reincarnation stories, ghost phenomena and UFO sightings. Scientists dare not to investigate the evidence as it could make them a laughing stock for their peers. That is groupthink and intellectual cowardice on a grandiose scale. Multiple credible witnesses have seen things happening that science can't explain on countless occasions. Albert Einstein once noted, 'Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity; And I'm not sure about the universe.' Einstein had spent much of his life among scientists. Bostrom claimed this world might be a virtual reality but didn't search for proof. As a philosopher, he may have had better things to do.

The book The Virtual Universe digs into the evidence. You can prove this universe is a virtual reality if you assume scientists have correctly established the laws of nature and that sciences like physics, chemistry and biology are correct. If things happen that defy these laws of science, like paranormal incidents, religious miracles, meaningful coincidences, reincarnation stories, ghost phenomena and UFO sightings, breaches in these laws occur. According to science, the Virgin Mary appearing to a crowd of thousands is impossible. If science is correct, and these things nonetheless do happen, this world must be fake. The book The Virtual Universe puts it like so:

1. If we live in a real universe, we can't notice. A virtual reality can be realistic and come with authentic laws of reality.
2. This universe may have fake properties, but we can't notice that either because we don't know the properties of a genuine universe.
3. Breaching the laws of reality is unrealistic in any case. If it happens, we may have evidence of this universe being fake.

It follows from (1) and (2) that we can't use the universe's properties, reflected in the laws of nature, to determine whether or not this universe is real. Science can establish the laws of physics or the properties of this universe, but science can't tell whether they are real or fake. But if breaches occur, we have evidence of this universe being fake. The book The
Virtual Universe digs into the evidence, and it includes stories about paranormal incidents, religious experiences, meaningful coincidences, reincarnation stories, ghost phenomena and UFO sightings, often with multiple credible witnesses. So yes, aliens can beam you up into their UFO because they are as fake as you are.

Advanced humanoids likely have similar motivations to those we have because they evolved from humans, likely after some engineering, genetic or otherwise. These advanced humanoids might run simulations of human civilisations for research or entertainment. Research applications could be about running what-if scenarios. Possible entertainment applications are games or dream worlds in which someone’s imagination comes true. These simulations may not be realistic in some aspects as they reflect the rules of a game or someone’s fantasies. In a simulation, you can let Jesus walk over water and make him think that faith alone suffices to do that.

Simulations of civilisations are complex. Small changes can derail events that were to occur otherwise. Just imagine another sperm fertilising Adolf Hitler’s mother. There were millions of sperms out there. Guaranteeing an outcome, for instance, letting World War I end on a date referred to by the licence plate number of the car that drove Archduke Franz Ferdinand to his appointment with destiny, requires control over everything that happens. That doesn’t apply to games. Unpredictable developments make games more interesting. Looking at how we currently employ computing power, namely for games, sexy pics and cat videos, the number of simulations for entertainment likely vastly outstrip those run for research. If we live inside a simulation, we should expect its purpose to be entertainment.

The owner or owners may use avatars and appear like ordinary human beings to us. If you are familiar with computer games, you are familiar with avatars. Once you enter a game, you become a character inside that game, your avatar, and you have an existence apart from your regular life. Inside the game, you are your avatar, not yourself. Or you could start a virtual world where you are God and make your dreams come true. In this world, you also become someone else.

That is a lot of assumptions. Each assumption is plausible, but each has an unknown probability. And without evidence, it is speculation. Even if there is evidence, it doesn't mean the explanation is correct. Suppose you hear a car starting. You think there is a car starting. Perhaps some vehicle is firing up its engine. But your husband might be watching his favourite television series, Starting Engines. And so, you can’t be sure there is a car outside. Nothing you know contradicts it, but you can be wrong. So, is God an individual from an advanced humanoid civilisation who uses us for amusement? It is credible, and perhaps nothing contradicts it. But who is to say it is correct?

Now comes the disagreeable part. When the beings in the simulation think for themselves, that raises ethical questions like whether they have rights the creators should respect. Considering how humans treat each other, it is not a given these rights would be respected even when our creators acknowledge them. In the real world, bad things happen to people. In the case of control, the beings inside the simulation do not think. We have no independent will and are toys to our creators. God kills people at will, and a few million casualties more don’t matter. On the bright side, if God wants us to enter Paradise, nothing can derail that. And if the Boss makes a joke, you can better laugh, even if you think it isn’t funny. Perhaps you can’t. But don’t worry. It took me fifteen years.
The identity of God

We might live inside a virtual reality created by an advanced civilisation to entertain an individual we call God. That could be the purpose of our existence. That advanced civilisation probably is humanoid, which means God is like us, with human imaginations and desires. If the programme runs a script, thinking of us as mere worms would be a delusion of grandeur. Real worms decide for themselves how they grovel and when. Welcome to the Theatre of the Absurd, where we are actors on a stage, and no one thinks. You might believe conspiracy theorists are nutters, and many of them indeed are, but apart from that, they are not paranoid enough by far. They are part of the plan, even if they do not want to. And they can't escape their fate, not even by suicide.

So what about René Descartes, that world-famous fellow who once said, 'I think, therefore I exist.' Was he wrong? He begins with an assumption, 'I think.' He then arrives at a logical conclusion, 'Therefore I exist.' That made him stamp a realness certificate on his person. But did Descartes think? Even if he did not, he might still have an existence. Only that is dubious because God imagined us. You can ask yourself, do Spike and Suzy exist? They are comic characters created by Willy Vandersteen, who doesn't exist anymore if he had ever done so because he stopped breathing. If you go down that road, everything you imagine exists. I just imagined a unicorn. Do unicorns now exist?

Philosophers discuss such questions, and for some reason, they never stop, wasting precious time they could have spent on living, but scientists agree that merely thinking of a unicorn does not make it real. Saying 'be' does not generate a bee. So, if God exists, we do not. We are imagined beings like unicorns. And so, the gods we imagine also don't exist. There is only God who exists in reality. Who is this person? That we cannot know. But we might uncover something. If we are here to entertain God, what is the fun of standing at the sideline? Why not take part yourself? If God plays a role and becomes one of us, we might identify some of those individuals. The starting point for the inquiry could be Jesus. No one ever had felt a closer relationship with God than he, so there is a good chance he knew God as a person.

The gospels tell us that Jesus called God his Father. It seems a close personal relationship. Hence, Jesus may have thought of himself as the Son of God in a literal sense. All four official Gospels imply Jesus was the bridegroom but don't mention the bride. The Church tells us that Jesus married the Church. However, the Church did not exist when Jesus lived. A historian would call it an anachronism. An example of anachronism is the Roman Emperor Caesar taking an aeroplane to Egypt to spend his holidays with Cleopatra. There were no aeroplanes in the Roman Empire. And if you read this in a history book, you can be sure it didn't happen. There could be a hidden agenda. You can check whether Airbus sponsored the book. And the gospels themselves do not say Jesus married the Church. Why should the Church lie about Jesus' marriage? Is there something we are not allowed to know?

Christians claim God is love for a reason. The Bride of Christ was God in the person of Mary Magdalene. She made Jesus believe he was Adam reincarnated and that She was
Eve reincarnated, that Eve did not come from Adam's rib but that Eve gave birth to Adam, and that they were an eternal couple living from the beginning of Creation until the End of Times. Jesus was God's son because Adam was. Hence, Adam is the Son of God (Luke 3:38), Jesus is the Firstborn of all Creation (Colossians 1:15), and Christians are born of God the 'Father' (John 1:13). God is a Mother, and early Christian scribes performed a gender change on God. Muhammad married God in the person of Khadijah bint Khuwaylid. But unlike Jesus, he didn't know.

Jesus and Muhammad have lived. The accounts of their lives can be inaccurate because they date from decades after they died, but the early history of the Israelites in the Jewish Bible - the Jews call it Tanakh - is a fantasy. Archaeological evidence doesn't support it. Moses never brought the Jews from Egypt into the Promised Land. The story still has a historical origin. Around the time Moses allegedly lived, the Egyptians who governed Canaan left, giving the Israelites a victory for which they had not fought. The Egyptian army vanished into thin air. The Israelites might have viewed it as a miracle and came to suspect that their favourite deity, Yahweh, had something to do with it. Stories retold in evenings at campfires grow more sensational over time. Eventually, the Lord split the Red Sea, drowned the Egyptian army and let the Israelites escape.

A question remains: how did God create the Jewish nation and their religion? The Canaanites gradually formed tribes and, later, petty kingdoms after the Egyptians had left in what the Jewish Bible calls the Era of the Judges. Local tribal leaders organised warfare and settled disputes. Thus, they were judges. The Jewish Bible says these judges had nationwide authority, but that was incorrect. The oldest source of the entire Jewish Bible is the Song of Deborah. Historians think the song dates from shortly after the Egyptians left. That song likely did not pop up out of nowhere. Deborah brought victory to one of the local tribes that later became part of the Jewish nation. Deborah attributed that victory to Yahweh. Deborah, also called the Mother of Israel, could be the earliest historical figure in the Jewish Bible and the founder of the Jewish nation. She could have been God Herself.

The God of Abraham, known as Yahweh, the Father, and Allah, thus is a veil behind which the owner of this universe has operated so far. She only revealed Herself to Jesus. It made Jesus a unique prophet who developed grandiose views about himself as the Son of God who lived eternally from Creation to the End Times. No evidence suggests Jesus was Adam, but God made him believe he was. That God is a Mother and can appear as an ordinary woman is not far-fetched. Someone imagined it. The leader of the Church Ministry of Mother of All Creation cult claimed she was God and had had 534 lives, including Jesus, Cleopatra, Joan of Arc, and Marilyn Monroe. But this is a thorough investigation, even though conducted inside a universe that exists for a frivolous purpose. Her guesses were spot-on, as this research suggests that Cleopatra, Joan of Arc, and Marilyn Monroe were incarnations of God. But Her claim of having been Jesus proves she did make it up.

Jesus' followers knew God married Jesus, but the Gospels don't mention that essential fact. Scholars might have asked themselves why there are no eyewitness accounts or why Paul remained silent about what had transpired. Here is your answer. But why did the early leaders of the Church do it? To Jews, it was blasphemous to say God was a woman who married Jesus. Christianity had Jewish followers who had heard of the miracles Jesus did but did not know about his marriage to God. Non-Jewish converts had fewer issues with a goddess marrying a godlike human who lived eternally. Romans, Greeks and Egyptians all
had myths about goddesses, godlike humans and gods having sex with humans. To them, it was business as usual, thus not particularly exciting.

Obfuscating the marriage, changing God's gender, and introducing a virginity cult surrounding Jesus's mother might have been the elected solution to resolve a controversy that tore the early Church apart. The leaders of the early Church felt uncomfortable about what they did, and some words in the Gospel of John suggest so. The compromise resolved the controversy and became Christianity as we know it.

Try to understand it from God's perspective. She lives eternally, or at least thousands of years, and uses us to pass Her time. And we are less than worms in God's eyes, so we can be subject to Her pranks. The song Gimme The Prize by Queen hints at the possibility of the God of kingdom come being a Queen. That is a queer pun, also because Freddy Mercury was the performing artist. Queen also made a song named I Want to Break Free. In the accompanying video clip, Mercury dressed as a drag queen.

Here in Western Europe, most people found his performance funny, including Mercury's gayish manners, and we had a good laugh. That was different elsewhere, for instance, in the United States. And now, it seems early Christians have performed a gender change on God. This one is for the haters of the community of LGBT, and all those other letters and the plus-sign they added to make it even more inclusive: another one bites the dust. The leaders of this world are on notice as the song says the Queen of kingdom come will squeeze the so-called leaders of our lands in Her hands.

Lack of humour also plagues many Muslims. They take blasphemy very seriously. A Mohammed-drawing contest organised by the Dutch anti-Islam politician Geert Wilders infuriated Muslims in Pakistan. A Pakistani cricket player offered money to assassinate him. But God doesn't care and even made Wilders do it. Once the nature of the relationship between God and Muhammad becomes public, it could alter gender relations within the Islamic community, and Pakistan will not remain the same. Islam is one of God's pranks. And so is Christianity.

The Church Fathers' obfuscation of the relationship between God and Jesus gave Christianity its unique and baffling theology. Drinking Christ's blood, eating his body, and the resurrection of the dead could be good ingredients for a motion picture called Zombie Apocalypse. Indeed, some of the Roman persecutions of Christians could be due to a belief that Christians were a cannibalistic sect eating human bodies and drinking human blood. That is what they say about Satanists nowadays. But the outlandishness of Christianity begins with the idea that we are all cursed because Eve and Adam sinned. And then came Jesus, who sacrificed himself for our sins so you can save yourself by following him. There could be a silver lining to it. The belief in a Messiah might save humanity from self-destruction. And perhaps that was God's plan all along.
Imagined gods versus one true faith

Throughout history, humans have imagined thousands of gods and goddesses. The Jewish deity Yahweh was one of them, just like Zeus of the Greeks, Venus of the Romans, and Thor of the Vikings. And there were countless others. That was also the case in Canaan, where the Jews came from. Archaeologists discovered that the worship of Yahweh was first much like other local deities. Like Israel and Judah, neighbouring states had adopted a god to protect them from harm. Archaeological evidence does not support much of the account of early Jewish history in the Bible. And the Abrahamic religions do not make much sense and contradict each other. Atheists often use that argument. There is an issue with this view. The atheists only appear rational as long as you ignore a significant piece of historical evidence.

Somehow, the worship of the Jewish deity in all its forms survived and grew, so by now, nearly half the people believe that Yahweh, also known as The Father or Allah, is the only true God who rules our world. No one worships Thor anymore, except a few eccentrics who think choosing a religion is like going to a supermarket and picking what you like. You almost hear them think, 'Look how special I am. I worship Thor.' A coward like Blaise Pascal, a world-famous guy who invented Pascal's wager, would never take up that bet. It is unlikely that Thor exists. And if he does, he must be weaker than the Christian God.

Otherwise, Thor could have prevented the Christian God from taking over his turf. Or better yet, Thor could have expanded his franchise into new regions by sending priests to convert the infidels. Pascal's wager is that the risk of not believing in God is eternal damnation instead of eternal bliss, while the risk of believing in God is merely wasting time in church and having no spectacular sex life while not getting a reward for that discomfort. It is thus rational to believe in God and act accordingly because the sacrifice is small compared to the possible gain. That makes Satan worshippers appear stupid. You almost hear them think, 'Look how naughty I am. I risk eternal damnation by worshipping Satan.'

But then again, I gradually came to think there is no evidence for the existence of God and that religious people are not better or worse than non-believers. People betting on God by believing something that makes no sense, only to get a reward, are morally corrupt. And if insincerity brings you to heaven, I preferred to burn in hell with the sincere. That was indeed a careless thought. I did not believe God existed, but if He did -at the time, I still thought of God as a He- He would not appreciate those grovelling worms who merely hope to cash in their reward. Things took an unexpected turn later on, so the latter part of my thought might be correct. In hindsight, I had severely underestimated the risks of inverting Pascal's wager. Like Blaise Pascal, I am not a hero. If I had thought that believing something nonsensical could protect me from harm, I would have had faith.

To appreciate the long-term historical trend, you must go back 2,500 years when the insignificant nation of Israel began to develop delusions of grandeur and imagined that all the nations would receive blessings through Israel and its special relationship with the Creator. Nothing of that kind appeared in the making for over 500 years. But then came Paul, who turned the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, who otherwise might have remained
an obscure prophet who claimed to be the Son of God, into a religion with a universal appeal. Everyone could join and receive salvation, and who doesn't want that? A suspicious mind could have asked why this peculiar religion sprouted from Judaism and gained over two billion followers after 2,000 years. But then again, God has advised us not to ask too many questions, and Christians think they know the answer. And thanks to Muhammad, the worship of Israel's God spread even further.

That wrathful cloud that allegedly led the Israelites out of Egypt, which then went into hiding for over 500 years to supposedly father Jesus, then 600 years later sent an angel to whisper messages in Muhammad's ear, then waited for another 900 years to give us Martin Luther and even more confusion, and then left us in suspense for another 500 years so we could develop computers and invent the simulation argument to find out that we live inside a virtual reality and merely exist as amusement, might have been the veil behind which the owner of this universe is hiding. Perhaps you are unconvinced, but even if you believe in evolution theory and survival of the fittest, you must admit that of all those imagined deities, this one has won the competition by a wide margin. Who knows what the future brings, but if we look at the past, there can be only One, or perhaps none.

Looking at the trail of confusion, you also could have known your beliefs were incorrect. Christianity has 45,000 branches, all claiming to be the one true faith. Only they will go to heaven. You might call it Pascal's Nightmare. You are fuel for Satan's furnaces forever unless one of those 45,000 is correct, and you happen to have that belief. Place your bets, ladies and gentlemen. Rien ne va plus! Islam is a bit more inclusive and promises that faithful Jews and Christians can join the party in heaven. And the Jews believe they are the chosen people. Israel's history was one of setbacks, but Israel survived while nearly all the other nations disappeared. Israel had little military power, so the Israelites clung to hope. One day, a Messiah will come, liberate Israel, destroy its enemies, and restore its glory, which it supposedly had when David and Solomon were kings. Jesus was not good enough. He did not rout the Romans. And so, they kept on waiting.

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam share an apocalyptic worldview featuring a final battle between good and evil in the Holy Land. Many Christians, adherents of the Religion of Love, support Zionism to make that happen, including the murder and displacement of Palestinians. That infuriates Muslims, followers of the Religion of Peace. They hardly care how many Muslims are slain by other Muslims. To them, the suffering of the Palestinian people at the hands of the Jews is worse than any atrocity in the history of humankind, including the Crusades. The Book of Revelation, which a guy named John possibly wrote after eating mushrooms, raves about 144,000 Jews protected from divine judgement who would convert the other Jews to Christianity and save them. It all has to happen in the Holy Land in the End Times, the Christian Zionists think, so the Jews must move back to Israel and kick out the Palestinians. And religious Jews would like to blow up the mosque on the Temple Mount so they can replace it with a proper house of prayer.

So what about that final battle between good and evil? John's utterings reveal a precise location and suggest it will materialise at a place named Armageddon near the border between Israel and the West Bank, where the armies of the world will gather. Depending on which side you are on and the mushrooms you have consumed, you may see those forces gathering now. But there have been wars since times immemorial in the Middle East. So, why would it be now? And if you are neutral, sober or not religious, you only see a bunch of religious crazies fighting for a small patch of land that is not particularly
worthwhile. Are these the End Times? And as the prophecy goes, God may have a secret weapon, and we might find out. Possibly it is a stealthy pigeon, dubbed the Dove of Peace, elusive to the Vulture Squadron during World War I, and undetectable by radar, with a ribbon in its beak with the lettering, 'You stupid morons.'
Religious experiences and miracles

The Jewish people still exist after 2,500 years, while they have not had a homeland for most of the time. That is a remarkable feat, most notably because the Jews are supposed to be God's chosen people. It is also a bit of an enigma that Christianity replaced the existing religions in the Roman Empire. Somehow, the message of personal salvation through Christ caught on. A pivotal moment was the conversion of Emperor Constantine to Christianity in 312 AD. He made Christianity the favoured religion in the Roman Empire.

A few centuries later, a small band of Arab warriors created an empire stretching from the Atlantic to India, spreading a new religion called Islam. Is it a realistic scenario that the illiterate camel driver Muhammad became a crafty statesman after seeing an angel telling him he had messages from the God of the Christians and the Jews? Historians can explain it, but it is an account of what happened rather than an explanation. The question is, could it occur without someone pulling the strings?

We only know this world, so we can't answer that question. Proselytising religions like Christianity and Islam have a built-in inclination to grow, but that may not be a comprehensive answer. Jews, Christians, and Muslims worship the same deity. Our universe could be a simulation, and God might be the explanation. But who is to say it couldn't have happened otherwise?

When Islam arrived on the scene, Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians in the area already believed in an all-powerful creator. Muhammad had met them on his travels, so he was familiar with these religions. Before that, Christianity had faced an uphill struggle. While the Roman state suppressed this religion, pagans left their gods behind and accepted the Christian God as the only true God. And they did so in large numbers.

That begs for an explanation, even though the conversion to Christianity was a gradual process that took centuries. The number of Christians increased 2-3% per year between 30 AD and 400 AD. Each Christian may have converted just one or two persons on average. Over time, exponential growth made Christianity grow from perhaps 100 followers in 30 AD to 30 million in 400 AD. Most people lived miserable lives, and the promise of an eternal blissful existence in the afterlife may have been too tempting to resist. But the most often cited reason for conversions were stories about miracles Christians did.

An early miracle was Jesus appearing to a few followers after his crucifixion. The New Testament tells of miracles the disciples allegedly performed. These stories may be fabricated or exaggerated, but miracles are a consistent theme in Christianity until today. The Roman Catholic Church has a rich folklore with relics that supposedly have magical properties because Jesus has touched them. The most famous relics are the Crown of Thorns in Paris, the mysterious Holy Grail, the chalice from which Jesus drank, and the Shroud of Turin, a piece of linen cloth with the supposed image of Jesus' face.
Many of the miracles attributed to these relics are unverifiable or can have other causes like luck, but a few can't explained away that easily. The Roman Catholic Church keeps a record of them. On message boards, people tell stories about prayers heard and miraculous healings. Many of these stories might result from chance or other causes like a misdiagnosis or lying to get attention, but that is not always the case. And so, there may be more to it than science can explain. Some Muslims also venerate relics. Istanbul houses several relics of the Prophet Muhammad, such as a tooth, a footprint, dust from his tomb, and swords. His beard is in a Turkish museum. However, Muslims don't have the degree of reverence for those relics as Roman Catholics.

A recurring event is the appearance of the Virgin Mary and other miracles related to her. Thousands of people have seen her. For instance, she appeared several times in Venezuela. She showed herself to Maria Esperanza Medrano de Bianchini in 1976, who received exceptional powers. She could tell the future, levitate, and heal the sick. In Egypt, Mary appeared at a Coptic Church between 1983 and 1986. Muslims also have seen her there. There have been many more Virgin Mary appearances. The most notable sequence occurred in Portugal at Fatima between 13 May and 13 October 1917.

The grand finale was on 13 October 1917, when the sun reportedly spun wildly and tumbled down to earth, radiating in indescribable beautiful colours, before stopping and returning to its normal position. Some 40,000 people witnessed the show. They had gathered because of a prophecy made by three shepherd children that the Virgin Mary would perform a miracle on that date and location. Faking this seemed hard to do, considering the technology available in 1917. A lack of holographic equipment would have made the effort challenging.

Jesus also appeared a few times, but less frequently than the Virgin Mary. An intriguing account comes from Kenneth Logie, a preacher of the Pentecostal Holiness Church in Oakland, California, in the 1950s. In April 1954, Logie was preaching at an evening service. During the sermon, the church door opened. Jesus came walking in, smiling to the left and the right. He walked right through the pulpit. Then he placed his hand on Logie's shoulder. Jesus spoke to him in a foreign tongue. Fifty people witnessed the event.

Five years later, a woman gave testimony when she suddenly disappeared, and Jesus took her place. He wore sandals and a glistening white robe. He had nail marks on his hands, which were dripping with oil. After several minutes, Jesus disappeared, and the woman reappeared. Two hundred people have seen it. It was on film as Logie had installed film equipment because strange things were happening.

One can imagine such events convince people the message of Christianity, even though most peculiar, is correct as Zeus and Thor failed to show up and do some tricks. It is also notable that the Virgin Mary did the most miracles. The explanation might be that God is a Mother, Jesus was the Son of God, and she was the birth mother of Jesus. The Virgin Mary replaced God as a Mother when God became a Father. In this way, she became the surrogate for God, appearing to have a power greater than Jesus.

Mary and Christ are part of a folklore where genuine experiences mix with mental cases seeking attention or con artists profiting at the public's expense. Usually, there are no 40,000 witnesses, verifiable miracles, or camera footage of what occurred. The Vatican is troubled by the self-proclaimed seers, fortune tellers, prophets, and messengers who
believe they have a special bond with the Virgin Mary or have weeping Madonna statues, which they may or may not have prepared to weep. These people could be delusional, crave attention or, like the televangelists in the United States, be after your money. That is not always the case. If you happen to have a religious experience, and you can't think of naturalist explanations, you should believe what you see. To quote Shakespeare’s Hamlet, ‘There are more things on heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.’
Building a nation with religion

Israel emerging

The Jews started as tribal people in Canaan, the area currently covered by Israel and Palestine. Tribal means there were no states. For a long time, the area was under Egyptian control. The earliest known reference to a land named Israel is on an Egyptian stone engraving dating from around 1200 BC. It lists the enemies the Pharaoh Merneptah allegedly defeated during his campaigns. Among the defeated nations was Israel, which had revolted against its Egyptian overlords. The engraving does not provide any detail, so perhaps there was a skirmish or two with a few local hill dwellers.

After 1150 BC, Egypt suffered droughts, food shortages, unrest, corruption, and endless bickering in the royal court, causing it to retreat from Canaan. Storytelling made the events more spectacular over time. It transformed the retreat of the Egyptian army and its causes into an epic drama, with the Lord sending plagues to Egypt to make the Egyptians release the Israelites, Moses freeing Israelites from Egyptian oppression featuring an ireful and fiery cloud that split the Red Sea and drowned the Egyptian army.

The Canaanites lived from agriculture, so they needed territorial defence that states could best provide. Several small kingdoms emerged. Among them were Israel and Judah. This situation lasted until new imperial powers emerged on the scene four centuries later. At first, the Israelites were polytheists. They worshipped several gods and goddesses. One of them was Yahweh. Archaeological finds indicate El was the supreme deity in the Canaanite belief system. El also became the generic word for god. The goddess Asherah was his wife. The names El and Yahweh could depict the same deity, so possibly there was more devotion to Yahweh than other deities early on. The Song of Deborah suggests so.
States and kings can use religion to justify themselves. It matters a lot whether a powerful entity like a god or a goddess supports the state and the king, for only the stupid defy the gods. And no one wants to be a suicidal idiot. The kings of Judah, and perhaps also Israel, thus promoted a national religion around Yahweh. Other kingdoms in the region also adopted national deities. Milcom was the deity of Ammon, while Moab had Chemosh to defeat its foes and supply the country with blessings (1 Kings 11:33). Despite its impressive military, the United States calls itself One Nation Under God even today out of fear that without divine protection, it would soon collapse and overrun by its enemies.

Yahweh thus became the deity of the state religion in Judah and possibly Israel. Many still worshipped other gods, as having multiple options is prudent. If Yahweh forsakes you, perhaps Baal or some other deity might still assist you. The Bible testifies to tensions between those who still worshipped other gods and goddesses alongside Yahweh and those insisting on worshipping Yahweh alone. As Yahweh had become the favourite deity of the Israelites, El became the generic word for god, and Asherah became Yahweh's wife. Archaeological findings, for instance, records of Jews living in Egypt, testify to this.

**Writing the Bible**
As time passed by, new empires arrived on the scene and set their eyes on Canaan. The Assyrians overran Israel in 720 BC. The Babylonians conquered Judah in 597 BC after taking over the Assyrian Empire. The Babylonians deported many inhabitants while others fled to Egypt. The Jewish communities in Egypt, Babylon, and Judah became dispersed. The authors of the Jewish Bible tried to reconnect them by showing that they share a common heritage. They belonged to a larger group, a nation or tribe, a family with common ancestors. The Jewish Bible likely became a compilation of tales from these communities and royal archives of the former kingdom of Judah. The Jewish Bible depicts the history of Israel and Judah from the perspective of Judah.

The Persians later conquered the Babylonian Empire. The Persian emperor Cyrus the Great allowed the Jewish people to return to Canaan. He commissioned the rebuilding of the Jewish temple. Those still living in the area were not keen on a group of religious zealots entering their land. They opposed the plan, and a political struggle unfolded. After seven decades, Ezra and Nehemiah succeeded in rebuilding the temple. Jewish society was on the brink of being wiped out. Israel and Judah existed no longer. The remaining Jews were in danger of mixing with the surrounding population. Jewish leaders had to find a way to keep their people together. Marrying outside the community became frowned upon, and the Jews became a seclusive group that didn't integrate into mainstream society. That has caused them a lot of trouble in the following centuries.

The authors of the Jewish Bible aimed to preserve Jewish identity around a common religion, history and cultural heritage. The Jewish religion gradually became monotheist after a monotheist religion named Zoroastrianism became the official religion in the Persian Empire. The prophet Zoroaster believed in a good creator and an opposing evil power. And it had considerable influence. It brought Judaism monotheism, messiahs, free will, heaven, hell, and, of course, that horned fellow named Satan. Zoroastrianism not only affected Judaism. Some of the Greek philosophers around 400 BC were also monotheists.

Before that time, the Jews were henotheists, which means they believed other gods existed but only worshipped Yahweh, or at least should. That is why the commandment is 'you shall have no other gods before me' rather than 'you shall believe there is only one God.' Yahweh was jealous and did not appreciate offerings to other gods like Baal. Most texts in the Jewish Bible have that henotheist perspective.

The Jews wrote most of their scriptures between 600 BC and 300 BC, but there are older parts from the royal archives from Judah. The earliest source could be the Song of Deborah. Possibly, it dates from the 12th century BC. Little evidence supports the historical account in the Jewish Bible dealing with the time before the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. That doesn't mean that these stories are entirely fictional. David may have been king of Judah and not of a united kingdom like the Jewish Bible says. Archaeologists uncovered a 9th-century BC stone engraving with lettering BYTDWD in Northern Israel, possibly referring to the House of David. Another engraving found in the former kingdom of Moab contains these same letters.

Creating a nation
The authors of the Jewish Bible used the idea of a unified kingdom to promote unity between people from Israel and Judah. A shared history made the inhabitants of Israel and Judah and their offspring all descend from one great nation. The purpose of the Jewish Bible was to create a Jewish nation around a shared history and religion. That can be a reason to imagine a unified kingdom that once existed. If you go back in time to before the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, the history of the Jews becomes murky. No written records exist from these times. The tales about Abraham, Isaac, and Moses may have been legends from different communities merged into a single narrative to promote a single Jewish nation. And to make the proposition more attractive, the Jews believed they were the chosen people.

The survival of the Jewish people has been hanging by a thread for a long time. They were a small nation crushed by great powers. They always hoped for a Messiah who would save them from oppression like Moses once did. Great powers came and went, but the Jewish people remained. After more than 2,500 years, the Jews are still around, so their nation-building project proved a successful long-term survival strategy. They even managed to reclaim their original homeland. It is also remarkable that Judaism stood at the cradle of Christianity and Islam. And so, the Jews have played a central role in world history. Today, Jews have an imposing power over many parts of the world. It is an impressive feat, considering their numbers. What do they still need a Messiah for?

Historical analysis

How do historians and scholars look at the Jewish Bible? Apart from the lack of archaeological evidence, they find the account of early Jewish history in the Jewish Bible too neat to be correct. It presents an agreeable genealogical line extending from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob, who had twelve sons who just happened to become the twelve tribes of the nation. Jacob and his family went to Egypt during the days of Joseph. Later, Egypt began to oppress the Israelites, and they escaped under the leadership of Moses. The Egyptians kept records, and they tell nothing about the Exodus. One might at least expect an Egyptian stone engraving telling how the Pharaoh victoriously chased 600,000 Israelites to the Red Sea with the help of the great god Ra, adding that Ra split the waters, making the Israelites believe they could escape, but Ra drowned them.

Moses passed away. Joshua took over and brought Israel into the Promised Land. After Joshua died, a series of judges took over. They governed Israel and saved it from its enemies. Each judge came from a different tribe, which is also unbelievably neat. Then came Saul, Israel's first king. He was not up to the task, so David replaced him. After the death of David's son, Solomon, his successor, the kingdom split in two. The descendants of David ruled only in the South, Judah. The northern part, called Israel, had several dynasties.

The simplicity is deceptive. It is possible that many of the people described in the Jewish Bible have lived but originally had very little to do with each other and have been brought together to create a single history of Israel. Abraham may not have been the father of Jacob, Moses may not have been the brother of Miriam, and David may not have been the successor of Saul. These stories may originally have been local tales from tribes and petty kingdoms that later became part of the Jewish nation. Thus, you can see the Jewish Bible
as a nation-building project rather than an account of history, so you should not expect it to be factual. The stories in the Jewish Bible come from several sources and have been rewritten several times over the centuries.

Textual analysis

It may be interesting to see how scholars analyse the texts. It helps you understand biblical history and gives clues about how scholars arrive at their conclusions. Professor Jacob Wright explained the basics using Genesis 26 as an example. It shows how the authors of the Jewish Bible wove the story of Isaac and Rebecca into the broader history of Israel. Biblical scholars try to uncover the construction process of the texts. They look at different sources within biblical texts, additions and other editing techniques. Genesis 26 tells about Isaac living in the Philistine land of Gerar, west of Judah.

Isaac's wife, Rebecca, was attractive. When his neighbours asked Isaac about Rebecca, he claimed she was his sister, so Isaac followed Abraham's footsteps. Isaac feared the Philistine men in Gerar would kill him and take his beautiful wife. One day, Abimelech, the king of the Philistines, gazed out his window and spotted Isaac and Rebecca fondling. He demanded an explanation. Abimelech feared one of his subjects might have slept with her, which could make his kingdom subject to divine retribution.

Abimelech then issued a decree stating that whoever touched Isaac or his wife shall be put to death. Rebecca would become one of the matriarchs, a crucial figure in Israel's history. Isaac prospered among the Philistines and eventually became mightier than them. Everywhere Isaac went in the waterless environs of Abimelech's kingdom, he discovered water sources, and his success aroused jealousy among local inhabitants. That amount of luck captures the imagination.

Instead of fighting for his territories, Isaac moved on and ended up in Beer-Sheba in the south. Abimelech visited Isaac there. The Philistine king blessed him. Isaac invited him for a feast. After eating and drinking all night long, they exchanged oaths of peace. Later that day, Isaac's servants found another water source in another stroke of unbelievable luck. Isaac named this well Beer-Sheba, referring to his treaty with the Philistines. The story also had a political agenda. It was to show that Beersheba was part of Israel.

A closer look at Genesis 26

Genesis 26 contains two kinds of material, which are the story about Isaac's clan and how he came to possess towns in the far south and Beer-Sheba, and the broader narrative of the book of Genesis, which links this story with the other parts of Genesis to make it a coherent history of the nation. There are multiple ways of looking at the text. Hence, different scholars may come to different conclusions. One way of viewing Genesis 26 is as follows, with the parts that link the story into a broader narrative underlined:
1 Now there was a famine in the land—besides the previous famine in Abraham’s time—and Isaac went to Abimelek king of the Philistines in Gerar. 2 The Lord appeared to Isaac and said, 'Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. 3 Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. 4 I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, 5 because Abraham obeyed me and did everything I required of him, keeping my commands, my decrees and my instructions.'

6 So Isaac stayed in Gerar. 7 When the men of that place asked him about his wife, he said, 'She is my sister,' because he was afraid to say, 'She is my wife.' He thought, 'The men of this place might kill me on account of Rebecca, because she is beautiful.' 8 When Isaac had been there a long time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked down from a window and saw Isaac caressing his wife Rebecca. 9 So Abimelech summoned Isaac and said, 'She is really your wife! Why did you say, 'She is my sister'?' Isaac answered him, 'Because I thought I might lose my life on account of her.' 10 Then Abimelech said, 'What is this you have done to us? One of the men might well have slept with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us. 11 So Abimelech gave orders to all the people: 'Anyone who harms this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.'

12 Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold, because the Lord blessed him. 13 The man became rich, and his wealth continued to grow until he became very wealthy. 14 He had so many flocks and herds and servants that the Philistines envied him. 15 So all the wells that his father’s servants had dug in the time of his father Abraham, the Philistines stopped up after Abraham died, and he gave them the same names his father had given them. 16 Then Abimelech said to Isaac, 'Move away from us; you have become too powerful for us.'

17 So Isaac moved away from there and encamped in the Valley of Gerar, where he settled. 18 Isaac reopened the wells that had been dug in the time of his father Abraham, which the Philistines had stopped up after Abraham died, and he gave them the same names his father had given them. 19 Isaac’s servants dug in the valley and discovered a well of fresh water there. 20 But the herders of Gerar quarrelled with those of Isaac and said, ‘The water is ours!’ So he named the well Esek, because they disputed with him. 21 Then they dug another well, but they quarrelled over that one also; so he named it Sitnah. 22 He moved on from there and dug another well, and no one quarrelled over it. He named it Rehoboth, saying, ‘Now the Lord has given us room and we will flourish in the land.’

23 From there he went up to Beersheba. 24 That night the Lord appeared to him and said, ‘I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham.’ 25 Isaac built an altar there and called on the name of the Lord. There he pitched his tent, and there his servants dug a well.

26 Meanwhile, Abimelech had come to him from Gerar, with Ahuzzath his personal adviser and Phicol the commander of his forces. 27 Isaac asked them, ‘Why have you come to me, since you were hostile to me and sent me away?’ 28 They answered, ‘We saw clearly that the Lord was with you; so we said, ‘There ought to be a sworn agreement between us’—between us and you. Let us make a treaty with you 29 that you will do us no harm,'
just as we did not harm you but always treated you well and sent you away peacefully. And now you are blessed by the Lord.' 30 Isaac then made a feast for them, and they ate and drank. 31 Early the next morning the men swore an oath to each other. Then Isaac sent them on their way, and they went away peacefully. 32 That day Isaac's servants came and told him about the well they had dug. They said, 'We've found water!' 33 He called it Shibah, and to this day the name of the town has been Beersheba.

34 When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and also Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite. 35 They were a source of grief to Isaac and Rebecca.

The first five verses are part of the larger narrative, except the first part of verse 1. In verse 6, the story itself starts. Abraham comes up in verses 15 and 18. The intervention of The Lord in verses 24 and 25 is also part of the larger narrative. The mention of Esau at the end is part of the encompassing story. And that raises the question, where were Jacob and Esau all that time? They were adults at the end of Genesis 25. One explanation is that Genesis 26, without the underlined parts, once was a separate story.

The stories about their sons Jacob and Esau seem wrapped around the story of Isaac and Rebecca and their dealings with the king of the Philistines. In this way, the authors created a larger narrative. Genesis 25 contains the story about the birth of Esau and Jacob and how Esau sold his birthright to Jacob. That story resumes at the end of Genesis 26. In Genesis 27, Jacob seized his father's blessing with his mother's help. These interweaving narratives come from different sources.

One is the P-source or priestly source. It tells an independent story of Israel. The authors merged it into the narrative. According to the P-source, Jacob did not flee for Esau because of stealing the birthright but because he was in danger of a mixed marriage. The P-source describes how Esau married a Hittite woman and how Rebecca asked Isaac to send Jacob away so he would find a woman who would not make her life miserable.

There is an older account of Isaac and Rebecca and how they came to possess Beersheba. Around it is wrapped a story of their children, where Isaac is the son of Abraham and the father of Esau and Jacob. Another small story tells how Rebecca sent Jacob off to find wives from her own family. Another source tells about how Jacob stole the birthright from his brother Esau. The authors of the Jewish Bible thus wove an older story and two other sources into a broader narrative.4

Theories from scholars

There is reason to believe the P-source is a late source dating after the exile in Babylon. It deals with the identity of Israel and its relation to others. Mixed marriages became a huge issue after the defeat of Judah. Marrying within the clan or the nation helped to continue a community defined by a common culture. Therefore, the marriages of Esau to Hittite women caused concern for Rebecca.

Another source is the J-source or Jahwist source. A part of Genesis 25 comes from the J-source. It tells about the birth of Jacob and Esau. It continues in Genesis 27 and 28 with
how Jacob stole the birthright of Esau and pursued the deal with the help of his mother, Rebecca. Jacob then had to flee for Esau. According to the J-source theory, the J-source has incorporated an older source into the broader narrative. Later, the P-source altered the reason why Jacob had to flee.

The formation of the earliest sources, the histories of Israel, whether it be the history of Israel's ancestors and the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or the exodus leaving Egypt and the conquest of the land, are built upon the linking of stories. The authors brought separate individual representatives of clans together in a larger narrative to create the idea of a Jewish nation. Many scholars suppose the first chapters of the Jewish Bible - the Jews call it Torah - consist of four sources spliced together.  

There is more to say about scholarly research into the Jewish Bible. For our purpose, this short explanation suffices. It gives us an idea of how the first chapters of the Jewish Bible describing Israel's earliest history emerged and how scholars look at the texts and arrive at their conclusions. If you are shocked to find out that much of the Jewish Bible is a fairy tale and the remainder is not an accurate account of what transpired, I can only say that Jews are good at fabricating stories. After all, they run Hollywood.
From Jesus to Christianity

The Gospel of John tells Jesus believed he had eternal life and a bond with God from the beginning of Creation until the End Times. Christians and Muslims expect him to return. Even though Muslims do not believe Jesus is the Son of God, they nonetheless think he has that most peculiar feature of eternal life and that his mother was a virgin, which is also quite unusual. Remarkably, Muhammad and the Jewish prophets did not view themselves that way. In other words, Jesus is a most enigmatic person, perhaps the most enigmatic person in the history of humankind. So, what made Jesus unique? Jesus started a religion that has over two billion followers today. In hindsight, Jesus changed world history more than anyone else, which is detrimental to the Jesus-had-a-delusion argument.

And so there might be more to Jesus. Apart from a historical account, an explanation of his beliefs may help us understand him. That includes his possible relation to the alleged entity dubbed God, that supposed guy in the sky who is more powerful than Superman and can do more tricks. Historians try to reconstruct what Jesus believed and did. They use historical sources like the gospels to uncover what happened and what Jesus taught, but they leave God out of the picture. They fail to clarify Jesus’ supposed close relationship with God or why he called God his Father. Nor do they ask themselves why this Father can give birth (John 1:13). If you are all-powerful, you can do anything, but there may be a better explanation. Perhaps you can think of it, too. That is called a brain exercise. Your brains need to be in shape to get the message.

Decades after Jesus allegedly went missing, a few anonymous authors wrote the gospels. Scholars think Christians first depended on oral traditions and used writings that no longer exist. Oral recounting is notoriously inaccurate. Stories get better when retold, with more miracles, thus further from the facts. And there is evidence of redactions in the New Testament. Scholars agree to very little about Jesus of Nazareth, except that he lived and preached around 25 AD. His ministry supposedly started after John the Baptist had baptised him. Then there was a lot of action, with mystical and sensational statements, miracles like healings and multiplying bread and fish, followed by a betrayal, crucifixion and resurrection from the dead, and finally, his disappearance that puzzles Christians until today.

Paul and the other epistle writers, for some reason unknown, refrained from comments about what transpired, so we only have the gospels. They date from decades after Jesus wandered around to stir up the populace. There are a few things the gospels agree on:

- Jesus did miracles, like healing the sick, conjuring bread and fish out of thin air, and raising dead people.
- Jesus made controversial statements that baffled the Pharisees, so they schemed against him, which eventually led to his crucifixion.
- Jesus did not take Jewish religious law as seriously as other religious zealots. He had a different message.
- Jesus did not like hypocrites, for who is without sin? He forgave sinners who repented. Still, he claimed there would be judgment.
• Jesus was respectful of women. And he held most peculiar views on marriage. Few men were up to that task. That goes unexplained.
• Oh yes, and he called God his Father, and he was God's son, and it was a close and loving relationship. Other prophets were not like that.

Who was Jesus, what did he do, and what were his teachings? Historians try to corroborate stories with other sources, while scholars try to reconstruct what happened and the beliefs of the earliest Christians by investigating the oldest texts and earliest controversies. They have analysed the scriptures for centuries and concluded that the gospels are questionable sources. You can't establish much about Jesus except that he lived and preached. Some things are more plausible than others. The virgin birth likely didn't happen, while the crucifixion almost certainly did occur. Some of Jesus' disciples saw him after he died. Otherwise, you lack a compelling explanation for the origins of Christianity. Furthermore, there is reason to believe there were written records early on and that they have gone missing.

There is little doubt the gospels contain historical evidence. But if you claim miracles like the resurrection have happened, you must explain it. If this universe is a virtual reality, then it is possible. On the Holodeck, I can slay platoons of ferocious Klingon warriors alone using only a kitchen knife. At the same time, in real life, elderly ladies overtake me in the swimming pool even when I am giving my best. Copying fish or reviving dead people should also be no problem, nor is walking over water. The same goes for a virgin birth. Whatever you imagine can become true. But it is not proof that it actually happened. Christians likely altered or embellished stories, forgot to mention things they did not like, or interpreted the events in ways that disagreed with the facts.

Writing a gospel was an intellectual challenge for talented writers who could combine scraps of information, symbols and signs to compose high-level literature. Without social media, people could dedicate a lifetime to such a project. And others could dedicate lifetimes to finding out what those writers meant. Well-known are the parables, stories Jesus told that conveyed an underlying message. By saying something and meaning something else, Jesus often left his audience confused, including his disciples. And the central question is: was Jesus merely human or godlike? In the Gospel of John, Jesus appears godlike. In the other gospels, he seems human. In either case, he is enigmatic.

Jesus' deeds had a religious meaning, so he had twelve disciples. Twelve stands for perfection or authority in government. Jacob had twelve sons who represented the twelve tribes of Israel. And Jesus spent forty days in the desert to fast and fight a spiritual battle with Satan. The number forty signifies new life, growth and transformation. The rain of the Great Flood lasted forty days and nights. And Jesus rose from the dead after three days. This number represents divine wholeness, completeness and perfection. And the number seven also signifies completion and perfection. God allegedly created this world in six days and rested on the seventh. And Jesus said 'I am' seven times in the Gospel of John, supposedly implying he was godlike.

One can imagine the biblical authors tweaked and rearranged the facts to make them fit the numbers or that Jesus, aware of the meaning of those numbers, acted accordingly. But the experts are still baffled about those 153 fishes Simon Peter dragged ashore without tearing his net (John 21:11). What does that number signify? That is not a mere fact, experts agree. They wrote voluminous books like 153 Fishes: The Ultimate Guide. And a
Wikipedia page deals with this question. There, you find links to all the relevant literature. The ultimate guides don’t mention that $153 = (12 * 12) + (3 * 3)$. And both three and twelve have special meanings. But it can’t be that simple. Or can it?

To get a grip on the confusion, you can suppose there are facts, early beliefs, and later beliefs. What Christians believed changed over time because of circumstances, so early ideas likely are closer to Jesus' teachings than later ones, and early sources have fewer distortions and thus are closer to the facts than later ones. When Jesus lived, the apocalypse was in the air. The Romans occupied Israel. Many Jews believed the end was near and that the Lord would send a messiah to kick out the wicked Roman oppressors and restore Israel to its former glory, which it supposedly had when David was king. The Jews were a small nation crushed by the major powers and could only hope for God to come to their rescue. Religious zealots prayed, committed terrorist acts, and revolted. As a result, the end times, the arrival of a messiah, and a final reckoning still define Jewish, Christian, and Islamic thinking. Nowadays, the Palestinians follow the same recipe only to get their butts kicked time after time. But once, the Jews were much like the Palestinians today. They were a pain for the Romans. Nowadays, the Jews run the empire in Washington, DC, to protect their pet project in the Holy Land.

At first, Jesus' followers expected him to return soon. Jesus likely also believed that himself. The disciples thought they might live to see it happen. It was an early belief reflected in Paul's letters that he wrote around 55 AD. When things did not go according to plan, the Christians had to adapt to this reality and become less specific about the date of Jesus' return. His Jewish followers had expected him to return to throw out the Romans. After the Romans levelled the Jewish Temple around 70 AD, that hope crumbled to dust together with the Temple. In the end, with no return of Jesus in sight, Christians turned him into a heavenly ruler who gives you access to eternal life if you follow him. That is how the Gospel of John depicts Jesus. It was the last gospel written around 100 AD. The historical order of the New Testament is with approximate dates:

- Paul's Epistles (the genuine ones), 55 AD,
- Gospel of Mark, 70 AD,
- Gospel of Matthew, 75 AD,
- Gospel of Luke, 85 AD,
- Gospel of John, 100 AD.

The apostles Mark, Matthew, Luke and John did not write their gospels. Attributing these works to the apostles was a ploy of the Church to make them appear authoritative. The New Testament also contains fake epistles of Paul and Peter. Nobody knows who wrote them. The Gospel of John is the latest, so many experts think it is the least reliable. And so, they supposed Christians deified Jesus later on. There is a problem with this view. Christians saw Jesus as a godlike figure from the beginning.

Paul wrote in one of his epistles that Jesus is in the form of God (Philippians 2:6-11). Scholars believe he cited an older poem, possibly dating from the earliest days of Christianity. To Greeks and others, a human could more easily become godlike than to Jews, so the bar for Gentile Christians to call someone godlike was not as high as it was for Jews. But that doesn’t explain why Jesus believed he had eternal life and would return. And so there may be more to it still. After all, Jesus was a most enigmatic figure who changed world history more than anyone else.
The Gospel of John might come from an independent Christian community and could reveal things other gospels do not mention. There were disputes about the nature of Jesus and his relationship with God. Was he human or godlike? Paul never wrote about what transpired during Jesus’ life, which might mean that Christians knew or that Paul refused to disclose what he knew. Mark is the oldest gospel that tells about the life of Jesus and what he did. It is short, lacks detail and presents an enigmatic Jesus. For instance, Mark 1:27-28 reads,

*The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, 'What is this? A new teaching, and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him.' News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.*

The author of Mark likely based his gospel on previously written sources that have disappeared. That disappearance might relate to Paul’s motivations not to disclose details of Jesus’ life. The original Gospel of Mark stops after Mary Magdalene and a few other women discover that Jesus’ tomb is empty, and an angel tells them that Jesus has risen. The remainder seems a later addition. Mark is the oldest gospel and the least fanciful and includes juicy details that are probably correct, like Jesus’ family saying he had gone crazy (Mark 3:21). It thus might be the most reliable, so scholars doubt the resurrection story. That view is problematic as a more ancient source refers to an even earlier belief, as Paul lists the people who saw Jesus after the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:3-8),

*For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas [Simon Peter], and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all, he appeared to me also.*

Paul did not mention any women, the empty tomb, or Joseph of Arimathea. The ‘for what I received’ implies it could be a creed passed on to him, something Christians already believed before he joined the movement. That was very early on. And so, there is reason to think Jesus appeared to at least some of his followers. Otherwise, there would be no Christianity at all. Paul wrote this letter fifteen years before Mark and referred to a belief from before that time, likely before he even joined, which was more than fifteen years before he wrote the letter, thus more than thirty years before Mark.

That could be as reliable as it can get. Conviction, no matter how strong, is not a fact, but you might not get any closer. Most scholars never got to that point because it is too obvious and they are too clever. You have an advantage because you read this. The narratives in the gospels diverge from what Paul writes here, so it may be impossible to construct a better picture of what transpired unless we can establish that some accounts are more reliable than others and we can identify falsifications.

If you own a virtual reality like the Holodeck, you can use it for amusement. You can enter to play a role in the story you wrote. That gives rise to a few questions. Did Jesus know God personally? What about Jesus’ intimate relationship with God? And why was Jesus the Bridegroom? Whom did he marry? Not the Church, if you believed that silly concoction. What about God is love? And God the Father giving birth? You must be kidding. Why did
Paul not speak about what transpired? Why have the earliest writings disappeared? The plot thickens, and the answer is obvious. Obfuscating the truth made Christianity a most peculiar religion where Jesus married the Church, sacrificed himself for our sins because God is so loving, and made his followers eat his body and drink his blood to remember him until the day of his return. God may have a good laugh because She can make people believe all that and let them perform these gory rituals.
Who was Mary Magdalene?

Who was Mary Magdalene? That question has occupied minds for ages. The gospels allow for confusion. Was Mary Magdalene a hooker or a repentant sinner? Men could play out their sexual fantasies on Her. And so, they did. A converted prostitute, wow! She became a cult figure after the recovery of lost gospel fragments, implying Mary Magdalene and Jesus had an intimate relationship and that She stood above the other apostles. The official gospels also contain phrases suggesting Mary Magdalene was the most significant person in Jesus' life. She witnessed the crucifixion from the foot of the cross after the male disciples had fled and was the first to see the resurrected Jesus.

Luke wrote that Mary Magdalene was one of the women who travelled with Jesus and supported him financially, suggesting Mary Magdalene was wealthy. We also learn Jesus had cured these women of illness and demonic possession and that seven demons had troubled Her (Luke 8:1-3). Possibly, he drew it from a dubious oral story, but you can doubt nearly everything the gospels say. It may have served an agenda, for instance, to play down the role of Mary Magdalene, so the scribes later added it at the end of Mark. They could have left out that irrelevant detail but chose not to. After the crucifixion, Mary Magdalene rose to prominence and became a central person in the subsequent events.

There has been speculation as to whether Mary Magdalene was Jesus' wife. Jesus is referred to as the Bridegroom in every Gospel (Mark 2:19-20, Matthew 9:15, Luke 5:34, John 3:29). Mary Magdalene went out to wash and anoint Jesus' body after the Crucifixion (Mark 16:1). This was the duty of the wife. The official position of the Church is that Jesus was, and still is, married to the Church, a most peculiar idea. The recovered gospels cast a different light on their relationship. The Gospel of Philip names Her as Jesus' companion and mentions that Jesus loved Her more than the other disciples and kissed Her often. The Gospel of Mary notes that Jesus loved Her more than the other women.

There is every reason to believe that in the Jesus Movement, the sect led by Jesus when he was alive, women were equal to men. That was still the case when Paul wrote his letters. He named women full partners in the Christian movement and mentioned their names in his letters. That gradually changed, and the gospels came to emphasise the role of the male apostles. The role of women in the Jesus Movement was more prominent than the official gospels currently reveal. One of the recovered gospels, the Gospel of Mary, depicts Mary Magdalene as the leader of the early Church, superior to the other apostles, including Peter, the supposed leader of the Church. One fragment reads,

*Peter said to Mary, 'Sister, we know that the Saviour loved you more than all other women. Tell us the words of the Saviour that you remember, the things which you know that we don't because we haven't heard them.' Mary responded, 'I will teach you about what is hidden from you.' And she began to speak these words to them.*

Likely, this gospel originates from the second century AD, so it is not as old as the official gospels. It is a gnostic gospel that centres around supposed hidden truths and inner spiritual knowledge, but other gnostic beliefs appear absent. For instance, the belief that
the Jewish God of the material world is evil as opposed to the good Christian God of the spiritual world. Different groups of Christians modified the texts for their purposes, and there is reason to assume there was a close relationship between Mary Magdalene and Jesus and that the Church Fathers eliminated Jesus' wife from the gospels by marrying him to the Church. Hence, there is reason to believe Jesus was Mary Magdalene's husband. That raises another question: why was the marriage removed? Was Jesus too divine to be married? Or was it something else?

If this world is a virtual reality to entertain a humanoid individual we call God, God could become an ordinary human. The Gospel of John says that Jesus had an intimate and loving relationship with God. He seemed to have known God personally and believed that he had eternal life and existed at the beginning of the world. Christians claim that God is love. But did Jesus and God kiss and do other things lovers do? God can give birth, so God might not be a Father after all. Then, all the evidence and all the logic leave us with a stunning conclusion. Jesus married God in the person of Mary Magdalene. And because it is obvious and explains so much, it could be correct.

Mary Magdalene might have convinced Jesus that She was the reincarnation of Eve and that he was the reincarnation of Adam. She may have made Jesus believe that Adam was the son of Eve, so he was the Son of God because Adam was. Adam being the son of Eve makes more sense than the rib story. Thus, Mary Magdalene married Jesus after persuading him he was Her eternal husband from Creation until the End of Times. It explains why Jesus thought he had eternal life, existed from the beginning, and would live until the end. And it would make Eve the Mother of humanity. After all, we supposedly are born of God. Possibly, only Jesus felt that Mary Magdalene was God, and other people might have noticed nothing unusual about Her, but Jesus made them believe it.

There are a few loose ends to tie up. One can imagine that the rib story was false and that Eve was Adam's mother. But could Eve have been a goddess? That is not so obvious. God created Eve and Adam, Genesis tells. That does not corroborate what Mary Magdalene supposedly made Jesus believe. But Eve is Mother of all the Living, a title that suits a Mother Goddess. You have to leave the creation myth in Genesis behind and invent another one to make that idea work. And it just happens to be that the first sentences in the Gospel of John tell such a myth. After some mystical allusions with an 'in the beginning,' a 'there was light', and an undercover operation of Jesus during which few recognised him, Christians are born of God.
Genesis from where?

Before discussing whether Eve could be a goddess who gave birth to humanity, we need to know where the first chapters of Genesis came from. They deal with Creation, the fall, and the flood. Who wrote them? These stories mostly ran in Mesopotamia, the birthplace of several ancient civilisations. These civilisations are much older than the Jewish nation and had myths about Creation and the flood that are at least 1,000 years older than the Jewish Bible. The Jews lived in exile in Babylon when they compiled their scriptures. They used myths from the area to write the first chapters of Genesis. A Babylonian creation myth, the Enûma Eliš, is a bit like the first chapter of Genesis,

When in the height heaven was not named,
And the Earth beneath did not yet bear a name,
   And the primaeval Apsu, who begat them,
   And chaos, Tiamat, the mother of them both
   Their waters were mingled together,
And no field was formed, no marsh was to be seen;
When of the gods, none had been called into being,
And none bore a name, and no destinies were ordained;
   Then were created the gods amid of heaven,
Lahmu and Lahamu were called into being.

There are similarities with the first chapter of Genesis. Both start with chaotic waters before anything comes into being. Genesis says, ‘The earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.’ In both, a fixed dome-shaped firmament divides these waters from the habitable Earth, and both share similar descriptions of the Creation of celestial objects and ordered time. The Jews used existing myths to make their own. The Creation of man in Genesis resembles the Mesopotamian Epic of Gilgamesh, which tells the gods became tired of working on Creation and created a man to do the job. They put a god to death and mixed his blood with clay to produce the first human in the likeness of the gods,

In the clay, god and man
   Shall be bound,
To a unity brought together;
So that to the end of days
   The Flesh and the Soul
Which in a god have ripened –
That soul in a blood kinship is bound.

In Genesis, God created humans in the likeness of the gods (1:26) and rested after six days of hard labour (Genesis 2:2-3). God then made a man to work the ground (Genesis 2:5) and made him from soil (Genesis 2:7). In the Epic of Gilgamesh, the gods created the first man in Eden, the garden of the gods in Mesopotamia between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The same happened in Genesis (Genesis 2:14). There is another story
of the origin of man in the story of Enki and Ninmah. The gods, burdened with creating the Earth, complained to Namma, the primaeval mother. Namma then kneaded some clay, placed it in her womb, and gave birth to the first humans.

The Mesopotamians thus had at least two creation stories, one in which the gods created man from soil and one in which a goddess gave birth to humanity. Eve was the Mother of All the Living. The story of Eve and Adam in Genesis could originate from those two tales.

The epic further details that the first man, Enkidu, was wild, naked, muscular, hairy and uncivilised. The gods sent a naked woman to tame him. By making love to him for a week, she turned him into a civilised man of wisdom and like a god. She gave him a meal and clothed him. In Genesis, Eve let Adam eat (Genesis 2:6), which gave him the learning of the gods. Eve and Adam were naked before that (Genesis 3:7). The Lord clothed them (Genesis 3:21).

The Epic of Gilgamesh differs from Genesis, but the similarities are striking. In both stories, a god creates a man from the soil. The man lives naked in nature. A woman then tempts him. In both accounts, the man accepts food from the woman, receives knowledge, covers his nakedness, and leaves his former life. The appearance of a snake stealing a plant of immortality in the epic is also noteworthy.

The Great Flood in Genesis also closely resembles the account in the Epic of Gilgamesh. Few scholars doubt the epic is the source of the biblical narrative. The epic tells the city of Shurrupak at the Euphrates River had grown. The god Enlil could not sleep because of the sounds the city made. To deal with the noisy humans below, the gods agreed to drown them all.

The god Ea warned his friend Utnapishtim and asked him to build an ark. With his children and hired men, Utnapishtim built an enormous boat and went on it with his relatives, animals, and craftsmen. The storm god, Adad, sent a terrible thunderstorm with pouring rains that drowned the city. Then, the gods regretted what they had done.

After seven days, the weather calmed. Utnapishtim looked around and saw an endless sea. He saw a mountain rising out of the water. After another seven days, he released a dove into the air. The dove returned, having found no place to land. He then released a swallow that also came back. Then, he released a raven that did not come back.

Utnapishtim disembarked and made an offering to the gods.

The Bible tells that all the people had grown evil. Only Noah was blameless and faithful. God decided to send a flood to wipe out humanity but to spare Noah and his family. God ordered Noah to build an ark that could also harbour males and females of every animal species and food for them all.

The flood came for forty days. No one survived. After forty days, Noah sent out a raven. Then, he sent a dove to see if the waters had receded. Once the waters had receded, the Lord asked Noah to get out of the ark with his wife, his sons and their wives and to release the animals. Noah disembarked and made a sacrifice. It is more or less the same story.
In archaeological excavations, female figurines have turned up. They could depict mother goddesses. The most famous one is the Venus of Willendorf, from around 23,000 BC. In ancient cultures, mother goddesses represented fertility. The ability of women to produce offspring could have been the essence of mother goddess worship. Women give birth, and early humans may not have understood fatherhood. Perhaps some people even thought men had no reproductive use and merely existed to please women. The mother goddess can give birth as a virgin, which is the miracle of the mother goddess. One of the best-known mother goddesses was Isis in ancient Egypt.

Women can be sure their children are their own, but for men, this is different. When the fathers of children are unknown, families are matrilineal, which means family lines depend on motherhood. The goddess worship may have disappeared because men desired to control women and their sexuality. The transition from hunting-gathering to agriculture may
have played a crucial role in this development.

Hunter-gatherers were wanderers. They had fewer territorial conflicts because population density was low. Their disputes were less intense because they had no property and could move on.¹ That changed with the advent of agriculture. Farmers had to defend their property and family. Warfare became imperative. Otherwise, they would starve and lose their offspring. Men are willing to protect women and children they consider their own. And they can walk out when they doubt their fatherhood. That may have given them a position of power so patriarchy could emerge.

In her book, When God Was a Woman, historian Merlin Stone claims that goddess worship was the earliest religion in the Near and Middle East. The Creator was a woman before men rewrote history. Stone bases her claim on female figurines in archaeological finds. Hunter-gatherers left no writings, so we know little about their beliefs and family structures.

The Garden of Eden comes from an ancient Mesopotamian myth, the Epic of Gilgamesh. The garden was near the rivers Tigris and the Euphrates. The Jews lived in exile in Babylon when their priests compiled their holy scriptures. It might explain why the first chapters of Genesis took place in Mesopotamia, while the Jewish deity Yahweh originates in Canaan. Jewish scribes tailored Mesopotamian myths to their needs. Jewish history in the Bible began when Abraham left Ur in Mesopotamia and headed for Canaan.

In the Epic of Gilgamesh, the gods created a man from clay, just like in Genesis, but in another creation myth, a goddess gave birth to humanity. Eve could have been Adam's mother in the original tale. It makes more sense than Eve coming from Adam's rib. She is the Mother of All the Living (Genesis 3:20), and we are the woman's offspring (seed) (Genesis 3:15). Elsewhere in the Bible, a child is the father's offspring. That is a remarkable difference. Thus, Genesis might imply we come from women and that men have no reproductive role. And Eve was a virgin when she gave birth to Adam. The miracle of the Mother Goddess is virgin birth. If Jesus was the reincarnation of Adam and the son of God, he could have been born from a virgin Mother Goddess.

The Bible claims God made the woman a mate for the man (Genesis 2:18). In the original story, the gods may have created the man as a mate for the woman. A reason to think so is that Genesis mentions the woman's desire for her husband rather than the man's desire for his wife (Genesis 3:16). It suggests the original tale could have had a woman's perspective and that Adam's purpose was being a husband to Eve and to please her. Eve could have been the leading character in the original story. She discussed eating the fruit with the serpent and made Adam eat from it (Genesis 3:1-6).

Add to this that a man left his father and mother to be with his wife (Genesis 2:24). Women join their husbands' families in patrilineal and patriarchal societies. Paradise might have been matrilineal or even matriarchal. The title Mother of All the Living can refer to the mother goddess.⁸ In this sense, Eve resembles Namma, the primaeval mother in the story of Enki and Ninmah, who kneaded clay, placed it in her womb and gave birth to the first humans. A reason to fabricate the rib story might have been the problematic suggestion of a mother taking her son as her husband and people taking it as an example.
The Fall reflects the transition from hunting and gathering to agriculture. The life of hunter-gatherers was more agreeable than the plight of farmers who came later on. They had a more varied diet, worked fewer hours, and spent their time doing much more exciting things. Also, they were less in danger of starvation, disease and human violence. The Agricultural Revolution did increase the total amount of food available to humankind. But all this extra food didn't result in a better diet or life, but only more people, including pampered elites like kings, noblemen, and priests. They ate all the extra food. The average peasant in a small village worked harder than the average forager thousands of years earlier, and they got more toil and a lousier diet in return.¹

Attempts to improve life thus resulted in more difficult living conditions. People didn't foresee the long-term consequences of their actions. They thought that with some extra work, the harvest would be more bountiful. And then they wouldn't have to worry about drought and lean years. They didn't foresee that the number of mouths to fill would increase. Nor did they understand that feeding children with porridge instead of mother's milk would weaken their bodies and immune systems and that permanent settlements like villages were a hotbed for infectious diseases. They didn't think that by increasing their dependence on a single food source like wheat, they were exposing themselves even more than before to the dangers of drought.¹

In this sense, the Agricultural Revolution was a curse for human beings. The Garden of Eden provided for everything, and it was the natural state of humans. Eve and Adam were naked (Genesis 2:25) like hunter-gatherers in the jungle today. Adam was banished from the garden to work the ground and condemned to a life of toil (Genesis 3:17-19). And perhaps the original tale was about the downfall of women rather than men. Women had to obey their husbands from then on (Genesis 3:16). The original theme could have been the Agricultural Revolution and the power shift it caused between the sexes.

In ancient cultures, people worshipped snakes for their wisdom or knowledge. Hence, the serpent may have given counsel to Eve. The tree of knowledge relates to the sacred tree, which may explain why it was forbidden to eat from it. Eve's deed may reflect the role of women in shifting from gathering to planting crops that condemned men to a life of property and warfare. Farmers have to protect their crops from thieves. Otherwise, they face starvation. Perhaps Cain murdered Abel because Abel's flocks ate Cain's crops, so he had only meagre offerings for the gods, while Abel could please the gods by offering well-nourished animals. The first murder happened just after the Fall and was a conflict between a cattle herder and a crop planter. Knowledge of agriculture and animal husbandry were a curse for humans, and Paradise was lost.

At first sight, this explanation does not fit in with the Abrahamic religions. The Jewish deity Yahweh and the Arabian deity Allah were male, even though many people now think God has no gender. Yahweh and Allah had a wife and children before monotheism took over. Allah was the supreme deity of Mecca. Later, the owner of the universe appropriated this title. Unlike Christians, Jews and Muslims do not see God as a Father. Christians are born of God, and there is no Father in the Jewish Bible, but Eve is the Mother of All the Living.

The Quran extensively mentions the creation of Adam but says little about how Eve came into existence. The Quran does not claim that Eve came from Adam's rib but that men and women come from one soul (Quran 4:1, 7:189). It doesn't give details, but Muslims believe this soul is Adam. The Quran further claims God created Jesus like Adam from dust.
The historical context of the original story, the curse of the Agricultural Revolution caused by women, is lost in the Quran. In hindsight, it doesn't seem like a mere reciting error of those who memorised the Quran before a written edition came out. Casting the blame on Adam may have been early Christian teaching. After all, you can't blame Eve if She was God. Thus, Jesus, being Adam reincarnate, had to redeem himself.

The first Christians may have believed Eve was God and the Mother of all the Living, Mary Magdalene was Eve, and Jesus was Adam. And Eve did not come from Adam's rib, but Adam was born as Eve's son. So Adam and, therefore, Jesus were the Son of God. Humanity descends from Eve, so we are God's children (John 1:13). Tribes exist by believing they share common ancestors. These ancestors are mythical people who lived long ago. Hence, the myth of Eve and Adam can turn humanity into a single tribe. And God's plan may work like so. Paul may have realised this message concerns humankind rather than Jews alone.
Virgin Mary

The Virgin Mary plays a central role in Christianity. The Catholic Church named the Virgin Mary the Mother of God, thereby implying Jesus was God and that God has a mother, which is indeed most peculiar if you come to think of it. You do not seek refuge in such ideas unless you try to cover up the truth. Christians later began to make statues and icons of the Virgin with the child Jesus similar to those of the Egyptian mother goddess Isis with her child Horus. And so, the Mother Goddess Mary Magdalene, the reincarnation of Eve, eliminated from the Gospels, re-entered the Church via a back door. As Christians prayed to the Virgin, she became a proxy for God.
The Protestant Reformation was a misfired effort to return to the roots of Christianity. The Protestants believe the scriptures are the only correct basis of Christian faith. They ended church traditions that lacked biblical grounds, including saints and the Virgin Mary veneration. One of their grievances was that the Virgin Mary had become more important than Jesus. Roman Catholics often pray to the Virgin Mary rather than God or Jesus. The Protestants also did away with icons and statues because one of the Ten Commandments is not to make images for worship (Exodus 20:4-5).

In this way, the Protestants eliminated a link to the essence of Christianity. The Mary-with-child imagery refers to Jesus as the Son of God the Mother. It may explain why the Virgin Mary appeared far more often than Jesus and performed more miracles than the other saints. She could be the cloak behind which God the Mother hides.

In the Quran, Mary is the most prominent woman. She is the only woman mentioned by name. The Quran dedicates an entire chapter, chapter 19, to the Virgin Mary. The number 19 has great significance in Islam. Some Muslims indulge in arcane numerological explanations as to why that is so. The Quran refers to this number in the chapter named Hidden Secret. And so, the Quran may hold a hidden secret related to this number. The Quran also claims Mary was a virgin, thus confirming the miracle of the Mother Goddess. The Virgin Mary plays a central role in God's scheme to hide Her identity.
The star and crescent became Islam’s symbol. It has a long history predating Islam, as it was associated with a Moon goddess. In the Bible, the moon refers to the woman and the star to the child (Genesis 37:9). Hence, the Islamic symbol may represent the Madonna with the child Jesus or the relationship between Khadijah bint Khuwaylid and Muhammad. She was fifteen years older. A woman of Her age could have been his mother.

The St. Mary of Zion Church in Ethiopia is said to contain the Ark of the Covenant. Legend has it that the Ark came to Ethiopia with King Menelik after he visited his father, King Solomon. The Ark symbolises Mary of Zion. The Ark is supposed to be the residence of Yahweh, the God of Israel. That seems not accidental, as God’s name was Mary.

Mary was a virgin and the mother of Jesus, while Jesus was God’s son like Adam was, the seed of the woman, and had no father. Mary is the New Eve. God announced there would be enmity between the offspring of the serpent and that of the woman (Genesis 3:15). It supposedly is a prophecy predicting the coming of Jesus. Christians believe the seed of the woman refers to the virgin birth of Jesus. That is most peculiar because the woman is Eve, and the Virgin Mary was the New Eve. You can smell a rat here. And it is a huge and smelly one. So what about that rib? Did Eve give birth as a virgin? And did early Christians invent the birth story of Jesus to replace the birth of Adam from Eve, thereby turning the Virgin Mary into a surrogate mother goddess?
The Last Adam

Adam is the Son of God (Luke 3:38) and Jesus the Firstborn of all Creation (Colossians 1:15). So, was Jesus Adam reincarnated? And was Adam born? The usual interpretation of the Firstborn of All Creation is that Jesus already existed with God before creation and was not Adam. That is not what the words say. Being born is not that hard to understand. It is something different from existence before creation. And so, there may be more to it than theologians can explain. And that is not much, considering they studied God for thousands of years.

Theologians only regurgitate what was previously fed to them, which is the vomit of previous generations of theologians. After so many centuries, their menu is spoiled. It doesn't even taste like regurgitated vomit anymore. Do theologians discuss the simulation argument? No! They occupy themselves with 2,000-year-old controversies. Why would Jesus sacrifice himself for the mistakes of Adam? A good explanation would be if Jesus believed he was Adam and would survive.

Paul compared Jesus to Adam. In Romans, he wrote, 'Just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.' (Romans 5:19) And in 1 Corinthians, he noted, 'As in Adam all die, so in Christ, all will be made alive.' Jesus thus became the redeemer for Adam's fall. Paul called Jesus the Last Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45). It might be worth noting that Adam is the Son of God too. Coincidence?

Perhaps not. Paul was careful about what he told and may later have concluded he had disclosed too much by comparing Jesus to Adam. The Quran underpins the idea that Jesus could be Adam. Jesus was like Adam in the way he was created (Quran 3:59). And several Quran verses state that God ordered the angels to prostrate before Adam (Quran 2:34, 7:11, 15:28-29, 17:61, 18:50, 20:116, 38:71-74). The Quran mentions it seven times, making it appear significant. And seven times, Jesus says 'I am' in the Gospel of John. Why is that? Christians think only Jesus deserves the worship of the angels.

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews claims that God made Jesus, the firstborn into the world, superior to the angels and made the angels worship him (Hebrews 1:1-7). And if you assume the Quran is a message from God, that presumed guy in the sky, who has superpowers but is not Superman, and not a man either, then Jesus must be Adam. The Quran also claims that Jesus will return (Quran 43:61). If he was indeed Adam, he could. Otherwise, God must convince some other guy he is the Last Adam instead of Jesus.
Sarah, Mother of the Jews

Weaving one tale inside another

The Jewish Bible is a good read, apart from the parts that lay out the Jewish religious law in excruciating detail. It features tales about the Jewish patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt to the Promised Land under the guidance of a wrathful cloud. It is nearly all made up. Writing and editing the Jewish Bible took centuries. And they wrote it for religious purposes rather than producing an accurate account of what transpired. That is how historians look at the Jewish Bible. If you believed it all, don't blame the Jews for writing good stories but your gullibility. You don't think reptiles live among us because scriptwriters in Hollywood made a film in which they do, or do you?

What does the almighty owner of quadrillions of galaxies have to do with the Jewish Bible, a product of the fantasies of a petty nation dwelling in a small land on a tiny planet near an insignificant star inside one of those galaxies? To answer that question, imagine you are John Ronald Reuel Tolkien writing tales about Hobbits. You can write a story about someone who makes up a story about you. Tolkien could have written about a Hobbit writing about his creator Tolkien. And by the way, the Shire might be an insignificant spot in an infinitely large universe, but Tolkien hardly cares about the rest of the universe. Only the Shire and the Hobbits have his interest.

If Tolkien can do that, God can do it too. If God is a woman and has been among us as Mary Magdalene, what roles did God play among the Jews? In other words, which women in the Jewish Bible were God in disguise? Inquiring minds want to know. Most of these stories are fantasy. Hence, the first question you should ask is: can God have played roles in stories that never happened in the story? Tolkien can write a story in which a Hobbit writes a story in which Tolkien enters the Shire disguised as a Hobbit. But that story never happened in the story Tolkien wrote. It is a story a Hobbit wrote in that story. And what about the Hobbits starting a religion with an imagined creator? And then the truth comes out, Tolkien reveals himself, and the Hobbits all laugh. So it can be done. And indeed, strong women, who could have been God in disguise, appear in the Jewish Bible.

Hiding it behind human motivations

There is another reason why powerful women appeared in the Jewish Bible. The Israelites were too few in numbers and were too weak to defend a territory. They had to survive as a minority in the lands of others. Military adventurism would be fatal for them. To that aim, the authors of the Jewish Bible invented a new type of hero. Rather than valiant warriors, their heroes were virtuous people who helped others like Boaz, people with weaknesses like David, and risk-averse shrewd people. Abraham was not a courageous warrior, nor was his son, Isaac. Cunning had to compensate for that. Jacob cheated on his brother
Esau and took his birthright. Meet the Jewish hero. He has no honour, lacks the courage to defend his wife and defrauds his brother. But luckily, he has God on his side.

Heroes die, but the cunning and cowardly remain alive with God on their side. That is why there are still Jews while other nations made a one-way trip to the dustbin of history due to too much testosterone and adrenaline. And so, the authors of the Jewish Bible also refashioned the role of men and women in family life. The stories of Jewish patriarchs were about family life and domestic affairs where women had a central role. And women played a crucial part in Jewish victories. That undermined male authority in war. In several cases, women achieved triumph on the battlefield or determined the fate of men. Jacob defrauded Esau of his birthright and deceived his father, Isaac, with the help of his mum, Rebecca. Esther saved the Jewish people from a plot in the Persian court. The Jewish Bible does not depict events suggesting Rebecca or Esther could have been God in disguise. But there are a few other stories that catch the imagination and qualify. There was something special about Sarah, the matriarch of the Jews.

Sarah and Abraham

The Lord allegedly promised Abraham that one day, his offspring would be as countless as the stars and own the land between Egypt and the Euphrates River. But his wife, Sarah, was barren, so she ordered Abraham to sleep with her slave Hagar so Hagar would bear a child in her name. Those were the days when slavery was still legal, and you could get away with that. Once Hagar was pregnant, she began to look down on Sarah. Sarah then mistreated Hagar, and she fled. But God sent an angel, the famous Angel of the Lord, who in Christian thinking might be Jesus but did not say he was, who ordered Hagar to return and submit herself to Sarah. Hagar bore Abraham a son, Ishmael.

That could have been good enough, but the Lord chose differently and presented a covenant to Abraham. It required the circumcision of all the males. Sarah was to become the matriarch of the Jewish people. At the time, Abraham was one hundred years old, and Sarah was ninety. Abraham and Sarah laughed when they learned this. Remember, 4,000 years ago, there were no erection enhancement pills or fertility treatments. Sarah became pregnant and bore Isaac.

Like in most traditional agricultural societies, Jewish religious law prescribes that men precede women in inheritance. Daughters can only inherit if there are no sons. Nevertheless, being a matriarch of the Jewish people is most significant because you are a Jew if your mother is one. Your father is irrelevant to your Jewishness. God was particularly picky as to who was to become the matriarch of the Jews. In this sense, the Jews are not primarily children of Abraham, as the Jewish Bible says, but children of Sarah in the same way Christians are children of God.

Abraham feared for his life because of Sarah's beauty. When the Egyptians asked if Sarah was his wife, he said she was his sister. And so, the Pharaoh's servants took notice and informed the Pharaoh, who took her as his wife. For that reason, God inflicted severe diseases on Pharaoh and his household. That is divine justice. God punished the Pharaoh because Abraham had deceived him. With a God like that, you don't need Satan. Not surprisingly, that horned fellow was nowhere to be found in this tale. Perhaps he enjoyed a
sabbatical. The Bible does not tell. Abraham did the same in Abimelech's kingdom, thus knowingly bringing Abimelech in mortal danger. King Abimelech then received threats from God after he planned to take Sarah as his wife. Luckily for him, God didn't have a bad mood that day.

To us mere mortals, an intriguing question might be, what made Abraham worthy in the eyes of God? Is it that he intended to sacrifice his son when a voice asked him? If it had happened today, they might have locked up Abraham in a mental ward. If Abraham was God's husband, it could make sense. In any case, God works in mysterious ways, and a ram presented itself, and that same voice then asked Abraham to sacrifice the animal instead. That was a narrow escape. If that ram had not been there, there would have been no Jewish people, and world history would have been entirely different. That is chaos theory at work here, or is it God?

In family matters, God sided with Sarah. The Angel of the Lord summoned Hagar to return to her mistress, Sarah. Later, God told Abraham to send Hagar away when Sarah wanted this. Sarah became the matriarch of the Jews because the Lord commanded. The Lord thus represented her well. Had this been a scrap of history, Sarah might have been God in disguise and have done an excellent job hiding that. But God can also play undercover roles in events that never took place. That is a perk of writing the story yourself. And why does God desire bits of male reproductive organs in exchange for making a covenant? That is indeed most peculiar unless the Lord is a Lady. Even then, it seems quaint to me, but perhaps I don't understand women and their fantasies well enough.

Asenath and Joseph

Jacob had twelve sons, but Joseph was his favourite, and he was the best-looking one. His brothers were jealous and conspired against him. They sold him as a slave. Joseph ended up in the household of Potiphar, an Egyptian and one of Pharaoh's high-ranking officials. Joseph did well there and became Potiphar's favourite. Joseph was handsome, so he caught the eye of Potiphar's wife, who wanted to sleep with him. When he refused, she accused Joseph of trying to seduce her, and Potiphar put him in prison. There, Joseph became the prison warden's favourite. Joseph was apt at explaining dreams. That eventually brought him to the Pharaoh, whose favourite he became also.

The Pharaoh made him a Viceroy and put him in charge of the granaries. Joseph married Asenath, the daughter of an Egyptian high priest. The Jewish Bible tells us nothing about her. That raised questions as marrying pagans became a controversial matter for Jews. A later story about their marriage explains how Joseph, after he escaped Potiphar's wife, ended up in the arms of a pagan priestess. How could God have let this happen? A cover story was needed and invented, and they named it Joseph and Asenath, which was quite to the point. According to this tale, Asenath was proud and despised men but became impressed by Joseph's looks.

Joseph first did not want to marry a pagan priestess who bowed before idols and did not worship the God of the Jews. But lo and behold, Asenath showed repentance and changed her faith. And then an angel from heaven hurried to her chamber to bless the marriage. When Asenath told Joseph, he changed his mind and married her. It thus must
have been convincing. Asenath's change of faith appears insincere and induced by her desire to marry Joseph. Nevertheless, God blessed the marriage, which is remarkable considering the high standards that usually apply. Asenath might have been God in disguise if only this had actually happened.

**Zipporah and Moses**

A fellow named Moses allegedly led the Israelites out of Egypt. A burning bush claiming to be God commanded Moses to return to Egypt to free the Israelites. Moses then took his wife, Zipporah, and sons and started his journey to Egypt. On the road, they stayed at an inn, where that same burning bush supposedly came to kill Moses, which is a reason why you should not believe it happened. Zipporah saved Moses' life by circumcising their son and touching Moses' feet with the foreskin, saying he was her bridegroom of blood (Exodus 4:24-26). Later, the burning bush allegedly successfully transformed itself into an ireful cloud of fire that helped Moses lead the Israelites into the Promised Land.

Zipporah saving Moses' life in this way fits the supposed agenda of the authors of the Jewish Bible, which is to undermine male authority so Jewish men would not strive to posthumously get the prestigious Darwin award for their adventures and terminate the Jewish people in the process. After all, the success of Moses' mission depended on Zipporah having rescued him from the consequences of his daring attempt to let his son remain uncircumcised. God somehow was particularly keen on that foreskin. Zipporah knew what God was about to do and the reason why. But Zipporah reading God's mind? No mere human could accomplish such a feat, not even Jesus. Hence, Zipporah might have been God in disguise if only this had happened.

**Bathsheba and David**

Bathsheba, who also was the wife of Uriah, broke David and his kingdom. While Uriah served in the army to fight one of David's wars, Bathsheba conspicuously bathed on a rooftop near the royal palace, where David could see her naked. She may have planned to seduce him. The alternative explanation, that there was no room inside the house to bathe, appears less convincing. David ordered Bathsheba to come to his place. And so she did, apparently without even saying it might be a bad idea. She became pregnant after sleeping with him. David then commanded Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, to go home, hoping he would sleep with his wife so the scandal would go unnoticed. But Uriah did not out of solidarity with his comrades on the battlefield. David then asked his commander to place Uriah on the frontline of the battle so he would die. After Uriah died, David married Bathsheba. Bathsheba turned out to be a true fate changer. She also bore the future king Solomon.

You might have heard that the Lord loved David. And if you have not, you might qualify for an ear transplant. But the subsequent course of events did not demonstrate that. From then on, everything went downhill. In hindsight, this sequence of incidents brought the son of Bathsheba to the throne. The prophet Nathan foretold David that his act cursed his
David's eldest son Amnon was murdered by his half-brother Absalom after he had raped Absalom's sister Tamar. Later, Absalom declared himself king and started a revolt against David, in which David's troops killed him. That eliminated two potential heirs to the throne. In David's old age, Bathsheba secured the succession to the throne of Solomon. The marriage was a grave sin, but God nevertheless loved Bathsheba's son, who was to become king. Thus, Bathsheba could have been God in disguise.

That might explain why the Lord loved David so much, as it cannot be due to his superior moral virtue. And it presents us with a reason why he couldn't resist Her. David is a historical figure, so there could be truth to the story. It also fits the agenda of the authors of the Jewish Bible. Even Israel's greatest king, David, had faults and crumbled in the hands of a woman. And no one would ever have thought Bathsheba had something to do with the angry cloud dwelling in that tent. Remarkably, the name Bathsheba consists of two parts, Bath and Sheba. Bathsheba seduced David by bathing naked on a rooftop near the palace. The Queen of Sheba later visited Solomon. That is a bit odd. Hence, the Queen of Sheba may also have been God in disguise. Thus, the pun may be intentional even though the Hebrews missed it due to the constraints of their language.

Deborah, the founder of the Jewish nation?

Sarah is the fictional matriarch of the Jews. There is a real one insofar as anything is real in this fictional world. She is also in the Jewish Bible. The Jewish nation gradually emerged after Egypt retreated from Canaan around 1150 BC. That left a power vacuum in which states gradually developed from tribal leadership. It corresponds with the tribal era of the judges in the Bible. The oldest part of the Jewish Bible likely is the Song of Deborah (Judges 5). Historians believe it dates from that era. As the story goes, Deborah was a tribal leader during this age.

Deborah was the fourth judge in the Book of Judges, but the remainder of the book dates from centuries later and could be largely fictional. Only Deborah may have lived in that era in that role. If you take that view, the Song of Deborah is the starting point of the Jewish Bible. The song likely did not pop up out of nowhere. Jewish tribespeople could have composed it to celebrate the victory brought by their heroine, Deborah. She could be the earliest historical person in the Bible. She attributed the triumph to the Jewish deity Yahweh, so the history of the Jews as Yahweh's people might have started with Her.

She took part in a battle (Judges 4:8-9). As the story goes, Deborah sent for Barak, the commander of the troops, and said to him, "The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you: 'Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead them up to Mount Tabor. I will lead Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.'" (Judges 4:6-7) But it was Deborah who commanded Barak. And so, She might have been the God of Israel in disguise and founded the Jewish nation and religion in person.
Khadijah, Mother of the Believers

Bride of Muhammad

Mother of the Believers is a title Muslims give to the wives of Muhammad. It best suits his first wife, Khadijah bint Khuwaylid. According to Islamic sources, Khadijah was a wealthy widow and Muhammad's employer. Muhammad was twenty-five, and Khadijah was forty when she proposed to him. A woman proposing the marriage was odd indeed, given the time and place where it transpired. To Muslims, it is the ultimate proof that their religion is very woman-friendly. The marriage between Khadijah and Muhammad was both happy and monogamous. When he was without her on one of his journeys, Muhammad never had any desire for other women. They had six children, of which four daughters survived. After Khadijah had died, Muhammad married more women.

Muhammad returned home shocked after the Archangel Gabriel appeared to him for the first time. He told Khadijah what had happened, trembling in all likelihood. She comforted him like a mother and supported him from then on. Khadijah's moral support made Muhammad believe in his mission, and her financial support was indispensable. Apart from a wife, Khadijah was thus like a mother to Muhammad, in the likeness of Eve and Adam. She was Muhammad's boss in more than one way. Unlike the Bride of Christ, the Bride of Muhammad is in the records and hard to ignore. Women hardly ever were boss over their husbands in seventh-century Arabia. And if you look at the larger picture, it seems all too clear who she was.

Quran origins

The Quran lacks chronological order and repeats itself. Scholars believe its historical accuracy is less than that of the Bible insofar as it describes the same events. So, you might find it hard to believe that this scratchy collection of sayings is the word of God and meant to correct corruptions in previous Jewish and Christian scriptures, as Muslims claim. Muslims believe the Quran was revealed to Muhammad by God, with the Archangel Gabriel being the intermediary. The first Muslims were illiterate. They memorised the verses and did not write them down. Memorising such a lengthy text for decades is quite challenging. And the Muslims fought battles that took the lives of some of those who knew these verses.

The early Muslims likely split up the task of memorising the Quran and assigned multiple men to recall the same verses. How well they did that is anyone's guess, but the outcome was what God intended if there is a script. And it explains why the Quran is the way it is. Later, those who compiled the Quran did not attempt to edit or present them chronologically because humans should not distort God's words. If only early Christians...
had shown that kind of reverence for their scriptures, Christianity would have been an entirely different religion.

Historical analysis suggests much of the Quran came from previously extant Zoroastrian, Jewish and Christian sources. But other parts seem original and could have been whispered by that supposed angel into Muhammad's ear. The Quran also adds a few juicy details to existing stories the Jews have failed to mention in their Bible, for instance, King Solomon gathering an army of ghosts, men and birds, entering the valley of the ants, and ants talking to each other (Quran 27:15-18):

*Indeed, We granted knowledge to David and Solomon. And they said in acknowledgement, 'All praise is for God Who has privileged us over many of His faithful servants.'*

*And David was succeeded by Solomon, who said, 'O people! We have been taught the language of birds, and been given everything we need. This is indeed a great privilege.'*

Solomon's forces of ghosts, humans, and birds were rallied for him, perfectly organised.

*And when they came across a valley of ants, an ant warned, 'O ants! Go quickly into your homes so Solomon and his armies do not crush you unknowingly.'*

That is, of course, very thoughtful. In virtual reality, these things can happen. We have no evidence, but some things are more plausible than others. Talking ants is as believable as a serpent talking to Eve. Still, Muslims claim Muhammad was the last prophet before the End Times and that the Quran corrects mistakes and omissions in the Jewish and Christian scriptures. At first glance, that is not particularly convincing, but the Quran contains a few discrepancies that may make sense in hindsight:

- The Quran discusses Adam's creation extensively but says little about how Eve came to be. The story of the rib is absent. Humans come from one soul, the Quran claims (Quran 39:6). The implicit assumption is this soul is Adam.
- The Quran does not blame Eve for the Fall. One account explicitly blames Adam (Quran 20:120-121). That might be a crucial element in the original message of Christianity that is missing nowadays.
- There is no original sin in Islam. The Quran says that Eve and Adam repented, and God forgave them (Quran 2:37, 7:23). The Quran doesn't claim that Jesus was a redeemer for the sins of humankind.
- The Quran names Jesus the Son of Mary and confirms the virgin birth, thereby implying that Jesus had no father, and because Christians call him the Son of God, it opens up the possibility that God's name was Mary.
- In the Quran, God orders the angels to prostrate before Adam, while the New Testament says the angels bow before Jesus, implying that Jesus could be Adam. The repeated mention could signal importance.
- Finally, the Quran stresses the return to Paradise many times. Our return to Eden gets little attention in the Jewish and Christian scriptures. The Quran mentions it so often that it could be of the utmost importance.
The theme of God ordering the angels to bow before Adam and Satan refusing because Adam was a creature made from dust relates to a 6th-century Christian work called The Book Of The Cave Of Treasures. It says,

And when the prince of the lower order of angels saw what great majesty had been given unto Adam, he was jealous of him from that day and did not wish to worship him. And he said unto his hosts, 'You shall not worship him, and ye shall not praise him with the angels. It is meet that you should worship me, because I am fire and spirit; and not that I should worship a thing of dust, which hath been fashioned of fine dust.'

That doesn't explain the endless repeating of this theme in the Quran. And so, there could be more to it, as this research suggests.

The Hidden Secret

The Quran claims that God is the greatest schemer (Quran 3:54, 7:99, 8:30, 10:21, 13:42) and capable of deception (Quran 4:88, 5:41, 11:34, 14:4). The existence of different religions and theological disputes is part of God's plan. Otherwise, the message of Islam would have been more convincing. No one can be clever enough to uncover the underlying truth. And no one can be too dumb for it either. After all, someone wrote the script. The Quran supposedly contains a hidden secret. Chapter 74 of the Quran is named The Hidden Secret or The Cloaked One. The cloaked man is Muhammad. The chapter further mentions that 19 angels guard hell. The conflating of cloak and hidden secret suggests a disguise. It says (Quran 74:31),

We have made their number [that of the angels] only as a test for the disbelievers so that the People of the Book [Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians] will be certain, and the believers [Muslims] will increase in faith, and neither the People of the Book nor the believers will have any doubts, and so that those hypocrites with sickness in their hearts and the disbelievers will argue, 'What does God mean by such a number?' In this way, God leaves whoever He wills to stray and guides whoever He wills. And none knows the forces of your Lord except He. And this description of hell is only a reminder to humanity.

Muslims believe it contains a clue proving the divine origin of the Quran. The verse implies that the number 19 has significance beyond the number of angels. In 1974, a guy named Rashad Khalifa claimed to have discovered a mathematical code hidden in the Quran based on the number 19. It gave rise to a numerological cult and countless films on YouTube. Numbers are meaningless. But the number 19 appears in the chapter named Hidden Secret. Hence, the number 19 may have significance, and the rise of the cult may not be an accident. What could the hidden secret be? Chapter 19 is named Mary, and it is about the Virgin Mary. The hidden secret may be that God's name was Mary, something only God could know. The cloak may refer to God appearing to be a man while being a woman or the Virgin Mary being the cloak hiding the identity of God.
Virgin birth

The Quran corroborates the virgin birth of Jesus (Quran 4:171), thus implying Jesus had no father. The virgin birth is the miracle of the mother goddess. Christians might have invented that tale to refer to Adam as Eve's son. The Quran consistently names Jesus the Son of Mary (Quran 2:87, 4:171, 61:6), while Christians call him the Son of God. It could relate to a previously extant Christian tradition in the Middle East. Archaeologists excavated near the location commonly known as Armageddon, a 5th century AD Greek inscription stating 'Christ, born of Mary'. The odd thing is that it doesn't say Son of God.

The Quran claims God has no children and that Jesus was not God's son (Quran 6:100-102, 17:111, 18:4-5, 19:88-92). The reason likely is that the Meccan supreme deity Allah had a wife and children before God claimed this title. And the Virgin Mary wasn't God either. The repeating of the phrase Son of Mary suggests importance. It stresses that God is not Jesus' father, and it may imply that God's name was Mary.

The star and crescent became the symbol of Islam. This symbol has a long history predating Islam, as it was associated with a Moon goddess. The moon represents the woman, and the star the child (Genesis 37:9). Hence, the Islamic symbol is like the Madonna with the child Jesus or the relationship between Khadijah bint Khuwaylid and Muhammad. She was fifteen years older and could have been his mother. Son of God thus means Son of Mary as Mary Magdalene was God. The picture that goes with it is the Madonna with the child, represented in the crescent with a star, the symbol of Islam.

Return to Eden

Muslims believe Jesus will return in the end times (Quran 4:159, 43:61). Even more crucial is our return to Eden, only sparsely mentioned in the Jewish Bible (Ezekiel 36:22–38) and the New Testament (Revelation 22:1-5). The Quran refers to Eden using terms like Gardens and Paradise 147 times, or 3 * 7 * 7 if you're into numbers with religious significance. It supposedly is the final destination of the righteous believers. It refers to
Eden as the phrasing refers to providing fruits of that garden and having spouses. Genesis claims God created the woman to accompany the man and that Eve and Adam could eat all the fruits except from that one tree. For instance (Quran 2:25),

And give good tidings to those who believe and do righteous deeds that they will have gardens [in Paradise] beneath which rivers flow. Whenever they are provided with a provision of fruit from there, they will say, 'This is what we were provided with before.' And it is given to them in likeness. And they will have therein purified spouses, and they will abide therein eternally.

Our return to Eden is a central theme in the Quran, while the Jewish Bible and the Gospel hardly mention it. The repeating implies importance. It concerns the nature of our journey from the Garden of Eden to the Final Gardens of Paradise. The Jews wrote most of their Jewish Bible during their exile in Babylon and shortly after. They returned and interpreted their journey from the depraved city of Babylon to God's city of Jerusalem. Christians took over this theme, and their Babylon became Rome. If Jesus was Adam reincarnated and is to return, our final destination could be Eden, the Final Gardens of Paradise. Eden stands for simple living, while Babylon represents advanced civilisation.
The Gospel of John remarkably differs from the other gospels. That has kept a few brilliant minds occupied. Matthew and Luke say that Jesus' mother was a virgin. Mark does not mention it, while John claims that Jesus was with God in the beginning, that in him was life, and that life was the light of all humankind. It refers to Genesis, where, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. But that earth was formless, empty, and covered by darkness, so God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. John remains cryptic and goes on to say (John 1:9-13),

_The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God._

Christians are born of God. And Jesus gave us the right to become children of God. It is all mysterious. Men cannot give birth. So, could God could be a Mother? John does not say that Jesus was Adam, who started humanity by being the husband of Eve, who was God. But in this way, you can understand how Jesus gave us the right to become children of God. The same author, whose name likely was not John, or it must have been John Doe, wrote similar things in one of his letters (1 John 2:29, 3:9, 4:7, 5:1, 5:4, 5:18). The official explanation is that born of God has spiritual meaning and does not involve a womb.

Jesus likened entering the kingdom of God to being born again. A Pharisee named Nicodemus asked, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!' And Jesus replied, 'No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to Spirit.' (John 3:3-6) Nicodemus mentions the womb. So, there could be more to the phrase 'born of God'. And baptising could symbolise the breaking of the waters.

That raises an obvious question. If the early church leaders went to such great lengths to remove all the evidence of God being a Mother, how could they have overlooked the phrase born of God? The correct answer is that they did not. The language of the Gospels is Greek. Greek culture dominated the ancient Eastern Mediterranean, where Christianity spread. Learned Jews like Paul were well-acquainted with Greek thinking. And so, Greek thought and mythology helped the early church fathers reconstruct their religion after changing God's gender.

In Greek mythology, Athena, the goddess of wisdom, was born from the head of the male deity Zeus. Zeus' head went open to let Athena out and then closed again. In this way, a male deity could give birth. When the church fathers changed God's gender, they may initially have thought of the Zeus and Athena analogy, so Jesus became born of the Father. If you doubt this explanation, you could read the Odes Of Solomon. These are first-century Christian writings, thus of the earliest days for Christianity. And the oldest sources
often are the closest to the truth. Ode 19 (here is that number again) comes with the following lines,

_A cup of milk was offered to me: and I drank it in the sweetness of the delight of the Lord._
The Son is the cup, and He who was milked is the Father.
_And the Holy Spirit milked Him: because His breasts were full, and it was necessary for Him that His milk should be sufficiently released._
_And the Holy Spirit opened His bosom and mingled the milk from the two breasts of the Father, and gave the mixture to the world without their knowledge._\textsuperscript{11}

No other ancient Christian text explicitly mentions gender-related attributes of God. Here, God has female physical characteristics despite being called Father. And because it is an ancient text dating from the earliest days of Christianity, you can reasonably suspect that the Father might originally have been a Mother.
God is love

Christians tell us that God is love. There may be something about this love the church fathers found so troubling that they did not want us to know. Jesus' deeds might make more sense once you know what it is. Love is a central theme in Christianity. And so this religion is known as the Religion of Love. According to the Gospel, Jesus said we should love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:30-31). Paul wrote the First Epistle to the Corinthians around 54 AD. It is one of the earliest written sources of Christianity. It contains a remarkable poem (1 Corinthians 13),

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.
If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.
If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, and it keeps no record of wrongs.
Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears.
When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.
For now, we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Paul wrote that love is more important than faith and good works. But why? When he wrote this letter, Paul was in the Christian movement for over fifteen years, but no earlier written records survived, for reasons until now unknown, but possibly not for much longer. Inventing a suitable cover story was a process that may have taken decades. And that story became that God loved the world so much that He gave his one and only son so that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). Scholars think John Doe wrote the Gospel of John. That same anonymous person may also have written the First Epistle of John. There, he shares his views on the love of God (1 John 4:7-10),

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son
God loving us and sending His one and only son into the world to die as a sacrifice for our sins seems ridiculous unless you are a Christian. Christians claim that Adam sinned, so we are all cursed, but then came Jesus, who saved us by his crucifixion. Jews and Muslims don't believe that God has a son, nor do they think that Adam's transgression justifies this sacrifice. When God ordered Abraham to offer his son, and Abraham was about to comply, God called it off. So why did Jesus do it? The odds are that it has to do with love because Christianity is the religion of love. Ephesians gives a possible clue (Ephesians 5:25),

_Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her._

Christians believe Jesus married the Church. Only the Church did not exist when Jesus lived. That is inconsistent in time, so a historian would call it an anachronism. It is like saying that the Roman Emperor Caesar took an aeroplane to Egypt to spend his holidays with Cleopatra. That is impossible because there were no aeroplanes 2,000 years ago. Jesus marrying a church that did not yet exist is another stinky rat that has been rotting for nearly two millennia. Theologians have spent their entire lives in the stench, so they don't notice the smell. The verse suggests Jesus died for love as in marriage. And it asks husbands to love their wives just like Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her. That might be as close to the truth as the church fathers dared to go. Jesus was married, and he gave himself up for his Bride. And men should do the same for their wives.

It sheds light on Jesus' views on marriage. Jesus said marriage is a bond forged by God (Matthew 19:3-9),

_Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?'

'Haven't you read,' he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

'Why then,' they asked, 'did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?'

Jesus replied, 'Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.'

Here, Jesus departed from Moses' law, referring to Eden. Jesus' disciples argued it would be hard for men to love their wives this way. Jesus replied that not all men can do this. Concerning marriage, Jesus promoted a high standard, untenable for most men. It would be better to live in celibacy than not to live up to it. Paul came to adhere to that line of thinking. He didn't think long-term as he believed Jesus would return soon, so there was little need for having children as a means of spreading Christianity. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a king who prepares a wedding banquet for his son (Matthew 22:2-14). The wedding symbolises the kingdom of God. It
appears contrived to compare the kingdom of God to a wedding unless it is one.

Surviving records of Jesus' words and teachings suggest Jesus believed women to be equal to men. The equality of the sexes is at odds with the patriarchal society of Jesus' time. Paul also saw women as equal partners in the Christian movement. The Didache, an early Christian text dating from the first century, implies equality of the sexes. It also helped to make Christianity monogamous, as opposed to Judaism at the time, and Islam.

Over time, Christianity grew increasingly patriarchal. Scholarly analysis of the letters of the early church fathers underlines this. For instance, scholars think 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 is a later addition. It claims the man is the head of the family. The same applies to 1 Corinthians 14:34–35. It orders women to be silent in the churches. A reason for suspecting the latter passage is an addition is that several manuscripts have it at the end of the chapter instead of its usual location. Textual critics see this as a sign that a scribe copied a note into the body of the text. And a previous scribe likely added that note.

If you ask yourself how scribes could justify falsifying their scriptures, here lies a possible answer. It happened in small steps that appeared reasonable to those involved. You might not consider adding a note a falsification. And once the comment is there, it becomes part of the context of the text as a clarification. Once it is part of the context and has become an instruction to read the passage in that particular way, it might not appear a falsification to include it in the text itself. In this way, a few generations can make an astounding difference. And so, the First Epistle to Timothy reads (1 Timothy 2:11-15),

A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

Paul never wrote this letter, even though the letter claims so. An unidentified Christian scrivener likely penned it down more than fifty years after Paul died. Scholars uncover falsifications by comparing the wording used in this epistle to Paul's genuine letters. The passage above suggests women spoke publicly and felt they had authority over men. Otherwise, the author would not have written it. These modifications suggest an equality of the sexes, a prominent position for women in the early Christian movement, and the gradual re-establishing of male supremacy.

The consequences can be troubling. Did Jesus sacrifice himself for God's love, and did God not care about Jesus? If so, why should God care about us? You can imagine the Church Fathers having trouble with that. If another man ever finds himself in Jesus' position, he might not be instantly enthusiastic about the proposition. But no one can go against the will of God. You can easily fall in love with someone who has taken you hostage. It is a natural reaction known as Stockholm Syndrome. Having no choice makes things easier. If the absurd hunts you down, and you see no escape, you embrace it.

And is it so terrible to die for love? Everyone dies someday, usually for lesser reasons like an encounter with a deadly disease, some random accident, old age or a war fought for some reason like the ego of a leader, or even worse, his stupidity. As Paul explained in his poem, you can speak every language, know all the secrets, and give your possessions to
those in need, but it is pointless if you do not have love. Hence, there is no reason to complain. If it is a delusion, you can enjoy the feeling as long as it lasts. If you must go down in infamy, you better do it laughing and always look on the bright side of life.
The religion Paul invented

Paul's reasoning

How did Christianity become the most peculiar religion it is today? We may never have a complete and definite answer to that question, but until now, we didn't even have a clue. A cloud of obscurity surrounds the first decades of Christianity. A few things we do know. Paul of Tarsus, better known as Paul the Apostle, invented Christianity. He was not one of the twelve apostles, by the way. He joined the movement shortly after Jesus went missing. Jesus started Christianity, but Paul turned it into the religion we know today, or that is what scholars believe. Paul was a Pharisee who devoutly observed the Jewish religious laws. Christianity began as a small Jewish sect founded by an end-time prophet who claimed to be the Messiah.

Many Jews awaited a messiah but expected a strong leader who would liberate the Jewish nation from Roman occupation. Jesus did not live up to their hopes, and the Romans had him crucified. Only that did not end Christianity. Jesus subsequently appeared to some of his followers, thus demonstrating that he lived on and was Adam like he had claimed. That gave the Christians new hope that he would return. Paul was at first a fervent persecutor of the followers of Jesus, but then he received a vision. According to his own words, Jesus appeared to him. It was a turning point in his life and an event that shaped the future of humankind. In his book The Triumph of Christianity, Bart Ehrman tries to reconstruct Paul's reasoning, which is the foundation of Christian thinking.

His vision proved to Paul that Jesus still lived as his followers claimed. Jesus had died, so he was resurrected, Paul supposed. And therefore, he must be the long-awaited Messiah. That presented Paul with a few theological problems. The Romans had humiliated Jesus and had him executed. So, why did Jesus have to die? Paul came up with an answer. In many religions, including Judaism, people sacrifice animals to please the gods. And so, Paul turned Jesus into the sacrificial Lamb of God. In this view, we are all sinners because Adam was. It is a novel idea not found in the Jewish religion and scriptures.

The sacrificial lamb is a revolutionary new type of saviour. He is someone who, by his death, provides redemption to his followers. According to Mark, Matthew and Luke, the disciples shared bread and wine during the Last Supper. And Jesus said, 'Take it; this is my body,' and, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.' It is outside the Jewish tradition and part of the sacrificial lamb imagery, and John does not mention it. So, did Jesus say these words, or were they added to confirm the sacrificial lamb image? We do not know, but as we will see later on, it is telling that the Gospel of John fails to mention it.

Christians already believed Jesus died for their sins when Paul joined their movement. In the first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul writes, 'For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was
buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures, and that he appeared to Simon Peter and then to the twelve apostles.' (1 Corinthians 15:3-5) These were the things passed on to him, possibly as a creed.\(^4\) Paul joined the Christian movement a few years after the crucifixion, so the passing on indicates it was an original Christian belief.

And so, it must have been God's plan to save Her/His people this way, Paul reasoned, so observing Jewish religious laws is not critical for your salvation, nor do you have to be a Jew. Jewish religious laws being irrelevant is a revolutionary thought for a Pharisee. However, prophecies in the Jewish Bible foretold that all the nations would accept the God of the Jews. To Paul, Jesus was the fulfilment of these prophecies. After all, Jesus was Adam, the father of humankind. And from Adam, God made all the nations that inhabit the Earth (Acts 17:26), so Jesus' message applied to everyone, not Jews alone. Some early Christians may have held that view already, so Paul may not have invented this either. Paul concluded that rejecting false gods and having faith in Jesus would be enough. Paul believed he was God's missionary to spread the good news.\(^2\)

Paul was a Jewish scholar who knew the Jewish scriptures well, while the other Apostles lacked such education. And so, he could shape the beliefs of the early Church and the future Christian religion. It is not clear who changed the gender of God and when. Paul was the most educated Apostle, so he likely played a significant role in that process. There is evidence of a controversy that needed a resolution. For Jews, it was blasphemy to say that God was a woman who married Jesus, while non-Jewish Christians had no problem with that. Paul may have resolved it by making the Christian deity male and removing the evidence of the marriage.

**Spreading the good news**

Paul dedicated his life to spreading the good news that faith in Jesus could save everyone. During his many travels, he founded Christian communities. His mission was not easy. His message caused upheaval, and Jews often expelled him from their synagogues. But he was determined and worked hard. It seems Paul's universal gospel of personal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ that is open to everyone caught on. But it is a strange tiding and not something you would be inclined to believe if you have grown up in a different tradition, whether you were Jewish or worshipped other deities. And so the success of Christianity begs for a better explanation. Ancient sources indicate that stories about miracles Christians performed made people convert.\(^2\)

An example of such a miracle was the healing of a lame man when Paul and Barnabas visited Lystra. As the story goes, Paul had healed the man. The Lycaonians then concluded that Paul and Barnabas were gods in human form. The priest of Zeus brought bulls and wreaths to the city gate because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them. Paul and Barnabas explained they were only human and messengers of the good news that the God of the Jews, who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and everything in them, had decided that all nations should no longer go their way. And the proof, they said, was that the Jewish God had shown kindness by giving us rain from heaven and crops in their seasons and filling our hearts with joy (Acts 14:8-18). The proof thus were the seasons, the crops and the rains. They had always been there, so that does not prove
anything. Hence, it must have been the miracle of healing that made people believe Paul's most peculiar message. And the story appears to confirm that.

Paul's activities led to a riot in the city of Ephesus. Demetrius, who made silver shrines of the goddess Artemis and brought in a lot of trade for the local businesspeople, realised the consequences of Paul's good tidings. He called the craftsmen together and workers in related occupations and said, 'You know, my friends, we receive a good income from this business. And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray many people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that gods made by human hands are no gods at all. There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited and that the goddess herself will be robbed of her divine majesty.' When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting, 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!' Soon, the whole city was in an uproar (Acts 19:23-29). A mob seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's travelling companions from Macedonia, and brought them to an assembly in a theatre.

A city clerk managed to quiet the crowd in the theatre. He said, 'Fellow Ephesians, does not the world know that the city of Ephesus is the guardian of the temple of Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven? Since these facts are undeniable, you should calm down and not do anything rash. You have brought these men here though they have neither robbed temples nor blasphemed our goddess. If Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a grievance against anybody, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls. They can press charges. If there is anything further you want to bring up, it must be settled in a legal assembly. As it is, we are in danger of being charged with rioting because of what happened today. In that case, we would not be able to account for this commotion since there is no reason for it.' After he had said this, he dismissed the assembly (Acts 19:35-41). More upheavals were to come in the following centuries.

**Contending versions of Christianity**

During the first centuries, there were several versions of Christianity. It points to contentious issues suggesting early Christian beliefs differ from Christianity today. Christianity as it is today is not what it originally was. Hence, the alternative views might be closer to the original faith in some aspects. The most well-known deviant groups were the Nazarenes, the Marcionists, the Ebionites, and the Arians:

- The Nazarenes continued to observe the Jewish religious laws. Jesus didn't intend to abolish them. It was Paul who came up with that idea.
- The Marcionists preached that the benevolent God of the Gospel who sent Jesus Christ into the world as the saviour is the true Supreme Being as opposed to the evil creator God of the Old Testament. And indeed, the Creator may not be the deity the Jews imagined.
- The Ebionites did not believe that Jesus was divine, nor did they think that he was born from a virgin. That is probably also true.
- The Arians claimed that Jesus Christ, even though he was the Son of God, did not exist before Creation. That is correct if he was Adam, the Son of Eve.
Christianity was in a state of flux. That began to change once the Roman Emperor Constantine made Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire. Constantine invited all the bishops in the Roman Empire to the First Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. It was the first effort to create a uniform Christian doctrine. More efforts followed. The Roman state promoted the official teachings of the Church. Consequently, other strains of Christianity faded into obscurity.

The Gospels of the New Testament date from between 70 and 100 AD, more than forty years after Jesus preached. The Apostles Mark, Luke, Matthew, and John never wrote them. The Apostles were uneducated Aramaic-speaking Jews, while the authors were Greek-speaking educated Christians who were not eyewitnesses. Scholars believe Mark, Luke, and Matthew are collections of stories that circulated among early Christians. The author of the Gospel of Luke even says so (Luke 1:1-4).

Whenever someone retells a story, details change, new episodes appear, parts disappear, and the story might become more spectacular. And so, the Gospels likely do not accurately tell what happened. Several letters in the New Testament have unknown authors, even though the letters claim otherwise. And we don't have the original texts of the New Testament. The oldest copies date from centuries later. Scholars have used these copies to reconstruct the original texts as much as possible.

**Paul's perspective**

Paul must have known more than his epistles reveal. He became a follower of Jesus early on. Paul came to know Jesus' disciples, who were first-hand witnesses of the events that had taken place. But he remained silent about what had transpired. That silence is telling. Dealing with the facts and deciding what to do may take time and emotional struggles. During emotional struggles, people sometimes become better writers. Paul's poem about love is one of the most memorable poems ever written (1 Corinthians 13).

Paul had help, but it is fair to say he invented Christianity as we know it. He was a knowledgeable scholar of the Jewish scriptures. Paul might have tried to bring his epiphany and the beliefs of Jesus' followers in line with the Jewish religion and scriptures. He chose to obscure the most controversial issues, like God's gender and Her marriage to Jesus. And that made Christianity such a peculiar religion. His perspective may stand between us and the original teachings of Christianity. Uncovering it may bring us closer to the truth.
How Jesus became God

Religion in the time of Jesus

Before he was born, a visitor from heaven told his mother that her son would be divine. Unusual signs in the heavens accompanied his birth. As an adult, he left his home to become a travelling preacher. He told everyone not to be concerned about earthly lives and material goods but to live for the spiritual and eternal. He gathered several followers who believed he was the Son of God. He did miracles, healed the sick, cast out demons, and raised the dead. He aroused opposition among the ruling authorities, and they put him on trial. After he died, he appeared to some of his followers, who later wrote books about him. This story is not about Jesus of Nazareth, but Apollonius of Tyana, Bart Ehrman tells us in his book How Jesus Became God. In those times, it was not as unusual to call someone the son of a god as it is today.

The parallels between Jesus of Nazareth and Apollonius of Tyana are striking. In ancient times, there was no chasm between the divine and the earthly realm. Critics of Christianity used these similarities to question and mock Christianity. The miracles attributed to Jesus were not exceptional either. Other men allegedly did similar deeds. Legends about people spring up from time to time. People claim that Elvis still lives and that they have seen him. Was Elvis resurrected? So, who is to say that Christians did not make up the tales about the miracles Jesus did? The gospels contain contradictions, and scholars believe Christians have modified, embellished or invented these stories. The authors never intended them to be an exact account of what happened. Their use was to spread the good news about Jesus. Finding out the truth later can be an arduous task. And success is not guaranteed. It has been the work of biblical scholars for centuries.

In Greek and Roman mythology, gods had sex with human beings and begot godlike children. For example, the Greek god Zeus had a son with Alcmena, who bore a godlike son, Hercules. Miraculous and virgin births also occurred. For instance, in Roman mythology, the mommy of the founders of Rome, Romulus and Remus, was a virgin. Greek mythology also includes a few virgin births. Leaders claimed to be a son of the gods. Julius Caesar said he was a descendant of the goddess Venus. Of Alexander the Great, claims circulated that his father was the Greek supreme deity Zeus. Kings in the ancient world often claimed to be descendants of the gods. That gave them legitimacy, for who dares to go against the will of the gods? Jewish kings were also called Sons of God. If Jesus called himself the Son of God, he could have meant he was king of the Jews. And it was seen that way by the Jewish and Roman authorities.

The Jewish deity came down in a human form as Mary Magdalene. Jesus claimed She was the reincarnation of Eve while he was Her son, Adam. They were the parents of all humanity. It was a recipe for theological mayhem that Christians later succeeded in resolving by making Christianity incomprehensible. The deification of Christ would not have occurred in the pure monotheist Jewish tradition. But educated, Hellenistic Jews
were open to new thoughts. Christianity also had non-Jewish followers who had no problem with the all-powerful Creatrix marrying the eternal godlike human Jesus. After the Romans levelled the Jewish temple and Jesus' return had not materialised, Christianity also had to compete with the Roman emperor cult that worshipped Roman emperors as gods, making some scholars today believe it is the reason why Jesus became divine in Christian thinking. An inscription dedicated to Caesar Augustus from Halicarnassus reads:

*Since the eternal and deathless nature of the universe has perfected its immense benefits to humankind in granting us, as a supreme benefit for our happiness and welfare, Caesar Augustus, Father of his own Fatherland, divine Rome, Zeus Paternal, and Saviour of the whole human race, in whom Providence has not only fulfilled but even surpassed the prayers of all men: land and sea are at peace, cities flourish under the reign of law, in mutual harmony and prosperity; each is at the very acme of fortune and abounding in wealth; filling all humankind with glad hopes for the future, and with contentment over the present; it is fitting to honour the divinity with public games and with statues, with sacrifices and with hymns.*

**Intentional obscurity**

The gospels date from decades after Jesus' disappearance, which makes them unreliable historical sources. Scholars believe the gospels partially describe what Jesus said and did. Much is plausible, given the time and place in which he lived. The gospels also tell us things Christians would not have made up because it undermines their teachings. For instance, John the Baptist baptised Jesus. The one who baptises is spiritually superior to the one receiving the baptism, so Christians did not make it up. To deal with this uncomfortable factoid, Christians might have invented that John said someone more powerful than him would come whose sandals he was not worthy to touch (Mark 1:7-8, Matthew 3:11, Luke 3:16, John 1:26-27). Parts of the Gospels appear copied from earlier texts now lost. If these sources were decades older, fewer errors might have crept in, as written texts do not change as much as oral stories during copying.

Paul knew several first-hand witnesses, so he had insider knowledge. He could have written about what transpired but did not, at least as far as we know. And so, the obscurity surrounding Jesus and his relationship with God could be intentional. The first three gospels are remarkably similar. Scholars believe the sources for the Gospels of Matthew and Luke are the Gospel of Mark and another text with the sayings of Jesus. They have an unclear origin and appear not written by people close to Jesus. But there may have been an insider account that survived. After several revisions and additions, it became included in the Gospel of John. And that might be why this Gospel is so remarkably different. The reasons to believe this require a separate chapter.

The Gospels say that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and called God Father. That looks like a close relationship with God. To Jesus, being the Son of God meant more than merely being king of the Jews. In The Parable of the Ten Virgins, the kingdom of heaven compares to a wedding where the bridegroom was a long time in coming (Matthew 25:1-13). All the synoptic Gospels hint at Jesus being the bridegroom. The Romans convicted Jesus for claiming to be king of the Jews. In the Jewish understanding, the king of the
Jews is a son of God. But Jesus might have believed himself to be Adam, the eternal Son of God, and perhaps for that reason, also king of the Jews.

The scriptures as an obstacle

The Jewish religion and its scriptures cloud our understanding. To understand God, we must see this universe as the product of an advanced humanoid civilisation to entertain one of its members. And so, there could be more to the mysterious apocalyptic prophet who felt a close relationship with God 2,000 years ago. After all, he started a religion with over two billion followers today. Christianity began as a branch of Judaism, a religion defined by scriptures. Their scriptures outline how Jews, Christians and Muslims see the owner of the universe. But they look through glasses covered with dust. Most of their scriptures distract us from the underlying truth.

Christians say that God is love. Christianity paints a different picture of God than Judaism and Islam, which present us with a vengeful warrior God. Many religious people think the scriptures are infallible. So, how can we explain the discrepancies if the God of Judaism, Christianity and Islam is the same? Paul likely went to great lengths to align Christianity with existing Jewish doctrine. Paul and his helpers obscured the most controversial parts of the new religion by making cryptic references to the Jewish scriptures. Had Jesus preached anywhere else, Christianity would have been an entirely different religion because the scriptures didn't limit the possibilities.

Biblical scholars reason from what they can establish from historical sources, while Christians believe the Jewish deity Yahweh is Jesus' father. Both see Jesus within a Jewish context. Jesus also looked at himself in this way. That may obscure things as Yahweh is the imagined deity of the Jews. It may be better to view Yahweh as the cloak behind which our Creatrix hides. The most pressing problem for Paul could have been that God is a woman who had a romantic relationship with Jesus. To suggest so was blasphemy. And so, Jesus became married to the Church like God was married to the Jewish nation. It made Jesus eternal and godlike. That was not a great leap if he was Adam, God's eternal husband.

Firstborn of all Creation

Jesus thought himself to be the reincarnation of Adam. Adam was God's son (Luke 3:38) and Jesus the firstborn of Creation (Romans 8:29, Colossians 1:15, Hebrews 1:6, 12:23). These words relate to the Jewish scriptures. They can also be cryptic references to Adam being born first as the son of Eve and Jesus being the reincarnation of Adam. The phrase born of God (John 1:13) relates to Eve giving birth to humanity. The context of the Jewish religion helped to construct a cover story.

In traditional agricultural societies, the firstborn son was crucial for the inheritance of land and the leadership of the family clan. The Jews were no exception. The theme occurs on
numerous occasions in the Jewish Bible. The story of Jacob and Esau is well-known. King David was God's firstborn son (Psalm 89:27).

The Jewish nation Israel is God's firstborn son (Exodus 4:22). Israel is also God's Bride (Isaiah 54:5, Hosea 2:7, Joel 1:8). It provided Paul with a theological escape because God married His firstborn son Israel. God marrying Her firstborn son Jesus in a romantic relationship seemed inappropriate. And so, Jesus may have married the Church instead. In this way, Jesus became like God, and the Christians became Jesus' people, just like the Jews were God's people. And that made Jesus like God.

Jesus as God

That is not as problematic as it might seem. Many Jews believe there are two powers in heaven. In Genesis, God speaks in the plural, 'Let us make humankind in our image.' It may be a relic of the polytheist past of the Jews when they still believed the gods created the universe. When they became monotheists around 400 BC, most of the Jewish Bible, the Tanakh, was already written. In a simulation created by an advanced humanoid civilisation to entertain one of its members, the gods in plural creating us also makes sense. The beings of this civilisation are the gods, and the owner of this universe is God. The monotheist Jews did not see it this way, so this phrase fuelled speculation about a godlike figure working alongside God.

In the Jewish Bible, God appeared from time to time. For instance, some people saw God sitting on a throne (Exodus 24:9-10) while no one has ever seen God and lived (Exodus 33:20). Others saw the Angel of the Lord, who is also God, and survived. Abraham and Hagar are among those who have seen the Angel, and the Jewish Bible then tells us that they have seen God. Hence, the Angel of the Lord is God but not God himself. Otherwise, they would not have survived. And so there must be two gods, an invisible all-powerful Creator and his visible godlike assistant. It is an example of the assumption of infallibility of the scriptures combined with strict logic leading us to the absurd.

Jesus could be the Angel of the Lord and the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15). It is contrived as it is not what the authors of the Jewish Bible intended. The Angel of the Lord did not say to Abraham, 'I am Jesus, God's one and only son.' He could have done so if he was. That would have saved us a lot of theological troubles as the Jews would have known that Jesus was the Messiah. Christians found other references to Jesus as well, for instance (Daniel 7:13-14),

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom will never be destroyed."

That must be Jesus, Christians claim. Jews disagree.
The road to Trinity

The theological problem Christians had to solve was that Jesus was the Son of God and godlike, while there was only one God. It is a logical inconsistency that kept Christian thinkers busy for centuries until they agreed on the Trinity. This most peculiar invention became a matter of faith, something a devout Christian would not question. As Christianity is a scriptural religion, the justification must be in the scriptures. The exact history and justification are cloudy, but giving a plausible explanation is possible.

The Gospel of John starts with the following sentence, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' The Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Word was Jesus as the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. And so, Jesus is God, and he existed before Creation. But he is not God the Father but with God the Father. God consists of the Father and the Son, while God is one. If you try to explain it logically, you run into difficulties.

There was a theological solution. In the ancient world, pagan gods sometimes came in threes or triads. The Indian religion has the group of Brahmā, Siva, and Viṣṇu, and the Egyptians had Osiris, Isis, and Horus. It was called Trinity. It required adding another component to the mixture to arrive at three ingredients and find a theological justification. The idea of the Trinity circulated among Christians as early as 150 AD but became official in the fourth century AD. So, what could be the scriptural justification for the Trinity? Christians found it in Isaiah (Isaiah 9:6),

For to us, a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Some see a reference to the Trinity here. Counsellor is a title for the Holy Spirit (John 14:26), the Father is God, and the Prince of Peace is Jesus. That is far-fetched. But there is a better one. Some see the Trinity when the Jewish Bible refers to God's Word (Psalm 33:6), His Spirit (Isaiah 61:1), and Wisdom (Proverbs 9:1). But what could be the theological justification?

In the first century AD, Greek philosophy influenced Jewish scholars like Paul. Plato claimed ideas are the basis of knowledge. Thus, ideas, not physical objects, are the building blocks of reality. In Platonic thinking, the world of ideas is superior. Platonists think that a spirit can use words to produce matter. God is a pure spirit, the highest being. In Judaism, God created all things using words. Hence, words existed before Creation.

The Jewish philosopher Philo lived at the same time as Jesus. He claimed the Word is the highest of all beings, the image of God according to which and by which the universe receives its order. Philo called the Word the second God. But if there is one God, the Word must be part of God. The author of the Gospel of John took that idea, and it starts with, 'In the beginning was the Word.' Here, the Word was Jesus, so Jesus existed before Creation. And that became a teaching of Christianity.

In Proverbs, Wisdom says that she was the first thing God created. And then God created everything else with the help of Wisdom alongside Him (Proverbs 8:22-25). She is a reflection of the eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of His
goodness (Wisdom 7:25-26). Wisdom is female because it is a female term in Greek. Here, Wisdom plays a similar role as the Word. She was present when God made the world and is beside God on his throne (Wisdom 9:9-10). Hence, Wisdom was also extant before Creation. And so, you have the Word, the Wisdom, and God existing before creation. If the Word had become Jesus, Wisdom could have become the Holy Spirit. And so we arrive at the Trinity.

Virgin birth

Jesus' birth from a virgin could be a deliberate fabrication rather than a myth that sprouted up among Christians. Virgin births are not a theme in Judaism and do not appear in the Jewish scriptures, so Christians may have had a pressing reason to introduce the idea. That Eve was the mother of Adam contradicts the Jewish scriptures. So, why not say Jesus was born from a virgin instead? After all, Jesus was Adam, and Eve was a virgin when she gave birth to Adam. And God's name was Mary, just like Jesus' mother, while God was Jesus' Mother. That was very convenient indeed.

Early Christians may have understood Jesus' virgin birth from Mary as code for Eve being the Mother of Adam. Isaiah wrote that a young woman would give birth to a son as a sign that God would destroy Judah's enemies (Isaiah 7:14). Isaiah addressed King Ahaz in the eighth century BC and did not think of Jesus, who was to come seven centuries later. The Greek translation of the Jewish Bible available in the first century AD translated a young woman as a virgin. The author of the Gospel of Matthew saw it as a prophecy of Jesus' virgin birth. By then, it already was a circulating story.

Logical issues leading to an arcane theology

Christianity started as a Jewish sect, so early Christians based their religion on the Jewish scriptures. And that created problems. The facts contradicted the scriptures, for instance, God being a woman who can take a human form. The efforts to resolve these logical difficulties helped turn Jesus into God. It should not surprise us that early Christians disagreed on the godlike nature of Christ and that most Jews did not buy into it.

If Jesus had preached in Egypt instead and had claimed his wife was the goddess Isis, the all-powerful Creatrix of the universe and that he was the reincarnation of her son Horus, there may still be records of his teachings. Egypt was a polytheist nation that could have adopted another colourful cult alongside the existing ones.

The Jews were monotheists with established scriptures. It also made Christianity uncompromisingly monotheistic. Converts had to renounce all false gods. That allowed Christianity to wipe out the other religions and religiously cleanse the Roman Empire. That almost looks like a plan. And if this universe comes with an all-powerful owner who uses the God of Abraham as Her cover, it could have been.
The Gospel of John

Strikingly different

The Gospel of John is strikingly distinct from the other gospels. In the first three Gospels, Jesus appears human, even though enigmatic. In the Gospel of John, he appears godlike. The Gospel of John is more recent than the other gospels, and biblical scholars believe Christians had deified Jesus by that time. Only that is not correct. Christians worshipped Jesus as a godlike creature very early on. In the Epistle to the Philippians, Paul cites a poem stating Jesus is in the form of God (Philippians 2:6-11). Scholars believe it is an older poem dating from the earliest days of Christianity.

Other scholars believe there had been a separate Johannine community in Syria, with the Gospel of John and the letters of John as its scriptures. These writings point to an intense devotion to Jesus as the definitive revelation of God with whom they were in close contact through the Holy Spirit. Only the Johannine scriptures use the phrase born of God indicating God could be a Mother. Scholars think the Odes of Solomon, which include the Ode 19 with the feminine attributes of God the Father, relate to the Gospel of John and the Dead Sea scrolls. The author might have been an Essene convert to the Johannine community.

The Johannine community was distinct from the Jewish Christians. Its writings reflect anti-Jewish sentiments. To Jews, it is strange and blasphemous to say that God is a woman, Jesus is godlike and that they married. To people from the surrounding cultures, such as Greek, Roman and Egyptian, it is not unusual to worship female deities, deify humans and believe that gods mate with humans. To his non-Jewish followers, Christ was godlike, not a human Jewish prophet. Otherwise, they would not have followed him. What business would they have had with a human Jewish prophet?

At first, most Christians were Jewish. Their religion would not have permitted them to see God as a woman and Christ as a godlike figure. But Christianity had non-Jewish converts very early on. And educated Hellenistic Jews were often open to innovation because of their contact with surrounding cultures. Around 42 AD, a group of Christians founded a church in Antioch in the Roman province of Syria, where the Johannine community supposedly was located. They were thrown out of the synagogue and became refugees fleeing persecution, possibly because of their views concerning God and the godlike nature of Christ.

The author of the Gospel of John wrote in good Greek and used a sophisticated theology with seven signs and Jesus seven times saying, 'I am.' He might have used several sources, such as the Gospel of Mark and Luke, and documents that don't exist any more. It is unlikely that a disciple compiled the final version. But one of the primary sources could have been much older, possibly an insider account written by a disciple. Alternatively, the work developed inside a tradition that understood the nature of the relationship between
God and Jesus as the eternal marriage of Eve and Adam. There is not much certainty as arguments run into contradictions. For instance, the Gospel of John indicates Jesus’ ministry lasted three years, suggesting more detailed historical knowledge of the original author. But the number three has theological significance as it is the heavenly number. And so, the author may have rearranged the story accordingly. The Gospel of John also says a disciple wrote it, which could be a remnant of a source. The other Gospels do not say that, and Luke notes that his account was handed down to him by others. But the last chapter of John featuring this statement could be a later addition, as the previous chapter already has a closing.

Hence, the close relationship between God and Jesus, and Jesus believing himself to be eternal, likely has a historical origin. It agrees with Jesus being Adam, the everlasting husband of God, the Alpha and the Omega. It would make him both human and godlike. Jews had difficulties with this because of their religion, but others did not have that limitation. The Gospel of John has undergone several redactions. If one of the sources is an insider account or the Johannine community did not have the theological restrictions of Judaism, the Gospel of John could reveal more and be more historically accurate than the other gospels or represent the earliest beliefs more accurately, most notably after identifying and eliminating these redactions. John could thus be the most revealing about the nature of the relationship between God and Christ. It is not what most biblical scholars believe, but it could explain a few things. And that is why it might be so.

**Platonic birth**

The beginning of John tells us nothing about the early life of Jesus. Instead, it gives a creation myth in abstract wording. Why write an alternative creation story? Does Genesis not suffice? Not if Jesus was Adam, and Adam the Son of Eve, who was God and the Mother of All the Living. The following phrases are noteworthy, 'In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind,' and, 'He gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.'

Jesus gave us life and the right to become children of God. If he was Adam, he fathered humankind, and because his wife was Eve, we are all children of God, at least if you believe that we all descend from Eve and Adam. The Quran says, "Truly, the likeness of Jesus, in God's sight, is as Adam's likeness, He created him of dust, then said He unto him, 'Be,' and he was." (Quran 3:59) We can speculate that the beginning of John might at first have started with Eve giving birth to Adam and taking him as Her husband.

That did not agree with the account of Creation in Genesis. The scribes may have devised this Platonic formula to obfuscate the details. And Platonic thinking is abstract. It is about ideas, not facts. That was indeed convenient. Apart from the theological controversy, there may have been another reason. Eve marrying Her son Adam carries a lewd suggestion. That may have caused problems in early Christian communities.

In the first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul writes, 'It is reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate: A man is sleeping with his father's wife. And you are proud!' (1 Corinthians 5:1-2). The scribes may later have watered down this controversial fragment so this man may have slept with his mother.
After all, it is sexual immorality that even pagans do not tolerate, so it was one of the worst possible sins. And the Christians in Corinth were proud of it, which is a remarkable response. Perhaps this man believed he followed the example of Christ.

And so, under the influence of Platonic thinking, the Word became flesh in the form of Jesus (John 1:14). The phrasing born of God suggests the original author knew God was a Mother. The author affirms this by expounding on that birth. When arguing with Jesus, the Pharisee Nicodemus noted that you cannot enter a second time into your mother's womb to be born again (John 3:4). Nicodemus may have correctly understood what Jesus meant, which is that Christians are figuratively born of God's womb and that God is a Mother. Jesus gave it a spiritual meaning in his answer, 'No one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.' (John 3:5)

The wedding

There was a wedding in Galilee (John 2:1-10). Jesus was there, as were his mother and his disciples. When the wine was gone, his mother told Jesus there was no more wine. That would not have been his concern unless he was the Bridegroom. Then Jesus answered, 'Woman, why do you involve me? My hour has not yet come.' It could mean that Jesus was not the Bridegroom and was about to be married too. He called his mother 'woman'. The reason might be that he considered God his Mother. Jesus started doing miracles at this wedding by turning water into wine. Perhaps he became the Christ through this wedding. Hence, it may have been his wedding, and the scribes may have changed the narrative to make it appear that it was not.

Then John comes with a statement not found in the other Gospels, "A person can receive only what is given them from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said: 'I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.' The Bride belongs to the Bridegroom. The friend who attends the Bridegroom waits and listens for him and is full of joy when he hears the Bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less." (John 3:27-30) Jesus was the Messiah because he was the Bridegroom in a heavenly marriage. The other Gospels also indicate Jesus was the Bridegroom (Matthew 9:15, Mark 2:19 and Luke 5:34).

I and the Father are one

Jesus called God Father, making himself equal with God, so the Jews wanted to persecute him, the Gospel of John says (John 5:16-18). Jesus made other claims in this vein. If the Gospel of John is a redacted insider account, these assertions may reflect Jesus' words. If Jesus believed himself to be Adam, he could have said, 'Before Abraham was born, I was.' And not, 'Before Abraham was born, I am.' (John 8:58). The wording 'I am' in this phrase implies the godlike nature of Christ and existence before creation. It refers to God saying to Moses, 'I Am Who I Am [Who Always Has Been And Will Always Be],' and, "This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I Am has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:14) The wording in John implies that Jesus is God, always existing, the alpha and the omega.
Then comes an intriguing assertion, 'I and the Father are one.' (John 10:30) Jesus claimed to be a god, so the Jews wanted to stone him for blasphemy (John 10:33). But Jesus may have meant something else. Marriage is a way to become one with another person (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:4-6). If Jesus had implied that he was married to God, it would still have been blasphemy to the Jews. If Mary Magdalene had remained in the background to let Jesus do Her bidding, and Jesus believed himself to be Adam from whom all of humanity descends, Jesus may have said, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Mother except through me.' (John 14:6)

Jesus' claims caused conflict among the Jews. On the one hand, he did miracles, but on the other hand, he offended the Jews by making outrageous claims. The Jews lived under Roman rule. The Romans did not care about someone claiming to be God's husband or any other particularity that offended the Jews. For Pilate, it was hard to bring up a charge against him (John 19:4). The way to get Jesus convicted was by claiming he was a rebel leader. Claiming to be a son of God implies being King of the Jews. And that was the offence for which the Romans convicted him (John 19:19).

Love is a central theme, 'As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.' (John 15:9-12) That is an unusual amount of love. If Jesus was God's husband, you can see why he said it. That brings us to the loving and intimate relationship that Mary Magdalene and Jesus may have had. The Gospel of John features the anonymous beloved disciple who, at the end of the document, claims to have written it. There has been speculation this disciple was Mary Magdalene.

The beloved disciple

The mysterious, beloved disciple appears only in the Gospel of John. So, why is it so secretive about the beloved disciple? If the scribes had removed the marriage between Mary Magdalene and Jesus from the Gospel, they might have changed Mary Magdalene's role to the beloved disciple. To become the beloved disciple, She had to take over Simon Peter's role, who was Jesus' favourite disciple. Hence, they created this separate disciple from thin air by extracting him from Simon Peter. That might be why this disciple acted like a shadow of Simon Peter throughout the story, except for the scene at the cross. If the beloved disciple had been Mary Magdalene, that would still raise questions regarding the nature of their relationship or raise women to a position of authority. So, in a later redaction, the scribes may have made the beloved disciple an anonymous person separate from Mary Magdalene and suggested he was Jesus' brother.

This perspective proves to be illuminating. Look at the following fragment, "Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there and the disciple he loved standing nearby, he said to her, 'Woman, here is your son,' and to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' From that time on, this disciple took her into his home." (John 19:25-27) If you take the text literally, the beloved disciple was Jesus' brother. Jesus' mother was also his mother. That
might also explain why he took her into his home. The confusion becomes all the greater as Jesus supposedly had two apostles named James. One was Jesus' brother, while the other was John's brother.

The fragment also says four women were near the cross, suggesting no men were present. And so, the beloved disciple must be one of these four women. The most likely candidate would be Mary Magdalene. Like John, Mark and Matthew suggest only women followers were near the cross (Mark 15:40, Matthew 27:55–56). Luke is less specific and says all who knew him, including the women (Luke 23:48). That contradicts Mark and Matthew stating that all the disciples had fled (Mark 14:50, Matthew 26:56). John does not mention the fleeing of the male disciples but does not note their presence either.

Perhaps Jesus said to Mary Magdalene, 'Mother, here is your son.' And then to his birth mother, 'Here is your Mother.' A few arguments could support this view. First, it is odd not to say mother but, 'Woman, here is your son.' Second, it is more likely that Mary Magdalene took Jesus' birth mother into Her home than a male disciple, unless he was Jesus' brother. The Gospels mention a group of female disciples travelling with Jesus (Luke 8:1-3). And they were a separate group led by Mary Magdalene, and they took care of each other. Third, how could Jesus tell a disciple, 'Here is your mother.' After all, it was Jesus' mother. Fourth, by all accounts, Simon Peter was Jesus' favourite apostle. For instance, Jesus had asked him to care for the sheep (John 21:15-18). Only he supposedly had fled the crucifixion scene and was not present.

According to Paul, Simon Peter saw the resurrected Jesus first, and then Jesus appeared to the other disciples (1 Corinthians 15:4-6). It could be a statement of faith handed over to Paul. It was an early belief dating only a few years after Jesus' death. And it agrees with Simon Peter being Jesus' favourite disciple. The Gospel of John tells a different story. It claims that Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw the stone removed from the entrance. She then ran to Simon Peter and the beloved disciple and said, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have put him!' So Peter and the beloved disciple went to the tomb. The beloved disciple came there first but did not go in. Then Simon Peter arrived and went into the tomb (John 20:1-6).

Then the beloved disciple also went in and saw and believed (John 20:8). The beloved disciple saw and came to faith, but two men were inside. Remarkably, it is not Simon Peter who saw and believed, even though he was the first to go inside. The beloved disciple could be a later addition. If so, Simon Peter saw and came to faith first. An empty tomb alone would not have made him think Jesus had risen. He may have seen Jesus there, apparently alive. The beloved disciple acts as a shadow of Simon Peter. The Gospel of John now tells Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene first (John 20:11-18). The following steps of editing seem plausible:

1. In the original story, Mary Magdalene told Simon Peter, the disciple Jesus loved, that Jesus had disappeared from the tomb. Simon Peter went in, saw Jesus there, and believed, just like Paul says.
2. Mary Magdalene became the beloved disciple, so Jesus had to appear to Her first. And so, Simon Peter saw and believed. The scribes only had to remove the name Jesus there. Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene in a newly added section.
3. Mary Magdalene and the beloved disciple became separate persons. So, Mary Magdalene spoke to Simon Peter and the beloved disciple, and both went into the
tomb, and the beloved disciple saw and believed. Mary Magdalene remained the one who saw Jesus first.

After this episode, Jesus appeared to the disciples (John 20:19-23). Paul tells the same in 1 Corinthians 15, suggesting this reconstructed account reflects the earliest beliefs. Mary Magdalene may have set in motion the resurrection beliefs by inviting Simon Peter to the tomb, and if She was God, She knew what he was about to find there.

The beloved disciple enters the story at the Last Supper when he asks Jesus who is about to betray him, "After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, 'Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me.' His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, 'Ask him which one he means.' Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, 'Lord, who is it?'" (John 13:21-25) Simon Peter was the one who wanted to know. And so, he may originally have been the disciple who asked Jesus who was about to betray him.

The final chapter of the Gospel of John mentions a rumour amongst believers that the beloved disciple would not die. Jesus believed some of his disciples would die while others would live to see his return (Mark 8:34-38, 9:1). In John, Jesus said, 'Very truly I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never see death.' And so, other explanations are possible than the one that follows now. The wording is most peculiar (John 21:20-23):

Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the Supper and had said, 'Lord, who is going to betray you?') When Peter saw him, he asked, 'Lord, what about him?" Jesus answered, 'If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.' Because of this, the rumour spread among the believers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, 'If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?'

The text implies the rumour was that the beloved disciple would not die at all, not merely until Jesus returned. Otherwise, the text would not note it so explicitly. Why might this disciple not die at all? Why only the beloved disciple? And why mention the rumour and try to dispel it? The rumour becomes understandable if Mary Magdalene was God and had become the beloved disciple in an earlier redaction. Simon Peter might have discussed Mary Magdalene's immortality with Jesus. After all, Simon Peter was Jesus' favourite disciple. However, the last chapter of John, where this scene takes place, could be a later addition as the previous chapter already has a closing.

Here again, the beloved disciple appears as a shadow of Simon Peter, as he did at the Supper and the entrance to the tomb. The beloved disciple allegedly wrote this document (John 20:24), but that is at odds with the third-person usage and the supposed modifications. It is, however, possible, or even likely, that an insider wrote parts of the original text or that someone put the testimony of a disciple into writing. Whatever position you take, you run into contradictions. The history of the text is complicated and there have been several redactions.
The validity of the Gospel

The resolution of the contradictions leads to another conclusion. After eliminating the supposed redactions concerning the beloved disciple, John agrees with the statement of faith handed over to Paul (1 Corinthians 15:4-6). Thus, the source of the Gospel of John might correctly reflect the earliest beliefs regarding the resurrection. That might make the Gospel of John the most reliable account of what transpired. Jesus appeared to at least some of his disciples shortly after the crucifixion. They may have altered the story for religious reasons, for instance, by making Jesus appear after three days to all disciples. But you can't imagine Christianity without Jesus appearing to some of them. On the issue of resurrection, the Gospel of John is true insofar as it reflects those earliest beliefs.

Historians and biblical scholars doubt the resurrection and the miracles Jesus performed because they can't assume they happened. These miracles go against the laws of nature, while many parts of the Bible are inaccurate or fictional. In virtual reality, miracles can occur. And a physical body is as virtual as a ghost appearance. If the Gospel of John is a redacted insider account, it can be more accurate or more telling than most biblical scholars and historians nowadays assume. John could also be more accurate or more telling than the other gospels as they aren't insider accounts and come from a tradition hostile to the idea of God being a woman who married Jesus.

Remarkably absent in John is the story of Jesus' transfiguration. It is present in Mark, Matthew and Luke. If John is more accurate, the transfiguration could be a myth and the resurrection a fact. To Christians, the transfiguration is evidence of the divinity of Jesus. The reason for inventing the transfiguration story may have been to make Jesus fulfil an earlier prediction of the prophet Malachi. But there was no prophecy indicating the resurrection of the Messiah. The Christians had to make something out of it. After all, they saw it as evidence that Jesus was eternal and Adam as he claimed, so this unbiblical event proved that Jesus was the Messiah.

John does not mention breaking the bread and sharing the wine during the Last Supper. The body and blood of Christ, representing the new covenant, are part of the sacrificial lamb imagery that Paul may have introduced. Perhaps Jesus never said, 'Take it; this is my body,' nor, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.' It is outside the Jewish tradition and part of the sacrificial lamb imagery. John is the most outside the Jewish tradition. If it had happened, John more likely would have mentioned it, and the other gospels more likely would have left it out.

It may be impossible to uncover all the redactions. The original text could date from decades before 70 AD if a disciple had been the author. The final version dates from around 100 AD, so it has the perspective of that era. After the Romans had destroyed the Jewish temple in 70 AD, Christians realised that Jesus might not return anytime soon. The character of Christianity changed accordingly, from expecting Jesus' return with power and glory to having a personal bond with Jesus that gives access to eternal life. The Gospel of John reflects this change in outlook.

Figuratively speaking
In the Gospel of John, Jesus does not always speak in clear and precise terms. For instance, 'I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you.' (John 16:12-14) Muslims see these words as a prediction of the coming of Muhammad. But to make that argument convincing, the wording should have been more precise.

Chapter 16 of the Gospel of John excels in vagueness. It contains a remark that appears insignificant between all the obscurity but might be there for a reason, 'Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father.' (John 16:25) Why should Jesus not speak plainly about God? The scribes who modified this gospel may have known what they were doing and realised the truth would come out one day. And that day may have come.
Satan and Judgement Day

Satan has always been God's trustworthy servant. He began his career as a serpent in Eden and later took charge of the furnaces that burn the evildoers for eternity. His task was to make God look good. We like to believe God cares for us, but prayers often remain unanswered while bad things occur, such as misfortune and nasty neighbours. How can an almighty good God allow this to happen? The obvious answer is that there is no god, or God does not care. That is not what we like to hear. Once the Jews had done away with Baal, Astarte and the others and switched to monotheism, they had to address this issue.

Suddenly, they had no one to blame for their misfortune except themselves and their nasty neighbours, who disagreed with the Jews for inexplicable reasons. How could that happen? After all, the Jews were God's chosen people. If things went wrong, it was time to repent, prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah claimed. There usually was some idolatry or depravity occurring in their midst. That must have made God angry, the prophets proposed. But even when the Israelites prayed relentlessly, lived according to the Ten Commandments, and did all the prescribed rituals and offerings, things often did not improve. Who was responsible?

The Jews dedicated an entire bible book, the Book of Job, to this issue, dubbed the problem of evil. Job was a particularly pious and virtuous man who was doing well. But on a fateful day, Satan challenged God by claiming that Job's devoutness was due to his prosperity. His belief was insincere, Satan argued. God could not allow the mere possibility of insincerity and agreed to test Job and allowed Satan to ruin Job. But even after the loss of his possessions, his children, and finally his health, Job still refused to curse God. Job did everything God could expect of a faithful servant and even more, or so it seemed.

Job's friends tried to comfort him and figure out why he was suffering and what he could do about it. They suggested Job might have done something wrong. But Job proclaimed his innocence and complained about his fate. In the end, God showed up, telling him to shut up. His sin was hubris because he thought he did not deserve to suffer. Everything happens for a reason. It wasn't a satisfactory answer, so Satan had to take up an enlarged role and do the dirty work so God's hands could remain clean. But the contradiction remains. Nothing ever happens without God willing it.

The Quran says Satan is a fallen angel named Lucifer (Iblis) who, unlike the other angels, refused to bow for Adam. The remainder of his career path is mostly the same as in the Bible. The Quran notes, 'The angels prostrated themselves, all together. Except for Satan. He refused to be among those who prostrated themselves.' (Quran 15:30-31) Then follows a conversation between God and Satan (Quran 15:32-42),

God said, 'O Satan, what kept you from being among those who prostrated themselves?'

Satan said, 'I am not about to prostrate myself before a human being, whom You created from clay, from moulded mud.'
God said, 'Then get out of here, for you are an outcast. And the curse will be upon you until the Day of Judgment.'

Satan said, 'My Lord, reprieve me until the Day they are resurrected.'

God said, 'You are of those reprieved until the Day of the time appointed.'

Satan said, 'My Lord, since You have lured me away, I will glamorise for them on earth, and I will lure them all away except for Your sincere servants among them.'

God said, 'This is a right way with Me. Over My servants you have no authority, except for the sinners who follow you. And Hell is the meeting-place for them all.'

Like in the Book of Job, God and Satan appear on speaking terms, or even better, work together on the grand scheme and discuss what to do. A Christian might ask why the angels should have prostrated themselves before Adam. But Jesus could be the reincarnation of Adam. In a world where nothing is real, Satan is as fake as we are or unicorns or Spike and Suzy. Satan is not the only red herring. The End Times are another. Suppose there will be an End Times. What can God reveal about it? And what is the worth of the prophecies in the Bible and the Quran?

The book The Virtual Universe addresses the consequences of predestination. A prophecy is like a premonition. Why can fortune-tellers sometimes make accurate predictions? And why are their predictions unreliable at the same time? The answer is that it is impossible to know the future. If I know I will have a car accident tomorrow, I will remain home, and the accident will not happen. Predictions can influence the future unless they are vague or hidden. In 1914, no one could have guessed that the licence plate number on Franz Ferdinand’s death car referred to the end date of the upcoming world war. And so, there could be signs demonstrating someone knows

Premonitions and accurate predictions require something more than just predestination. They presuppose foreknowledge of future events, but not necessarily with the persons having these premonitions or making predictions. God knows the future and can let people make accurate guesses without knowing what will happen. And so, the prophecies of ancient Greek oracles only made sense in hindsight.

Suppose the End Times are now. Jesus prophesied there would be false messiahs before he would return. Pim Fortuyn, the Dutch maverick politician viewed himself as the Dutch Messiah. Subsequent developments placed his claim in a different and most peculiar context. And the loud noise of trumpets will herald the end times. The noisiest person on Earth today is Donald Trump. War criminals might face Judgment Day in the International Criminal Court in The Hague, in the Netherlands. But such parallels always exist. Anytime could be the End Time. We can only know in hindsight.

That is why people keep on guessing. What would the Europeans have thought in 1352 AD when the Black Death decimated their numbers? Or millions of dead fish on the shore in 2015 AD? What could it mean? 'It can't be global warming, for sure, because they made it up,' some people think, 'So, it must be the End Times.' And there is always famine, suffering of the faithful, and, of course, depravity in spades. But it is logically impossible for God to reveal precise information as that will change the future. Apart from that, it lowers
the level of suspense. The Book of Revelation thus does not say, 'Jesus and all the angels
will descend from heaven on 31 October 2022.' It is not that God did not know, but that we
should not. Hence, the Bible and the Quran are poor guides about what will happen and
when.
History is Her story I

Introducing Chief Inspector Clouseau

In the autumn of 1989, I was a student and forced to leave a dormitory because I was immature and didn't fit in. Most notably, I couldn't get along with a particular Lady. I returned to my parental home to gather courage before trying out another dormitory. There was not much to laugh about in those days except for a few episodes of Chief Inspector Jacques Clouseau aired on German television. My parents lived near the German border. And so I could see them. The German dubbing was as funny as the original.

Clouseau was inept, but he always managed to solve the mystery. Guided by a few hunches and vague clues that only made sense to him, he ignored the obvious explanations of the facts and uncovered the truth by accident. So, how could a bumbling clown like Clouseau be correct while the competent fail? The answer is that he is a fictional character in a story. The plot is that Clouseau is right in the end.

In that case, history is Her story, and the pun may be intentional. Apart from women in the Bible, God may have played other roles. How can we know who they were? That is where Clouseau comes in. We live in virtual reality, so this can be a story with a plot. And so, I could be correct. My Clouseau method of investigation produced a list of possible avatars of God. It has gaps and overlaps. Perhaps God skipped the childhood years and took over someone's role during her lifetime. So, here is the list.

Nefertiti

Insofar as we know, the Egyptian Pharaoh Akhenaten and his wife Nefertiti (1370-1330 BC) invented monotheism. They worshipped a single deity, a sun disk named Aten. They broke with the Egyptian religious tradition and tried to end the worship of other gods. That is why Nefertiti may have been an avatar of God. Worshipping the Sun makes sense. Just imagine the Sun does not come back in the morning. You can better ensure he does and sacrifice a bull every evening before sunset. Their new religion did not last. After their reign, the traditional beliefs returned. They were far ahead of their time.

Cassandane

Cyrus the Great was a Persian Emperor and one of the first multicultural rulers. He respected the customs and religions of the lands he conquered. That made it easier for him to rule such a large empire. Otherwise, he had to assimilate all the people in his realm.
into Persian culture, which would have distracted him from making more conquests. And by the way, people did not mingle as much as they do today, so cultural differences didn't cause that much trouble. Cyrus the Great was a prominent figure in history. Iranians still call him The Father. Most Iranians aren't Christians, so that doesn't cause confusion.

Cyrus also conquered Babylon. The Jews in exile caused troubles with their Zionism there, so Cyrus sent them back to Israel and gave them money to rebuild their temple. The Jews were grateful and considered him a Messiah. The fate of a Messiah is to be married to God, so his wife Cassandane (567-537 BC) could have been God in disguise. Cyrus and Cassandane loved each other very much, or that is what the historical records say. Cyrus would not have been a proper Messiah in the biblical sense if a woman had not sealed his fate. Accounts of Cyrus' demise and death diverge, but that fact is beyond dispute.

The Greek historian Herodotus noted that he died in a battle with the Massagetae, a fearsome steppe people that lived in what now is Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. To acquire the territory, Cyrus first sent an offer to marry their ruler, Queen Tomyris, a proposal she rejected. He then tried to take the Massagetae territory by military means. Tomyris challenged him to meet her forces in honourable warfare. Learning that the Massagetae were unfamiliar with wine and its intoxicating effects, Cyrus set up a poorly defended camp with plenty of it and left with his best soldiers.

The general of Tomyris's army, her son Spargapises, overran the camp with his troops. They got drunk, and Cyrus defeated them in a surprise attack and captured Spargapises, who then committed suicide. Tomyris then vowed revenge, leading a second wave of troops herself. Cyrus' forces suffered massive casualties, and he died also. Tomyris ordered the body of Cyrus brought to her, then decapitated him and dipped his head in a vessel of blood. Accounts on the matter differ, and Herodotus offered us the most colourful one, but others confirm the death of Cyrus at the hands of Tomyris.

### Olympias, mother of Alexander the Great

Olympias (376-316 BC) was the mother of Alexander the Great. Alexander's lasting legacy is the spread of Greek culture in the Mediterranean. Greek thought and culture subsequently influenced Judaism and Christianity. For example, the Word would never have become flesh without Platonic philosophy. And Christians could never be born of God 'the Father' without Greek mythology. And so, you can see how God works in ways we can't anticipate. Olympias, who was married to King Philip II of Macedonia, claimed that Alexander was the son of Zeus, the Greek supreme deity.

According to the Greek historian Plutarch, Olympias had dreamt a thunderbolt struck Her womb on the eve of Her marriage to Philip. Philip was said to have seen himself in a dream sealing up his wife's womb with a seal. And so, a virgin birth it was, or it could have been, supposedly. Plutarch offered several interpretations of these dreams, for example, that Alexander's father was Zeus, the supreme deity of the Greeks. That would have made Alexander the Son of God. If it was a virgin birth, Olympias might have been God.

Philip chose Aristotle as Alexander's tutor. Alexander and Philip fought battles together and defeated Thebes and Athens, making Macedonia the dominant power in Greece. They
then began to plan an invasion of Persia, the largest empire at the time. Philip remarried, which threatened Alexander's position as heir to the throne. A feud at the wedding made Olympias and Alexander go into exile. While attending the wedding of his daughter to Olympias' brother, Alexander I of Epirus, a captain of Philip's bodyguards assassinated him. One of the possible conspirators was Olympias. The nobles and army immediately proclaimed Alexander King at the age of twenty. In the subsequent years, Alexander conquered the entire Persian Empire and ventured into India. Alexander died young, at the age of thirty-two, possibly from poisoning.

Alexander the Great was one of the most successful conquerors in history. He became popular in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, and legends sprouted about his exploits and life that affected the Abrahamic religions. He is a significant figure in Judaism. The Christians in the Near East turned him into a saint. The Quran also mentions him and recites scraps of the legends about him. Alexander, for example, supposedly travelled to the ends of the world to build a wall to keep Gog and Magog out of civilised lands.

Alexander de Grote (Alexander the Great) was my classmate at primary school for several years. It is a remarkable coincidence. Possibly, his parents had a hilarious moment when they came up with this pun that made the most out of his last name.

**Queen Dowager Zhao**

Chinese emperors had The Mandate of Heaven, and the Emperor was the Son of Heaven. The title legitimised the rule of the Emperor. In Chinese thinking, the gods did not play a central role. Thus, being the Son of Heaven was the closest to being divine. If insurgents overthrew the Emperor and installed a new one, the old Emperor supposedly had lost the mandate, and the new Emperor had it instead. That is very pragmatic indeed. This arrangement also provided stability as it deterred potential contenders to the throne.

China's first emperor was Qin Shi Huang. He unified China for the first time around 220 BC. He was a particularly ruthless person. He had to be because he came out on top after five centuries of relentless warfare that had no equal in history. His reign did not last. Qin Shi Huang died in 210 BC while on a trip to procure an elixir of immortality from Taoist magicians, who claimed the potion was stuck on an island guarded by a sea monster. Widespread revolts ended the government of his son shortly afterwards.

A new imperial dynasty soon established itself. Qin Shi Huang's lasting legacy is not only unifying China. He also standardised writing throughout the empire and introduced a pictural rather than a phonetic script so people could read the same documents everywhere in China, even when they spoke different languages. And so, China could build a national identity around a set of writings. As a result, the idea of a unified China never perished, even when the country fragmented and warlords temporarily took over.

Qin Shi Huang's mother was Queen Dowager Zhao (280-228 BC), the wife of King Zhuangxiang of Qin. Queen Dowager Zhao was a daughter of a prominent family. She was a concubine of a merchant named Lü Buwei, who gave her to his protegé, Prince Yiren of Qin. Thanks to Lü's intervention, Prince Yiren became the ruler of the Kingdom of Qin and King Zhuangxiang. His son Qin Shi Huang succeeded him. It may well be that Queen Dowager Zhao was God in disguise, adding some justification to his title, Son of Heaven.
When my son was nine, he sometimes jokingly called himself the Emperor of China. He often ordered my wife and me. We were making a joke out of it and called him the king. But my son insisted he was the Emperor of China. 'The Emperor of China demands cheese,' he then added. An article about the first emperor of China appeared in a television magazine just when I found out this world is virtual reality. That is clue-based guessing Clouseau style.

Cleopatra

Cleopatra (69-30 BC) was the last Pharaoh of Ancient Egypt. Few women have proved to be as strong a ruler as Cleopatra, even though She ultimately failed, causing Egypt to lose independence and become a Roman province. She presented Herself as a reincarnation of the Egyptian goddess Isis, who later, with her son Horus, became the template for the images of the Madonna with the child Jesus. Egyptian Pharaohs were deputies of the gods, but Cleopatra went further by claiming to be a goddess Herself.
Even Julius Caesar was impressed by Her personality. He abandoned his plans to conquer Egypt and backed Her claim to the throne. Julius Caesar had the same initials as Jesus Christ, which could be a hint. After Caesar died, She supported her next lover, Mark Antony, in a power struggle with the future Emperor Augustus. That led to Cleopatra's downfall and suicide. She might already have been looking forward to Her next role, Mary Magdalene, the wife of an obscure Jewish prophet who was to change world history.

Empress Theodora

Empress Theodora (490-548) was one of the most influential women in Roman history. An official of Her time noted that She was more intelligent than any man. Her husband, Emperor Justinian, realised this as well. He allowed Her to share his throne and take part in decision-making. She was a controversial figure. As a young woman, Theodora earned Her living as an actress, which might have meant entertaining men with indecent dances in establishments of dubious reputation, and possibly it included prostitution. Procopius's Secret History, an ancient version of a gossip channel with a preference for slander, is the foremost source of information about Her early life, so we can't be sure.

Later, Theodora travelled to North Africa as the concubine of Hecebolus, a Roman governor in Libya. Procopius alleged that Hecebolus mistreated Theodora, and their relationship ended in a quarrel. The then-destitute Theodora went to Egypt and converted to Miaphysite Christianity. Theodora later returned to Constantinople, where She met the future Emperor Justinian. Justinian was impressed by Her. He wed Theodora even though She already had an illegitimate daughter, which caused a scandal. And Justinian had to change the law to marry Her.

Theodora helped her husband make decisions, plans, and political strategies, participated in state councils, and greatly influenced him. She was an intimidating person who instilled fear but feared no one. There was an uprising during their reign, and rioters set public buildings on fire and proclaimed a new emperor. Justinian and his officials discussed the situation and planned to flee, but Theodora spoke out against this plan. According to Procopius, Theodora interrupted the Emperor and his counsellors, saying,

*My lords, the present occasion is too serious to allow me to follow the convention that a woman should not speak in a man’s council. Those whose interests are threatened by extreme danger should think only of the wisest course of action, not of conventions. In my opinion, flight is not the right course, even if it should bring us to safety. It is impossible for a person, having been born into this world, not to die; but for one who has reigned, it is intolerable to be a fugitive. May I never be deprived of this purple robe, and may I never see the day when those who meet me do not call me Empress. If you wish to save yourself, my lord, there is no difficulty. We are rich; over there is the sea, and yonder are the ships. Yet reflect for a moment whether, when you have once escaped to a place of security, you would not gladly exchange such safety for death. As for me, I agree with the adage, that 'royal purple' is the noblest shroud.*

Her powerful and inspiring speech convinced them to stay. Justinian then ordered his loyal troops to attack the demonstrators, resulting in the deaths of over 30,000 civilians. Some
estimates put the death toll as high as 80,000. The corpses must have piled up on the streets of Constantinople. The reason possibly was Her desire to wear a purple robe. After the revolt, Theodora and Justinian ordered the rebuilding of Constantinople. The works included aqueducts, bridges and churches, including the Hagia Sophia, which became one of the world's architectural wonders.

Theodora participated in Justinian's legal and spiritual reforms and was involved with women's rights and helping underprivileged women. She bought girls who had been sold into prostitution and freed them. She created a convent where the former prostitutes could support themselves. Theodora even tried to eradicate prostitution. Theodora and Justinian expanded the rights of women in divorce and property ownership and instituted the death penalty for rape.

Procopius claimed these reforms made women morally depraved, as men could no longer beat and abuse them at will, which might be the reason why Procopius disliked Theodora. He had some other details about Her to share. According to him, the senators had to prostrate themselves whenever entering the Imperial couple's presence.

Not even government officials could approach the Empress without expending much time and effort. They were treated like servants and kept waiting in a small, stuffy room for an endless time. After many days, some of them might at last be summoned, but going into her presence in great fear, they very quickly departed. They simply showed their respect by lying face down and touching the instep of each of her feet with their lips; there was no opportunity to speak or to make any request unless she told them to do so. The government officials had sunk into a slavish condition, and she was their slave-instructor.

That could be sixth-century gossip, but perhaps the almighty owner of the magnificent city of Constantinople and the rest of the universe desired to be reminded of Her greatness before She went into the desolate Arab desert as Khadijah to go after Muhammad.

**Empress Wu Zetian**

Shortly after Khadijah had died, another remarkable woman arrived on the scene. Empress Wu Zetian (624-705) was the only female ruler in the history of China and one of China's most gifted Emperors. She ruled from 665 to 705, first as the consort of the ineffectual Emperor Gaozong, then as the power behind the throne held by her youngest son and from 690 as sole Empress. Under Her reign, China's power increased, the economy improved, and corruption in the imperial court declined. Notwithstanding those impressive feats, the traditionalist Confucianists called Her the Evil Empress. 'She killed her sister, butchered her elder brothers, murdered the ruler, poisoned her mother,' the chronicles say. It is doubtful that it is all true, but She was ruthless nonetheless, and Her rise to power is a story of intrigue.

Wu came from a wealthy family, and Her father encouraged Her to read books and pursue an education that included politics, governmental affairs, writing, literature, and music. After She was summoned to the palace to become a low-ranking concubine, She reportedly revealed Her ambitions to 'meet the Emperor' to Her mother. Emperor Taizong, According to Her account, She once impressed Taizong with her fortitude:
Emperor Taizong had a horse named Lion Stallion, and it was so large and strong that no one could get on its back. I was a lady in waiting attending Emperor Taizong, and I suggested to him, 'I only need three things to subordinate it: an iron whip, an iron hammer, and a sharp dagger. I will whip it with the iron whip. If it does not submit, I will hammer its head with the iron hammer. If it still does not submit, I will cut its throat with the dagger.' Emperor Taizong praised my bravery.

After Emperor Taizong died, Gaozong became Emperor at the age of 21. He was inexperienced and frequently incapacitated with a sickness causing spells of dizziness. His wife, Empress Wang, introduced Wu because Emperor Gaozong did not favour her but his favourite concubine Xiao. Wang was childless, while Xiao had bore him a son. Wang hoped that Wu's beauty would distract the Emperor from Xiao. Wu soon overtook Xiao as Gaozong's favourite. In 652, Wu gave birth to her first child, a son named Li Hong. In 653, She gave birth to another son.

Wu is infamous for the way She supposedly eliminated Wang and Xiao. As the story goes, Wu smothered her week-old daughter, a child She had with Gaozong, and blamed the baby's death on Wang, who was the last person to have held her. The Emperor believed the story and imprisoned Wang. Xiao soon followed suit. Once She was Empress, Wu ordered both women's hands and feet lopped off and had their mutilated bodies tossed into a vat of wine, leaving them to drown, saying, 'Now these two witches can get drunk to their bones.'

In 655, aged 31, Wu became Gaozong's empress consort and a powerful political force. She had considerable sway over the Emperor. From then on, Wu began to intimidate and eliminate Her opponents. One of the first things Wu did was to submit a petition. It praised the faithfulness of Han and Lai, who had opposed Her unprecedented rise to power. Her purpose was to inform them they had offended Her and that She was aware of their opposition. She knew the psychological tricks. Han offered to resign soon afterwards. After removing those who opposed Her rise, She had even more power, and Emperor Gaozong asked Her advice on petitions made by officials and state affairs.

Wu was more decisive and proactive than Her husband, who was often unwell and left decision-making to Her. Historians believe Wu was the factual ruler during Gaozong's reign for over twenty years. Her strong leadership and effective governance made China one of the world’s most powerful nations. Empress Wu had a network of spies in the royal court and throughout the empire. She also reformed the imperial examination system to encourage capable officials to work in the government. Wu eliminated real or perceived rivals to power through death, demotion, and exile. Her secret police took care of that. Wu's measures were popular. She ensured that free, self-sufficient farmers could work their land. She helped satisfy the needs of the lower classes through relief.

Upon the death of her husband, Emperor Gaozong, Wu became empress dowager and regent and gained complete power. Wu had poisoned the crown prince Li Hong and had other princes exiled so She could put Her son, Emperor Zhongzong, on the throne. Zhongzong was weak and incompetent like his father, so the new Empress Wei sought to place herself in the same position of authority that Empress Wu had enjoyed. Wu then deposed Emperor Zhongzong and put another puppet on the throne for a while to finally
become the sole ruler of China in 690. She remained in power until she fell ill in 705, and a coup returned the throne to her son Zhongzong. She died the same year.

Maria, daughter of Harald III of Norway

Harald Sigurdsson was King of Norway between 1046 and 1066. As a young man, he had to flee Norway because he had backed his half-brother Olaf's claim to the Norwegian throne and was defeated. He and his men went to Russia, where they served as soldiers of Yaroslav I the Wise. Later, they became mercenaries in the Byzantine Varangian Guard. Harald became commander of the Varangian Guard and was involved in the imperial dynastic disputes. Harald spent time in prison because of palace intrigue. In 1042, he requested to leave, but the Empress refused. He escaped and returned to Russia, where he prepared his campaign to claim the Norwegian throne for himself. The Chronicle of the Kings of Norway Saga of Harald Hardrade mentions,

*There was a young and beautiful girl called Maria, a brother's daughter of the Empress, Zoe, and Harald had paid his addresses to her, but the Empress had given him a refusal.*

Based on the saga, Michael Ennis wrote a novel, Byzantium, where he speculated about a passionate love affair between Maria and Harald, of which Ennis vividly describes the detail. They tried to flee Constantinople together. They ran into a Russian fleet that attacked the city. Maria died, but Harald escaped. The accounts of what transpired diverged, and Ennis likely filled in gaps with his imagination. In 1046, Harald returned to Norway and became king. On his way back, he stayed in Russia and married Elisiv, a daughter of Yaroslav I. I always had an interest in the Byzantine Empire. That made me read the novel. As I do not read many books, it is noteworthy.

After failing to conquer Denmark, Harald set his eyes on England. There, he died when invading the country in 1066 AD. His demise is part of a coincidence scheme related to D-Day mentioned in The Virtual Universe. Harald's daughter Maria died on the same day in Norway, a peculiar coincidence. In his book, Ennis speculates that Maria was the reincarnation of Harald's former lover, who wanted to be with him. She dropped dead when he died. Ordinary people can't reincarnate into whom they desire or drop dead at the time of their choosing. And so, Maria could have been God. The Finnish band Turisas dedicated a song named The Great Escape to Harald, which is also a most peculiar coincidence considering the events that transpired in my life. And so, a clue presented itself for the Clouseau-like guessing process.

Hildegard von Bingen

Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179) was a German Benedictine abbess and polymath active as a writer, composer, philosopher, mystic, visionary, medical writer and practitioner. There are more surviving chants by Von Bingen than by any other composer from the entire Middle Ages. She is one of the few known composers to have written both the music and the words. She corresponded with popes, heads of state and emperors. She travelled
often during Her preaching tours. Abbots and abbesses asked Von Bingen for prayers and opinions on various matters.

Hildegard von Bingen claimed to have visions as a little child. She had unusual perceptions and realised these were visions. Von Bingen explained that she saw all things in the light of God through the five senses: sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch. Based on these experiences, Von Bingen wrote three books of visionary theology. She also wrote extensively about medicine from Her practical experience. She spoke out against church practices such as simony.

Von Bingen further wrote, 'Woman may be made from man, but no man can be made without a woman.' It refers to the story in Genesis in which God made Eve out of Adam's rib, perhaps to poke fun by implying the tale is illogical. While promoting chastity, Von Bingen is the author of the first written description of the female orgasm,

*When a woman is making love with a man, a sense of heat in her brain, which brings with it sensual delight, communicates the taste of that delight during the act and summons forth the emission of the man's seed. And when the seed has fallen into its place, that vehement heat descending from her brain draws the seed to itself and holds it, and soon the woman's sexual organs contract, and all the parts that are ready to open up during the time of menstruation now close, in the same way as a strong man can hold something enclosed in his fist.*

It suggests first-hand knowledge Von Bingen likely could not have had but had. Or would another nun have explained these details to Her? Also, according to Von Bingen, Adam had a pure voice. He joined the angels in singing praises to God before the Fall. That is also knowledge Von Bingen likely could not have acquired during Her lifetime. She either made it up or was present when it transpired. Around the time Von Bingen lived, an anonymous monk in the Netherlands wrote down the oldest known written sentence in the Dutch language,

*Hebban olla uogala nestas hagunnan hinase hic anda thu uuat unbidan uue nu.*

The English translation is, 'Have all birds started nests except me and you. Do we start now?' A teacher at primary school told the class about this text. I was an imaginative boy. The lines remained in my mind, and I later imagined a Gregorian chant based on these words when Sadeness from Enigma was a popular song. These lines intrigued me for no apparent reason, and I now suspect the monk may have had a vivid vision of Hildegard von Bingen, possibly even a wet dream.

**Joan of Arc**

In 1429, the situation was desperate. There was no hope for France. The English and their ally Burgundy had overrun most of France. Only a small pocket of resistance remained. It is not the start of an episode of Asterix & Obelix, but the story of Joan of Arc (1412-1431). She started as an uneducated peasant girl from Domrémy, an obscure village in Northern France and became a military leader who changed the course of history. After years of defeats, the leadership of France had been demoralised and discredited.
The seventeen-year-old Joan joined a relief army to end the siege of Orléans. She arrived at the city in April 1429, wielding her banner and bringing hope to the demoralised French army. Nine days after her arrival, the English abandoned the siege. Joan encouraged the French to aggressively pursue the English, which led to another decisive victory at Patay, opening the way for the French army to advance on Reims, where the French crowned their new King with Joan at his side.

But fortunes changed. After the coronation, Joan participated in the unsuccessful siege of Paris in September 1429 and the failed siege of La Charité in November. In early 1430, Joan organised a company of volunteers to relieve Compiègne, which the Burgundians had been besieging. There, Burgundian troops captured Her. After She tried to escape, the Burgundians handed Her to the English. The English put Joan on trial and burned Her at the stake as a witch.

Joan of Arc led the French army to several important victories that boosted French morale. It changed the course of the war. She claimed to have divine guidance. Modern scholars explain Her visions as a disease, but documents from Her own time indicate Joan was healthy and sane. She was only nineteen when She died. In the decades that followed, France prevailed. Was She God in disguise? Possibly so.
History is Her story II

Isabella I of Castile

Most people have learned who discovered America, but few know who financed his mission, the person behind the scenes who made it happen. And by the way, the same person who sent Columbus on his journey also created Spain. Queen Isabella I (1451-1504) was Queen of Castile and one of the most influential historical persons. She was the second child of King John II of Castile. At the time, two countries, Castile and Aragon, dominated the area. Isabella’s half-brother, Henry, was the heir to the throne.

Isabella became a pawn in Henry’s political ambitions. He forced Isabella into several betrothals and attempted to marry Her to King Alfonso V of Portugal. Later, as part of an agreement to restore peace after a rebellion, Isabella was to be betrothed to Pedro Giron, Master of the Military Order of Calatrava. Isabella prayed that the marriage would not
come to pass. Don Pedro suddenly fell ill and died on his way to meet Isabella. That prayer worked better than voodoo.

Henry did not have a male heir. Isabella made Henry sign an agreement, making Her successor to the throne. Henry made another effort to arrange a marriage, but Isabella refused and secretly arranged a wedding with Ferdinand of Aragon. In doing so, Isabella created Spain by uniting both kingdoms. After Isabella had secured the throne, She initiated several successful reforms in government, finance, legal code, and policing.

Isabella's actions had a substantial and lasting impact on world history. Her political manoeuvring in dynastic politics created Spain. Isabella sponsored Christopher Columbus's mission to reach the Indies by sailing to the west. On his way, Columbus bumped into an island, Cuba. A film about this event is titled 1492: Conquest of Paradise. Apart from the word Paradise, the number 1492 refers to the initials and possibly the birthday of a Lady I once met.

**Katharina von Bora**

Katharina von Bora (1499-1552) was the wife of Martin Luther, who initiated the Protestant Reformation. Katharina had several suitors, but none of the proposed matches resulted in marriage. She told Luther's friend and fellow reformer, Nikolaus von Amsdorf, that She would be willing to marry only Luther or von Amsdorf. Luther was unsure whether he should marry at all. A woman who wanted him made him change his mind. As Roman Catholic priests were celibate, their marriage set a precedent for Protestant family life and clerical marriage.

Von Bora had been a nun interested in the Protestant Reformation and dissatisfied with cloistered life. Conspiring with several other sisters, Von Bora contacted Luther. They asked for his assistance. Luther sent a merchant who regularly delivered herring to the convent. The nuns escaped by hiding in his covered wagon among the fish barrels.

Von Bora bred and sold cattle and ran a brewery to provide for their family, the numerous students who boarded with them, and her husband's visitors. In times of epidemics, she operated a hospital with nurses. Luther called her 'Boss of Zulsdorf' after the farm they owned. Based on Luther's descriptions, his wife, whom he nicknamed 'Herr Käthe', exerted control over his life like a master.

After Martin Luther died in 1546, Von Bora's fortunes turned sour. Wars destroyed Her property, and She became impoverished. She fled because of war, the Black Death, and harvest failures. During Her last flight, she was thrown from her cart into a watery ditch and fell ill. She reportedly said on her deathbed, 'I will stick to Christ as a burr to cloth.'

Many Protestants and Germans consider Martin Luther a prophet. And prophets might be married to God. The book The Virtual Universe discusses the assassination of Martin Luther King on 4 April 1968 as part of an elaborate coincidence scheme that includes the Lincoln and Kennedy assassinations. King's last name might imply that Martin Luther was a king like Jesus, thus a prophet of great importance.
Elizabeth I

Queen Elizabeth I of England (1533-1603) was one of the most successful monarchs in history. Her reign laid the foundation for the Anglo-Saxon world domination. She depended on trusted advisers like William Cecil. She also established the Church of England, a Protestant Church with Catholic elements, of which She became the supreme governor. Elizabeth was moderate and religiously tolerant.

Great Britain became a great power. Elizabeth was cautious in foreign politics, tried to avoid conflict, and half-heartedly committed to the wars England fought. In 1585, England could no longer avoid war with Spain because it supported Dutch independence from Spain. In 1588, the English defeated the Spanish Armada, and the remainder sunk in a storm, ending Spanish dominance over the seas and eventually leaving it to the British.

A curious sequence of events made Elisabeth Queen of England. Upon hearing of Her accession to the throne, She reportedly quoted the 118th Psalm's twenty-third line: 'It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.' Elizabeth's unmarried status inspired a cult of virginity. She said She was married to England like God was married to Israel. Some poetry and portraits depicted Elisabeth as a virgin goddess.

Computable, June 19, 2009

Armada distribueert database-systeem

De behoefte aan clusters van goedkope systemen voor het draaien van databases groeit. Zo'n gedecentraliseerd systeem moet echter wel betrouwbaar zijn. Promovendus Fabian Groffen van het Centrum Wiskunde & Informatica (CWI) in Amsterdam ontwikkelde hier voor het Armada-model. In dat model zijn de afzonderlijke machines zelfstandig, maar schieten elkaar te hulp als er één in nood is, net als bij een 16-eeuwse Armada-vloot.

Computable article about Armada
During a walk in 2009, I pondered whether or not Elizabeth had been God in disguise. When I returned home, I found a copy of the weekly magazine Computable in my letterbox. The front page featured an article about a distributed database system called Armada. That might be a hint.

Françoise d'Aubigné

Françoise d'Aubigné (1635-1719) was the second wife of the French king Louis XIV. Louis XIV, known as the Sun King, was vain and waged many wars. His lavish Palace of Versailles had no equal. Louis' magnificence was over-the-top and equally unequalled. His reign lasted over 72 years and is the longest of any sovereign in known history. During his first marriage, he had several mistresses.

Louis was more faithful to his second wife, Françoise d'Aubigné. Françoise never became queen, but she had considerable clout in the royal court. Louis was also pious. He saw himself as the protector of the Catholic Church. He made his devotions daily regardless of where he was. Under Françoise's influence, Louis became even more religious.

Louis XIV was the epitome of the divine right of kings. It is a doctrine saying the king is appointed by God and, therefore, not accountable to anyone except God. That doctrine might come in handy for the Messiah in the end times. A quote attributed to Louis is, 'The state, that is me.'

As a teenager, I had been a member of the School Council. Its members had endless discussions because the Financial Commission had overstepped. And so, a the-state-that-is-me situation supposedly had developed. That could be a hint. Louis might have been God's husband. I doubted it, so I decided to toss a coin. In this way, Françoise made it to the list. Another toss of a coin eliminated Catherina the Great from the list.

Joséphine de Beauharnais

Joséphine de Beauharnais (1763-1814) was the first wife of Napoleon Bonaparte. She was his greatest love. After the execution of Her first husband during the French Revolution, She had affairs with several leading political figures. Napoleon, who was six years younger, fell in love with Her. He sent Her many love letters. Napoleon's love for Joséphine cooled somewhat after discovering that Joséphine had a lover on the side. He then began affairs with other women but remained in love with Joséphine and married Her.

Napoleon Bonaparte's lasting legacies are the civil registries with first and last names, the metric system that includes metres, grammes and litres, and legal reform, the Napoleonic Code. The well-structured and accessible law code was a milestone and replaced a patchwork of feudal laws. It was one of the few documents that have influenced the whole world. The Napoleonic Code is the most widespread law system. About 120 countries use it, but not Great Britain, which also opted out of the metric system.
Napoleon was not a favourite of the British, or perhaps it was a British conservative attachment to incoherence and feudal institutions, so they held on to their lords, laws, miles and pints. Unlike the rest of Europe, the British now drive on the left side of the road and have left the European Union to rid themselves of David Cameron. He later returned as Minister of Foreign Affairs, so the Brexit has failed. Napoleon has tried to unite Europe, and that project appears close to succeeding.

Through the children from Her first marriage, Josephine became the grandmother of Napoleon III and the great-grandmother of later Swedish and Danish kings and queens. The reigning houses of Belgium, Norway and Luxembourg also descend from Josephine. She, however, did not give Napoleon any children, and Napoleon believed he needed an heir, which was why they divorced. Napoleon then married Marie Louise, an Austrian archduchess. It was not love that drove him, but calculation. Marie Louise bore him a son who died at the age of 21. In this way, his family line died out, and the divorce proved pointless. Napoleon's last words on his death bed were, 'France, the army, the head of the army, Josephine.'

There are some remarkable parallels between Napoleon Bonaparte and Adolf Hitler. Napoleon Bonaparte was born on Corsica, an island that became part of France. Later, Napoleon Bonaparte became the leader of France. Adolf Hitler was born in Austria, a country that became part of Germany. And Adolf Hitler became the leader of Germany. Both men were involved in a coup on 9 November (9/11 in European notation). Both started a military campaign in Russia that led to their downfall.

Napoleon Bonaparte and Adolf Hitler came to power by a coup, ending an unstable republic. They both turned Europe into a battlefield. Both ventured into Africa, and both faced defeat in Egypt. They both waged war on two fronts because they attacked Russia after failing to defeat England. These parallels are intriguing, and so are their wives. Concerning Josephine de Beauharnais, I did not receive a hint, but the thought is not far-fetched. Informed deduction is impossible anyway, so that leaves us with Clouseau-style guessing.

Lucretia Garfield

Lucretia Garfield (1832-1918) was the wife of US President James A. Garfield. A disgruntled public office seeker assassinated him in 1881, shortly after he took office. He lingered in the Twilight Zone for two and a half months before dying. Lucretia stayed at his bedside and received public sympathy, which might be ill-deserved, as it now turns out. They were both 26 when they married on 11 November 1858, referencing 11:11. During the Civil War, James Garfield had an affair as a general.

He later confessed it to his wife. She seemingly forgave him. But on 12 January 2010, a previously unknown $10,000 life insurance policy on the life of President Garfield surfaced in a family scrapbook. Lucretia Garfield had opened it 45 days before the assassination of Her husband. It is a most notable coincidence that might indicate foreknowledge.

My son was fond of the comic character Garfield. In 2006, a mysterious parcel addressed
to him was delivered to us by mail. It contained some Garfield items, including a coffee cup with the lettering 'It is good to be king.' The sender of the parcel was unknown. We made several enquiries, but nobody conceded to have sent it. Until today, the sender remains unknown. And so, Lucretia Garfield could have been God.

**Eurocentrism**

This list is eurocentric. Most on the list have lived in Europe. Eurocentrism emphasises European culture or Western ideas and theories without much regard for other cultures. For the last 500 years, most of the action was in Europe, and today's world is so profoundly affected by European ideas and culture that you might even call the world European. Those who oppose Eurocentrism may propose ideas like that the knowledge of indigenous is on equal footing with science.

I would have made the list more diverse, but I don't make the decisions. And I have tried. For instance, after seeing the Netflix documentary about Queen Nzinga of Ndongo and Matamba and reading her life story on Wikipedia, I found her a worthy candidate for being God in disguise and better suited than some women on the list. Nzinga could fill a gap between Queen Elizabeth I and Françoise d'Aubigné. And I tried to fill the gaps. Catherine the Great would also have made a proficient gap filler.

Filling a hole is not enough to qualify. And, Nzinga's life's story did not provide clues to work with, like with Queen Isabella I, who prayed that her marriage would not come to pass, and then her suitor died. Nor did a peculiar coincidence happen, like with Queen Elizabeth I, when a magazine featured an article about a database system called Armada. Again, I tossed a coin, which was my favourite way of resolving such undecided matters, but the outcome suggested God didn't want me to think She had been Queen Nzinga.
When Jesus Returns

High expectations

Will Jesus return? And what will he do if he does? Will Jesus make things right? Will there be a showdown between the forces of good and evil? Will evil people burn in hell forever? And what about Buddhists and atheists? They don't believe in a god. And Hindus? They think there are many gods. Or Jews, Christians and Muslims?

And who are the good people, and who are the wicked? The Italian mafia bosses were devout Catholics. The usurers of Goldman Sachs claimed they were doing God's work, which included defrauding entire nations. US President George Bush was talking to Jesus when he ordered the invasion of Iraq. And a million people died in the subsequent war.

Apocalypse is in the air due to excessive resource usage and dangerous technologies. Perhaps we need a Messiah. But a Messiah already came, sort of at least, perhaps as a lesson for us all. Have we learned that lesson? And what is that lesson in the first place? History can teach us many lessons. But we don't take them all at heart.

Adolf the Messiah or the Anti-Christ?

At first sight, Jesus Christ and Adolf Hitler appear opposites. Jesus is the personification of goodness, while Hitler is the epitome of evil. Christ stood at the cradle of Christianity, the Religion of Love. Jesus taught love would overcome hatred. 'If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also,' And, 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.' Hitler represents Nazism, an ideology of hate that led to exceptional cruelty and revealed the depth of human depravity, the Holocaust, so unimaginable that some believe it never happened. But genocide is part of human nature.

Closer inspection reveals a few intriguing parallels. Adolf Hitler's followers considered him their saviour, and they worshipped him like one. Christians think Jesus will come down from heaven, and there will be a rapture when he returns (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Hitler was the first leader to fly around in an aeroplane to meet the cheering crowds. Rapture means ecstasy, enthusiasm and admiration. Few persons in history caused as much rapture as Hitler. The motto of the Third German Empire was, 'One people, one empire, one leader.' That is what Christians and Muslims expect to happen when Jesus returns.

In many ways, Hitler was a Messiah. Hitler told the Germans they were the chosen people for their superior race. Jews believe they are the chosen people because of the special relationship between God and the Jewish people. Like Moses, Hitler promised to end the unjust oppression, in this case, caused by the Treaty of Versailles. He claimed his Third German Empire would last a thousand years, while the Bible says that the reign of Christ
would last a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-6). Hitler had a messiah complex. And seeking a definitive solution for the Jewish Question is a messianic project.

In traditional agricultural societies, lands remained within the family. The Jews were no exception. The Bible says the bond between people and land is not to be broken, and land is not to be sold (Leviticus 25:23). That is similar to the Nazi ideology of Blood and Soil, which focuses on ethnicity and homeland. It stresses the importance of the land people live on and celebrates rural living. The Nazis made selected lands hereditary. Those lands could not be mortgaged or sold.

Was Hitler the opposite of Christ, or an anti-Christ, or was he like Christ, as many of his followers expected him to be? Will there be a final reckoning in which billions of people die or face eternal torture in hell? That is worse than being gassed in a concentration camp because there is no end to it. To Hitler, World War II was about the survival of the German people. And to survive, you do whatever you believe is needed. And the stakes are much higher now. They are about the survival of humanity. And so, we must do whatever we believe is needed.

Hitler’s political views

Like many Germans, Hitler considered the Peace Treaty of Versailles unjust. The treaty stipulated that Germany accepted responsibility for causing World War I and had to pay massive reparations. The economist Keynes warned about the harsh peace terms imposed upon Germany. It could lead to World War II, he warned. These words turned out to be prophetic. Hitler also had a prophetic vision.

Hitler opposed interest after he had attended a lecture by Gottfried Feder named The Abolition of the Interest Servitude. It was the reason why Hitler joined the National Socialist Party. Hitler's views on interest were similar to those expressed in the Bible and the Quran. The ideas of Feder became central in his views on international finance. Today, unchecked trade and finance might destroy human civilisation as we know it.

Hitler feared the Jews would take over Germany. In the United States, where the Jews could operate without restrictions, his paranoid vision more or less became a reality. Wealth inequality has increased in recent decades while Jews make up a disproportionate part of the American elites. And to get elected, American politicians must unconditionally support Israel. It is the irony of history, or perhaps, a joke from God.

Hitler could have been a painter if the Vienna Art School had not declined his application, and we would now have had a few additional acceptable wall decorations. Hitler would not have sought revenge if Germany had not lost World War I. Had he not lived in an impoverished multicultural neighbourhood in Vienna, he might not have thought mixing different people from different ethnic groups was a bad idea. And had there been no widespread anti-Semitism already, he would not have hated the Jews that much.

Hitler was good at giving speeches, which were angry rants that fired up his following. During the Great Depression, Hitler gained popularity and grabbed power in Germany. He started a war that killed fifty million people. Ten million people died in the Holocaust,
including six million Jews. When American troops entered Germany in 1945, they were appalled by what they found in the concentration camps. Few people had imagined the Nazi regime was that gruesome.

**Drug abuse**

Hitler was a hypochondriac suffering from mood swings, Parkinson's disease, flatulence, skin problems and steady decline. His physician, a quack named Dr Theodor Morell, gave him unorthodox medications, such as cocaine, speed, glucose, testosterone, estradiol, and corticosteroids. In addition, Hitler received a preparation made from a gun cleaner, a compound of small amounts of rat poison and atropine to treat his farting.

These treatments may have contributed to Hitler's erratic conduct and illnesses. Hitler also took an extract of bulls' semen and numerous vitamins and tonics. He may have taken potions, pills and injections to improve his sexual performance so he could deal with the sexual appetite of his demanding mistress, Eva Braun.
Eva Braun

Eva Braun was the mistress and later wife of Adolf Hitler. Most historians consider her an insignificant figure who did not participate in political decisions. But opinions differ. A letter demonstrates that she knew of the concentration camps and the gas chambers. Some Nazi officials close to Hitler have said Braun was at the centre of Hitler's life for most of his twelve years in power. She was committed to Hitler, won his affection, gave him moral support, and enjoyed a sex life with him.

After learning about a failed plot to kill Hitler in 1944, she wrote to him, 'From our first meeting, I swore to follow you anywhere even unto death. I live only for your love.' And that was indeed how it ended. Over twenty plots to kill Hitler did not succeed, making Hitler believe a supernatural force protected him. When the end of the Third Empire neared, Braun became merrier. In the end, she married Hitler and committed suicide together with him. Perhaps this was the romantic ending she desired. So, was Eva Braun God and the mastermind behind Hitler's rise and demise?

Coincidences could serve as a clue. Braun was Eva's last name and the German word for brown. Her Adolf was born in Braunau am Inn, and brown is the colour associated with the Nazi ideology. Nazis were nicknamed brown shirts. And Eva is German for Eve. Eva had a passion for nude sunbathing, perhaps to become brown. And she loved being photographed naked. She had no shame like the original Eve in the Garden of Eden.

For Braun, the story may not have ended there. She might have turned into Marilyn Monroe. I contemplated that possibility when watching a Netflix documentary about Monroe's life. Immediately after the thought, the word goddess appeared on the screen in massive lettering. That hint was as plain as it could get. Monroe had an affair with US President John F. Kennedy. He later dumped Monroe. Soon afterwards, he met the Grim Reaper in an epic scene dubbed Kennedy assassination. People still speculate about who assassinated Kennedy and why.

That might be of secondary importance. Perhaps messing with Monroe was not such a good idea after all. A set of intriguing coincidences surround the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy and his brother Robert. They appear to be part of an intricate scheme involving the premature deaths of US Presidents, including James A. Garfield. Furthermore, the Kennedy family suffered a series of accidents and early deaths called the Kennedy Curse. The book The Virtual Universe goes into more detail.

The prophecy of the Holocaust

Rumour has it that Nostradamus predicted the rise of Adolf Hitler, but that is incorrect. The word Hister in his ravings refers to the Danube. Far more ominous are the prophetic references to six million Jews in danger of being exterminated or a coming Holocaust of Jews that appeared in Jewish magazines before World War II. That is not as remarkable as it might seem. The figure emerged because six million Jews lived in the Russian
Empire before World War I. Jews in Russia suffered from a hostile government and pogroms. Pogroms were riots incited to massacre or expel Jews.

The Russian Empire collapsed and became the Soviet Union. Still, the six million figure continued to circulate in Jewish publications. It subsequently became the number of Jews killed during the Holocaust. These prophetic statements are eerie, like the reference to the end date of World War I on the licence plate of Franz Ferdinand’s car. The most notable ones are listed below:

- In 1911, at the tenth Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, Max Nordau, co-founder of the World Zionist Organisation, together with Theodore Herzl, prophesised ‘the annihilation of six million Jews.’
- Shortly after World War I in 1919, Zionists feared that a Holocaust of six million Jews was imminent in Europe.
- According to the New York Times, in 1936, Zionists were lobbying for a Jewish state in Palestine to save the Jews from a European Holocaust. It was three years before World War II and five years before the extermination camps came into existence.
- In 1939, The Jewish Criterion predicted that the coming world war would annihilate six million Jews in East and Central Europe.
- In 1940, the Jewish leader Nahum Goldmann predicted that if the Nazis achieved victory, six million Jews would be doomed to destruction.

A look in the mirror

The 1981 film The Wave was about a school teacher, Ben Ross. He showed his class a film about the Holocaust. A pupil asked him how the Germans could rally behind Adolf Hitler and commit these atrocities. Ross couldn’t answer the question and decided to start an experiment. He began with advice on proper posture and a few classroom rules for better efficiency. The pupils took it up with enthusiasm. The next day, he introduced The Wave, a youth movement with a secret salute and membership card.

Robert, an unpopular student, received the task of monitoring the other students, a position that filled him with pride. Robert began reporting unorthodox behaviour to Ross and the other Wave members. Two hundred more students joined. Wave members bullied other students. The school newspaper wrote a negative review about The Wave, so Wave members planned to attack the editor.

The following day, Ross said the Wave was a youth movement in schools spread in the country, and its leader would give a televised speech. The eager Wave students assembled in the auditorium with television monitors. To their horror, the monitors displayed a film of Adolf Hitler at a Nazi rally. Ross told them that this was their leader. The experiment showed that most of us are fit to become Nazis or would not resist a fascist takeover. In other words, similar atrocities can occur again, and they did.

We didn't learn history's lessons because we never correctly assessed human nature. Warfare has never stopped, and tens of millions have died since World War II. If we had been honest with ourselves, we could have arrived at the disheartening conclusion that we are social animals that cooperate based on shared myths rather than rational beings. And
so, we are ill-suited to deal with modern technology. That we haven't destroyed ourselves yet is a miracle rather than a sign of wisdom. Had Adam and Eve listened to God and not sought knowledge to become like the gods, we would still have run around naked and could have managed ourselves. But we are self-destructive creatures that can't help themselves. Our desire for knowledge created the need for a saviour who provides us with a myth and delivers us from our destructive inclinations.
The end is near

A broken clock is right twice a day. At least that was so before clocks had digital displays. For a similar reason, end-time prophets can also be correct for once. They have proclaimed the end of the world for quite some time now. Sometimes, they gathered followers and went to a faraway mountain to wait for the apocalypse. Others have looked for signs. But there are always signs. Only when the End Time has come, we might discover the veritable signs in hindsight, like the prophetic licence plate number on Franz Ferdinand's car. If World War I had had an alternative prelude or had it ended on another date, the license plate number would have had no meaning.

Logic can be counter-intuitive. If the end time comes, it will be closer now than ever. The prophecies regarding the End Time had been off the mark so far. Early Christians expected to witness the return of Jesus themselves. The holy books did not predict the Industrial Revolution or computers. And a drug addict on mushrooms could have written a work like the Book of Revelation. And so, you might not expect it to happen. A few reasons to believe it might be close are:

• The growth of human activities runs into the limits of the planet. The end of growth will be a watershed moment.
• As long as nation-states and tribes exist, there will be no enduring peace, and weapons of mass destruction can end us all.
• Eternal life may soon be possible. And we have technology that can go wrong. Artificial intelligence may make us redundant.
• Existing religions and ideologies have failed us, but humans are religious creatures and need something to believe in.
• We may discover that we live inside a virtual reality created by an advanced humanoid civilisation for entertainment.
• The world has become interconnected. Ideas can spread fast. If the truth comes out, everyone will learn about it soon.

Pop music, the unexpected medium

If this is the End time, there may have been signs. There have always been signs. And they are in the eye of the beholder. Some Christians believed they found Satanic messages hidden in pop music by playing tracks in reverse. Some even believe Satan is in charge of pop music entirely and that this horned fellow has been busy composing the lyrics. Few would have guessed that God hid secret messages in pop music. But that might be the case. And, even more surprisingly, you can hear them by playing them in the usual fashion. You don't even have to play them in reverse. Only, this was not for the faithful to guess. In the song God is a DJ, Faithless says God is a deejay. Because of copyright issues and nasty lawyers trying to squeeze a buck out of unsuspecting people rather than working for a living, I don't quote the lyrics literally. That would have helped, but you can find these lyrics on the Internet.
If pop music indeed carries God’s messages, could it also contain hints about the existence of these messages? Consider a lyric that implies the presence of hidden messages in pop music. In Strange Phenomena, Kate Bush suggests that a coincidence with the radio could be a sign of God’s arrival. If we interpret ‘G’ as God, the song alludes to mysterious occurrences and the possibility of someone having the answers. Need I say more? Perhaps not. But I am going to.

So, does a day of coincidence on the radio herald the arrival of God? Or is it delusional to see these messages in pop music? At secondary school, I did particularly poorly at explaining literature. It is about guessing the motives of book authors. My scores were consistently poor, the poorest of the class. I considered guessing other people’s motives and decoding hidden messages in texts a waste of time. There are so many ways in which you can interpret words. The authors themselves often marvelled at what the literature experts found out about their intentions from the books they had written. Art and literature were a lot of fluff about feelings, quite often imagined.

With the final exams nearing, I began to fret and asked my teacher to give me additional practice exams. It didn't help. The grades remained as poor as before. Before the final exam, I prayed and asked God that the grade wouldn't be too bad. Not only to my surprise, my result was the best of everyone, only equalled by a girl with a striking hairdo, a bit alternative, who dressed outspokenly and flaunted her interest in art and literature. A classmate wondered how I pulled this one off. It was a most peculiar incident indeed. At the time, there was no reason to think God was behind this, and it didn't seem like a harbinger of things to come. Was I meant to discover God's messages in pop music? It is even stranger yet. The coincidences can fill a separate volume.

**Hotel California**

Let's do a text analysis on the famous song Hotel California by the Eagles. What is the meaning of this song? On the Internet, you find some possible answers. It could be about the lost Paradise caused by American decadence and burnout, too much money, corruption, drugs and arrogance, and too little humility. Her mind being Tiffany-twisted and owning the expensive car might reflect that. And the line about the wine being unavailable since 1969 refers to the fact that in 1969, it was no longer legal to drink alcohol while you were in a drug rehab programme. Before that, you couldn't do drugs, but you were allowed to drink alcohol. The hotel, thus, was a rehab. But I see a different message, not intended by the songwriters and unseen by the critics.

When She stood in the doorway, the mission bell sounded. He might be meeting God because of the mission bell. And then, he enters Paradise, thinking this might be heaven or hell. God is a spoilt woman who owns the place and is used to getting Her way. Her mind thus is Tiffany twisted. She owns an expensive car. Most people think Paradise is perfect, but it doesn't agree with human nature. And so, there is a darkness to it. They can't kill the beast. And you can't escape, so you can check out when you like, but you can't leave the place. You can argue against this by pointing at the master's chambers, where they gathered. If there is a master, she isn't God. Indeed, seeing meaning is not
science, and interpretations are dubious. I knew that as a teenager already, so I won't argue. With that in mind, we can proceed.

From Almelo via Enschede to Eurovision

Ilse DeLange's fourth studio album, The Great Escape, seems overloaded with hidden messages, to the point you have to throw overboard your sense of reality to ignore them. If you read between the lines, this album may come with a message from God, Eve reincarnated, to Her husband, Adam reincarnated, to prepare himself. The album contains some lyrics with parts that could convey such a message. Noteworthy coincidences surround DeLange. DeLange was born on 13 May 1977 in Almelo, a town in the region of Twente in the Netherlands. Almelo was also the home town of Herman Finkers, a comedian who wrote Kroamschudd'n in Mariaparochie, a short animation picture on the possibility of Christ coming from Twente.

On 13 May 2000, the 23rd birthday of Ilse Delange, a fireworks plant in Enschede in Twente blew up, killing 23 people. That was exactly 11 years after I moved to Enschede to live on the campus of the University of Twente in Enschede. I lived there for five months until 13 October 1989, a time-lapse that precisely matches the events surrounding the Fatima Miracle of the Sun after 72 years, which is the most spectacular religious miracle ever confirmed as having factually happened. The recurring of 23 is also odd. The accident was on the day of the Eurovision Song Contest. Once the seriousness of the situation became manifest, the Dutch broadcast of the Eurovision Song Contest ended.

My wife had dreamt about a large fire the night before the fireworks accident. On the day itself, she visited a friend who had a baby. Some other friends of hers were also present. One of them came from Enschede. Just after my wife told this friend from Enschede about her dream, this friend received a text message asking whether she was all right. It was only then that they learned about the fireworks accident in Enschede. Fourteen years later, Ilse Delange sang in the 2014 Eurovision Song Contest herself with Waylon as The Common Linnets. They came in second after Conchita Wurst, a transgender Jesus look-alike from Austria. That is noteworthy, not only because it links DeLange to Jesus but also because early Christians performed a gender change on God.
The Finnish rock band Turisas dedicated a song named The Great Escape to the Norwegian king Harald Sigurdsson, who played a role in the coincidence scheme related to D-Day. His daughter died in Norway on the same day he perished on the battlefield in England, a noteworthy coincidence. The Great Escape was also the name of the fourth album made by the English rock band Blur, released on 11 September 1994, a remarkable date considering the coincidences surrounding the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks. The total length of Blur's album is 56 minutes and 56 seconds. Compressing these numbers results in 11:11 as $5 + 6 = 11$. And $56 + 56 = 112$, while 112 is the European emergency telephone number. The lead song of DeLange's album, The Great Escape, lasts 4:01 minutes. I moved to Enschede to live in room 112 of dormitory 401.

**The Great Escape**

Being out on a limb, I will argue that Ilse DeLange's album is a message from God, the eternal Eve, asking Her prospective husband, the temporary Adam, to prepare for his task. That was not the DeLange's intention. Unwittingly, she became the channel for this communication. Mediums make misses alongside accurate guesses. And so, the supposed messages blend into the lyrics like the accurate guesses of mediums mix up with misses. The book The Virtual Universe explains how mediums can be precise sometimes. It is not a gift but scripted. It works the same way as meaningful coincidences. So, how can we interpret those songs?

In the first song, Reach For the Light, God says She remembers, but he does not. She says She knows Her name but everything he knew is lost inside his forgotten mind. That makes sense if he is supposed to be Adam and doesn't remember. In the second song, The Lonely One, God claims She used Her powers to make his life disagreeable. Only God can order the sun not to shine and the sky to fall on him. What She says about
Herself would even make Louis XIV, the Sun King, blush. She says she is the only princess, indestructible, winged victory, the golden sun.

The song The Great Escape gives the album its name. It is the centrepiece. And the song says it is autumn, and some force pulls him into the shadow world, a place of his fear. It is a holy land in disguise. Then She reveals where She comes from heaven.

In the next song, Carry Hope, She instructs him to prepare himself. She says the power is in his hands, and he has to make this land his own. She adds that faith calls out his name. In all his vanity, even Louis XIV, the Sun King, would not have said that when he lets go of hope, there is no one left you can follow. There is nothing but the power to believe in Her. The song Was It Love suggests She did it for love and doesn't care for religious people because of being locked inside belief. They are not inside of Her.

If you get a message like that, you may have difficulty believing it. It is a rare occasion. Perhaps only Jesus received a similar message previously, which makes my position precarious, as I can't ignore it. The signs seem clear, and we are sleepwalking towards an apocalypse that we can still prevent with good leadership. The most significant risk is making a fool of myself, and if I fail to do that, dying prematurely. The remainder of the album does not relate to the message. You have to cherry-pick the lines. Delange comes from the Dutch region of Twente, just like I do.

**Slippery slope**

The Great Escape has the clearest message. There could be messages in other lyrics as well. I already mentioned Hotel California by the Eagles, Gimme the Prize by Queen, and God is a DJ by Faithless. Joga by Björk mentions accidents, coincidences and connecting the dots. The coincidences make sense only with one person. Did God make these things happen to show him Her love to him? She adds how beautiful it is to be in an emergency. Emergency relates to the emergency services telephone numbers 112 and 911, thus the coincidences surrounding the 11 September terrorist attacks come to mind. You can read about then in The Virtual Universe.

Some have claimed that Stairway To Heaven by Led Zeppelin allegedly contains satanic messages you can hear by playing the song in reverse. The joke is on them. The artists said it was a coincidence. Straightforwardly playing the music reveals something more interesting. It mentions a lady we all know. She shines a light. She wants to show how everything still turns to gold. That lady could be God, as the song is named Stairway To Heaven. The album Led Zeppelin IV, which includes Stairway To Heaven, also features Going To California, which mentions a queen who plays the guitar and sings, a woman who was never born, thus Eve.

The Infant King from the album Adieu Sweet Bahnhof of The Nits is about a boy king on his way on a train to meet his Bride. There is a sense of crisis. The world is falling apart. The border is closed. People are packing. And gold can help when you intend to leave. It could refer to the end times.

Woman Cactus is on the same album. It might describe a psychotic love affair of an
indecent nature. His senses don't make sense at all. She haunts him as the bar sign repeatedly prints Her name on the wall. The needles and pins could refer to voodoo or her character. You might find more if you try, but it is a slippery slope, as the harder you try, the more you slip-slide away, as Simon Garfunkel might say. Lyrics like that might appear by accident if there is such a thing as accidental. I aimed to make a reasoned argument, and for that, the selection suffices.
My guide plausibility

Plausibility is a tricky concept. If it were straightforward, we would have figured it out long ago. We are imaginative beings who can come up with a slew of explanations. And so, we have many religions. The plausible may appear unreal in a world where everyone holds incorrect beliefs. God being a woman from an advanced humanoid civilisation who uses us for Her amusement makes more sense than existing religions or the scientific account. There is more evidence than you might expect if that had been incorrect. Its preciseness is also worth noting as it might imply accuracy. One of those precise statements is that Mary Magdalene was God. Compare that to the idea that God is an invisible fellow in the heavens we can't possibly know. Few detectives can work with that clue.

You can speculate too wildly. Or you can fail to see the overall picture if you only accept what can be proven. I have tried to avoid those pitfalls. We can establish that existing religions are incorrect if we examine the evidence. We can also discover that this world has miracles that defy scientific explanations if we look for evidence. Usually, we don't think about our beliefs because they help us to survive. Questioning our faith thus may prevent our genes from copying themselves, which is the ultimate purpose of the existence of organisms. But this time, we may best serve our genes if we do.

I did this investigation for a reason. I may have met God. The evidence convinced me. The details are a separate story I don't intend to publish unless I have no choice. And so, I had to devise an explanation. There still is the Great Unknown. I can be wrong. We are inside the simulation and don't know what is outside like a Holodeck character doesn't know it is on the Starship Enterprise. This conjecture might be a shot in the dark, but as the story goes, Chief Inspector Clouseau is right.

A detective connects the dots in a way that makes sense. We don't know everything. It is like the Monty Hall problem. Information affects probabilities. You can use the information you have to rule out options. After deduction, several possibilities may remain. That might be as good as it gets. Apart from God being a woman from an advanced humanoid civilisation, there are other possibilities, such as:

- This world is like a Big Brother house, and our creators entertain themselves with us. Mary Magdalene wasn't God but only appeared that way to Jesus.
- There are no humans left, and artificial intelligence has taken over. It runs this script to keep itself busy.
- Or, I come from an advanced civilization and don't know. Maybe I wrote this script to pass my time uncovering the plot.

God being a woman from an advanced humanoid civilisation who amuses Herself with this world is how the simulation appears to me. Each finding separately is weak evidence. The strength is in the combination. The findings make sense and explain more. Why does Christianity emphasise love? Why does Christianity differ from Judaism and Islam? All gods are imaginations, so how can there be a Creator? Why is the Beloved Disciple in the
Gospel of John anonymous? Why did Jesus believe he was the Son of God? And why was he the Bridegroom? You now have plausible answers to these questions.

Existing religions and scholarly explanations lack that kind of clarity. And so, people end up mired in theological disputes or lose themselves in pointless debates like creationism versus evolution or whether Christianity is right or Islam. The Christian church fathers have gone to great lengths to obfuscate the truth. And so, there was a truth to hide. No one could have guessed God married Jesus and Muhammad and founded the Jewish nation as Judge Deborah. And Jesus had a special place among the prophets. He knew he married God. If I have found this out, we might live in the End Time. A religious theory has more value if it brings us something good, like world peace. We'll see about that.