

THE

BENT SPOON

JUNE 2011

Where extraordinary claims
meet rational answers

WE'RE STILL HERE

LIFE AFTER THE ANTICLIMAX OF MAY 21ST



SPONTANEOUS HUMAN COMBUSTION | FEELING THE FUTURE | FREE ENERGY

MISSION STATEMENT

In the landscape of paranormal media, there are traditionally two unique, yet separate, brands. One geared toward the believers, and the other more skeptical in nature. The problem is that the true believers rarely, if ever, embrace a skeptical attitude or ask tough questions of their community; instead preferring to surround themselves with like-minded individuals that reinforce their own belief systems. And the skeptics, likewise, promote science and critical thinking largely to those already open to it, or who are active participants in the skeptical community. This results in an echo chamber effect, wherein the same ideas are bounced back and forth, guru-student relationships are inadvertently created, and neither side ends up learning much about the other.

Enter: The Bent Spoon.

The Bent Spoon is a skeptical magazine for the true believer. Within its pages you will find Q&A between those with opposing viewpoints, interviews with leading investigators and thinkers, as well as articles which will not only provide in-depth analysis, but also be critical of both believers and skeptics alike. Along with reviews, comic strips, and other lighter fare, The Bent Spoon hopes to foster an attitude of outreach, forming a middle ground where believers and skeptics can come together and have a conversation about the issues and questions we've all given thought to.

The Bent Spoon. Where extraordinary claims meet ordinary explanations

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the Bent Spoon
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Feature Article

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INTERVIEW



Gunther Von Harringa

from Bible Ministries International explains the warnings of May 21st 2011.



PLUS

*The follies of ghost theories,
logical fallacies, new PSI
research, perpetual motion
machines, and more...*

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I, Skeptic, Take Thee, Responsibility...

By Rachel Wolf

If you are anything like me, you keep an eye out for mainstream media reports of events or topics related to skeptical thinking. I'm always curious to see how skepticism is discussed in mainstream media. I see an importance in being informed on how skeptics and logical thinking is portrayed to the masses.

Perhaps I'm a nerd, or picky, or I have too much time on my hands, but I love to cross reference and fact check. It's something I've learned to do in my education going all the way back to high school; if you are going to cite a source, you better make sure that source cites its sources correctly. I call it the Golden Rule of Skepticism. The recent Hannity/Cooper "controversy" illustrates why this point is so crucial when doing research and trying to educate others. Sean Hannity edited a clip of Anderson Cooper to make it appear as if Cooper was saying something when in fact he was simply relaying what other people were saying. Of course this type of editing is nothing new, and it happens in every field, in written and visual media, and with people on both sides of the issue at hand.

Over the years, I have developed an informal checklist for following my Golden Rule of Skepticism. These are just tips, guides for how to cross-check references, and hopefully a way to help keep reporters accountable for what they publish.

1. Being properly informed is a skeptic's responsibility.

Simply reading an article on MSNBC.com does not mean you are properly informed on the issue. You are ulti-

mately responsible for the information you learn, and if you only choose to seek out sources without cross checking the validity of those sources, you are doing yourself and others a disservice.

2. Find the original source.

A great example of this is a recent article I read on autism screening at CNN.com. The study being discussed only contained the name of the lead researcher and the journal it was published in, but did not say the date published or any other information that I could use to find the article. I attempted to track down the original study, only to find it's not yet published (which says all kinds of things about peer review and legitimacy of findings...).

3. Ask questions.

If something doesn't make sense, or you can't track down the sources that are cited, don't be afraid to contact the author of the article. Additionally, if publications don't respond to you in a few days with more than just a form email, or they don't respond to you at all, it speaks volumes about the credibility of the report.

4. Use Wikipedia and other resource sites.

I know this sends up a big red flag to the readers of this article. Here I am, spouting about the need to know your sources, and I'm sending you to a site where any ole Joe can wax expert about anything from plastic

surgery to video game Easter eggs. But Wikipedia can be a great source... if you scroll to the bottom of the page and use the reference links. What I like about Wikipedia is that it's a great starting point for researching a topic because the related references are in one place. It's a good place to start.

5. If you can't understand, find someone to help you.

If you can't understand what interobserver agreement is, or what constitutes statistical significance, then ask someone who does. When reading a study, there may be technical language that might not make sense if you have never come across it before. Ask a third party to explain the terms to you. This way you are getting unbiased information related to your research. By examining studies reported in the media directly, you can see all the points that the reporter didn't touch on.

This is just a short list of suggestions when reading reports or news stories. Nor will each tip be useful at all times. But most of these tips will help you to better navigate the seas of misinformation and opinion disguised as fact. After all, it is up to the skeptic to be properly informed. If the skeptic community is going to escape its "hater" reputation, it will be through knowledge and information.

Rachel, once a believer in the paranormal and alternative medicine, is now a strong supporter of skeptical and logical thinking. Not shying away from calling it like she sees it, she maintains a critical eye on the media, emerging research, as well as those who are, to say it politely, believers. Rachel currently resides in Minnesota and is pursuing a Master's degree in Behavior Analysis.

IN THE NEWS

Many people today are going out of their way to be “green”, riding bicycles, recycling, bringing their own bags to the super market, and apparently, attempting to break the laws of physics.

Springfield, Oregon resident David Babb Sr. is attempting to recreate a perpetual motion machine invented by his grand father, Thomas Babb during the great depression. He came across the idea for the machine during a “backyard accident” in which he snapped a strand of baling wire that had been attached to the wooden spokes of two cars that were being repaired. As a result, he became interested in the power that the two wheels generated and began to play with different ways in which he could use this power. After a year of tinkering, he created a perpetual motion machine that “ran all night on its own power using the force of gravity”. The machine was then disassembled out of fear of the repercussions. “My grandfather was always suspicious of the government and big business,” David said of his grand father. “He figured that they’ll pop a cap in him or drown him to prevent it from coming out. He was afraid that it was the wrong timing for society. He was just frightened because he didn’t have an education, and it was just a scary world back then.”

My grandpa used to tell me stories too, something about walking uphill both ways to school.

“I’ve had a lot of friends and family tell me that I’m never going to get this thing made and to keep my mouth shut or I’ll lose my rights to it, but I can’t be there anymore,” David said. “This thing needs to get built.”



“For years, I’ve had friends and colleagues tell me, ‘Dave, don’t tell anyone about this; they’ll steal it from you,’ but I hope they

do, If that’s what it comes down to, I hope the world does steal this from me, because the world needs this.”

Meanwhile, in Los Angeles Reginald Garcia is hoping to fund his own electrical impossibility by selling his 33 year old photographs he took of Michael

Jackson.

“It’s generating more energy recharging the battery than it actually draws from the battery,” David Marohnic, Garcia’s partner said.

Garcia reconfigured the brushes and rewound the copper in a standard motor “so it captures the negative electromagnetic field as it collapses, sends energy to a capacitor and recharges the battery,” he babbled.

The sale of the Jackson photographs will allow them “to certify that the prototype does everything that we say it’s going to do.”

No amount of money in the world could certify that semantically null statement.

This is one occasion that I feel citing the laws of thermodynamics is appropriate (see Paranormal Conjectures, page 17). Perpetual motion machines violate both the first and second laws, conservation of energy and entropy, respectively. The first law states that energy is a constant, and can neither be created or destroyed. The second, the law of entropy, states that the amount of energy put into a system will always be greater than the output. In other words, their wasting a lot of time and “energy”.

-Nicholas Callis

QUESTIONS & COMMENTS

Hello,

I really enjoyed the first issue of The Bent Spoon. It was loaded with lots of fun articles. I do, however, have some serious questions about Tracking The Chupa Cabra. If one looks closely at Ben's "solution", you can see how he has manipulated the data to fit his conclusion rather than letting the data lead you to a conclusion. The original drawing does not look like the "recreation" that Ben has drawn, which he calls "the most accurate depiction". It appears as if he took a screen shot from the source that he wants to claim as the real character and then drew his rendition of the chupa cabra to match it. If you look at other random screen shots from this source, the character looks nothing like Ben's drawing. How on Earth can we accept that Ben's random screen shot is the one that hung in this Puerto Rican woman's mind and not what the character really looked like?

Ben uses many terms that a real skeptic should never use such as "undeniable", "absolutely", and "solved". You can never solve a mystery that is based in eye witness reports. You can only use words such as "probably" and the like. When you break it down, Occam's Razor doesn't even support Ben here.

Ben should have posited this as a possibility instead of a certainty. Ben is an intelligent guy that seems to be taking too many lessons from Joe Nickell, who also makes lofty, widespread claims when he shouldn't. With talents like his, he could go much further and be much more effective than Joe. Stop trying

to solve everything, Ben. That's not what skeptics are supposed to do. Give the public something to think about, alternatives to what is generally accepted and let them decide so they can learn to think critically.

While the rest of the book was fun and interesting, the conclusion is just bad research and bad skepticism.

Dear Bent Spoon,

I recently read your article about Harold Camping. While I appreciate your critique of someone who is very loudly making a fool of himself in the name of Christianity, I can't help but file a complaint about your methodology.

At the end of the article, after quoting a few sayings of Jesus entirely out of context (a very Camping-esque hermeneutic), the writer concludes, "I find it highly humorous that an omniscient God can't get it right [i.e., predicting the end of the world], but through elementary mathematics, Camping solved the puzzle." In the passages cited, Jesus never mentions the end of the world or his return. Instead, he speaks of "the coming of the Son of Man" and "the kingdom of God/heaven." These phrases carry no specific apocalyptic/eschatological weight, as Jesus himself actually says elsewhere, "[The kingdom of God is within you]" (Luke 17:21). What began as a careful critique of Camping ends in a straw-man low-blow to any mildly intelligent Christian reader The Bent Spoon may have, clearly betraying the writer's bias rather than remain-

ing objective and rational. Had the writer actually picked up a few books and done a little research, he might have avoided insulting 1/4-1/3 of the world's population (i.e., Christians). Perhaps they aren't the intended audience, but you might be surprised. Whatever the case, it would speak better of The Bent Spoon to avoid fallacious arguments and pejorative statements as long as it claims to be calm and rational.

Sincerely,

DP

P.S. May 21st is the day after my exams. Go figure.

DP, thank you so much for your comment.

As far as Jesus being an Apocalyptic Prophet, this absolutely true and the scripture I gave was taken out of context, but not by me. Let me explain.

If we look at what Jesus taught carefully, we can see that he is best understood as a first century apocalypticist. First I must say that this idea, that Jesus was an apocalypticist is nothing new among biblical scholars. Albert Schweitzer was arguing this point in the early 1900's, not to mention most biblical scholars are already subscribing if not have already subscribed to this idea.

I mean it is apparent if you read the bible in the right context. First we know Jesus started his ministry in association with John the Baptist, who was clearly an early apocalypticist, who preached that God's judgment of a sinful world was in sight.

Mark 1:15 - And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

Matthew 3:1-12 - 1In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,

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2And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

3For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

4And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

5Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan,

6And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

7But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

8Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

9And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

10And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

11I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance. but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:

12Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

And Luke 3:16-17 - 16John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:

17Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.

It is also clear that soon after the baptism of Jesus by John; Jesus started to preach the same message as John.

Matthew 4:17 - 17From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

This is a very apocalyptic message.

We also know that the Gospels, although first in the New Testament are not first chronologically. Chronologically the message of Paul would come first. I don't think there can be any argument here, that Paul's message was very apocalyptic in nature. Paul believed whole heartedly that they were living in the end times and that the judgment of God was near. We have very early letters from Paul that date from the 50s AD. They are autobiographical and undisputed. The message again is very apocalyptic in nature.

Firstly Paul preached to the Corinthians that people should not get married, because the end was coming so soon. Here is just one of the many apocalyptic

verses that Paul wrote.

1 Corinthians 7:29-31 - 29But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none;

30And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not;

31And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

If we go to the earliest Gospel, which would be The Gospel According to Mark, we find many apocalyptic messages.

Mark 8:38 - 38Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

Mark 13:24-27 - 24But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light,

25And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.

26And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

27And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.

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Mark 13:30 - 30 Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. (I don't know how this is taken out of context; it seems like a pretty blatant promise.)

Mark 1:15 - 15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. (Again this reflects the teachings that John the Baptist was preaching.)

We also know that Jesus referred to himself as the "Son of Man," which is clearly something that was taken out of the book of Daniel.

Daniel 7:13-14 - 13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

Now let's look at Mark 13:26-27 - 26 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

27 And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.

Mark 14:62 - 62 And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

The Bible is filled with apocalyptic logic

as well. I will only quote a few.

Mark 10:31 - 31 But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.

Matthew 5:5 - 5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Luke 6:20-23 - 20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.

21 Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.

22 Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.

23 Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

And of course Jesus preached that the Kingdom was forthcoming.

Matthew 16:28 - ...there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

Mark 9:1- And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

Luke 9:27- But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.

Like I mentioned above, these are pretty explicit promises, not taken out of context by me, but read perfectly in context from the Bible. So what happened? Well according to New Testament scholar James Dunn, author of "Jesus Remember," "Jesus had entertained hopes which were not fulfilled. There were 'final' elements in his expectation which were not realized. Putting it bluntly, Jesus was proved wrong by the course of events."

E.P. Sanders, another New Testament scholar, writes in his book "Historical Figure of Jesus" why Christianity didn't die away, even after the failed predications of Jesus. "his followers preached that he would return immediately—that is, they simply interpreted "the Son of Man" as referring to Jesus himself. Then, when people started dying, they said that some would still be alive. When almost the entire first generation was dead, they maintained that one disciple would still be alive [John 21:23]. Then he died, and it became necessary to claim that Jesus had not actually promised even this one disciple that he would live to see that great day."

I think my point is clear.

As far as the accusation of me creating a straw man argument, I have to say, no I have not. I simply stated that Harold Camping's prediction that Judgment Day is to happen on May 21st, 2011 will come and pass like every other end of the world prediction, including Christ's predictions. He made explicit promises that didn't happen; nothing was taken out of context by me. It is taken out of context by people who need to modernize the Bible and make it relevant for today. The Bible is not a history book, it wasn't intended to be. It was meant for the people at that time, who had a totally different idea/view of how the REAL world works.

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I also think it would be wise for you to understand what being rational and thinking critically means. If we use the word rational to mean logical, then my explanation is very rational. If we use the term critically thinking to mean a form of thinking that questions assumptions, I win again. I took what you obviously assume as reality (Christianity) and questioned it critically and came to a totally different logical conclusion.

Jesus Christ was an apocalypticist, someone who preached that the end of the world would come very soon, within the lives of his disciples. I think it is pretty obvious that it didn't happen.

I also don't appreciate being called out on a logical fallacy while at the same time you are using ad hominem attacks on me. You have no idea who I am or how much research I have done on the Bible. I don't just read things that adhere to my personal beliefs. If what I write is offensive to you, I am sorry, it wasn't intended to be. Nor was I intending to upset or insult anyone with a particular religious belief, I don't care what people believe in; they have the right to believe anything they want to. Where we differ is that your response was meant to be disrespectful, assuming I have no knowledge of what I am speaking about.

The bottom line is this, if Jesus' mentor was an apocalypticist, and Jesus' followers were apocalypticists, it would seem logical to infer that Jesus was an apocalypticist.

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Why is it ok for a skeptic to use the same equipment as an investigator, to prove that "ghost" are not real, but when an "investigator" uses the equipment, to try and prove that "ghost" are possible, they get made fun of and get bashed?

-Michele Nardone

Good question, Michele. And I'll try to answer it as completely as I can.

First of all, I can understand any frustration you've felt at being made fun of or bashed by someone who is identifying themselves as a skeptic. Positive outreach and communication is something the skeptical community needs to continue to work on. The good news is that it is a topic very much at the forefront of their agenda. For instance, former President of the James Randi Educational Foundation, and Bad Astronomy blogger, Phil Plait has been very vocal about the need for skeptics to calm their level of discourse as often as possible (ie: The "Don't Be A Dick" speech <http://vimeo.com/13704095>) Of course, believers can often be just as rude when discussing their beliefs, and it is my opinion that both sides need to listen and ask questions instead of name calling or otherwise putting others down.

Now, onto the rest of your question. A true skeptic should not be trying to prove that ghosts don't exist. Skepticism, like science, should not be trying to work on certainties in these matters. Skeptics should not say "Ghosts DO NOT exist," because that, just like "Ghosts DO exist" is a claim that requires evidence to back it up. It can be very difficult, nearly impossible at times, to prove a negative. And the fact of the matter is, that none of us have all the information required to make a statement on the existence of ghosts one way or another. I think skeptics are basically saying that the evidence put forth for the existence of ghosts is weak and unconvincing, while the believers are largely using personal experiences and

unsatisfactory scientific methods to base their conclusions on.

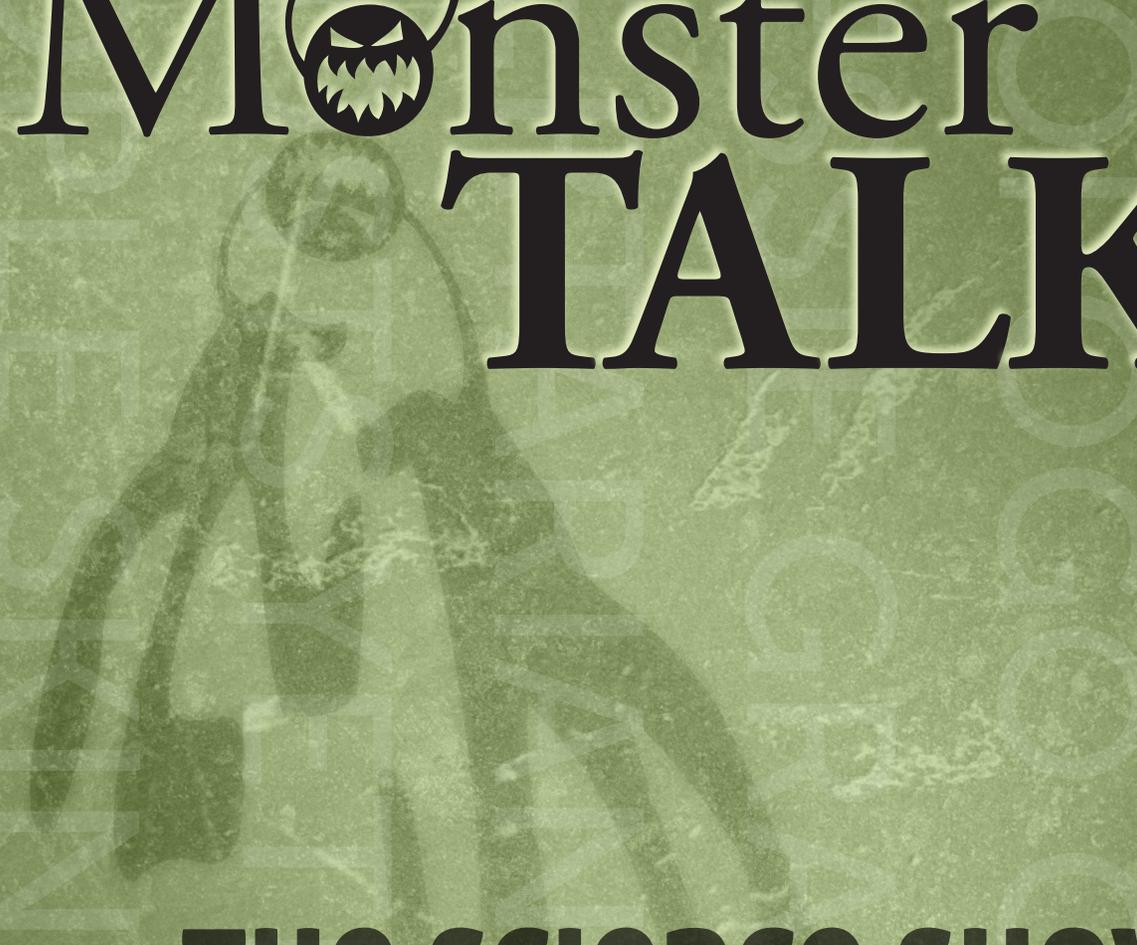
This is where the equipment may come in to play. Skeptics use equipment like EMF meters and "Ghost Boxes," for instance, in order to show other, more natural explanations, can be found instead of making the leap to "It's a ghost!" For instance, we know that EM is a naturally occurring force in our environment, and that it also given off by everyday household appliances and wiring in the houses we visit. Moreover, an EM field is also given off by the very equipment we use! So, your EMF meter, video camera, etc. all give off an observable, measurable amount of electromagnetic energy. It is difficult then for one to use a piece of equipment like this to prove that EMF fluctuations could be paranormal in origin, when EMF fluctuations in a given location are an everyday, normal occurrence.

Furthermore, ghost hunters will often attribute feelings of being watched, having headaches, and other symptoms to high levels of EMF found in a home when, in fact, there has never been a repeatable, peer-reviewed study that has confirmed this link. Indeed, no medical doctor I know is prescribing their patient to "turn down the EMF in your home" when they complain of a headache.

It is for these reasons, and many more, that skeptics may use popular ghost hunting gadgets in order to show other explanations for perceived paranormal phenomena. I hope this helps to answer your question, Michele. Thank you for helping to continue this much needed conversation.

-Jason Korbus

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FEATURE

WE WILL ALL STILL BE HERE MAY 22ND

BY BOBBY NELSON

There is not a doubt in my mind that nothing is going to happen on this May 21st date. Well I will probably be waking up with a hideous hang over from my "End of the World" party on May 20th, but none of the catastrophes predicted by Harold Camping will come to fruition.

For those who may not know what is going on, Harold Camping and Family Radio have been promoting that the world is going to end May 21st, 2011 because the Bible has given infallible proof s within its pages. I have heard it speculated that Family Radio has spent between 4-6 million dollars on this campaign, though it hasn't be confirmed, I don't find it unbelievable at all. They have caravans that tour the country preaching this nonsense and they have judgment day billboards worldwide. I have counted 15 of these billboards where I live in Toledo, Ohio alone.

May 21st is quickly approaching and I am sitting here with a smile on my face. Not because I believe I will be raptured, it is because I can't wait for Harold Camping to be wrong... again. Yes, I said again. You see, Harold isn't new the "guess the date of the end of the world" game. He made a prediction in 1992 that the world would end in 1994 and as you can probably guess, it didn't happen.

Harold was able to get out of that nonsense by saying that the title of his book 1994? had a question mark at the end of 1994. Supposedly this was Harold's way of say-

ing it may not happen. However Harold has grown a bit bolder with his present day prediction, claiming that it is 100% going to happen, May 21st, 2011 will be Judgment Day.

I mean I can tell you with 100% certainty that May 21st, 2011 is going happen as well, but so will May 22nd, 2011 and May 23rd, 2011. Just like 1994, May 21st, 2011 will come and go. So to all the young children that call into Camping's show in tears, terrified that end is coming or that they might not see their parents again, rest easy, none of this stuff is going to happen.

But what is Harold going to say? I have one guess. On Harold Camping's radio show Open Forum he preaches a lot about two topics in relation to May 21st, first that people should "cry mightily unto God for mercy," and he is constantly talking about how God spared the Ninevites from destruction in the book of Jonah. I feel this is the start of his contingency plan. When the Rapture and Judgment day doesn't happen on May 21st, Camping is going to have to explain why to his followers.

I predict it'll sound something like this:

"Glory be to our merciful God, who does everything perfect. Judgment day was upon us, but like the Ninevites you spared us your wrath and destruction after

hearing our pleas for mercy."

It'll either be that, or he will say:

"The Bible is very complex and we must have over looked an important calculation."

What we won't hear is:

"I am truly sorry everyone, I was wrong, I should never have done this, it was very irresponsible of me."

Most people will probably laugh and shrug this whole thing off as another nut who failed to predict the end of the world. But what about the poor followers of Camping, who believe in this so much that they, sold their houses, spent their life savings, their children's college tuitions etc. Believe me folks this has happened. I just read an article about a 60 year old man named Robert Fitzpatrick. Fitzpatrick spent his life savings of \$140,000 promoting that the world will end on May 21st, 2011. We can't forget about Lyn Benedetto, a 47 year old woman who sliced her daughters and her own throat to avoid the Tribulation. All 3 lived, but the deed was done to avoid Judgement day. The crazies are out there. When I read these stories I don't know whether to feel sorry and compassionate or if I should say, well it serves you right for subscribing to such nonsense.

I know if people believe in this type of stuff; there is probably nothing I can say to convince anyone otherwise. However I am still very interested in hearing Camping try to weasel out of this one. In a perfect world, on May 22nd, 2011 Family Radio will force Camping to resign, but I guess we will just have to wait and see what happens.

SOUPERNATURAL

SPONTANEOUS HUMAN COMBUSTION

By Jason Korbis

There are few topics in the paranormal world that draw the attention of the curious quite like Spontaneous Human Combustion (SHC). We've heard about it on television programs like *Unsolved Mysteries*, read accounts in articles online and elsewhere and maybe, just maybe, heard it happened to the friend of a friend of a friend we know.

The idea that a human being can just burst into flames is an intriguing one because it sounds like it can happen to any one of us. And since so few of us know much about the makeup of our bodies, it is simply a scary enough thought to make it seem like a real hazard. The good news is that there is absolutely no evidence to back up SHC being a real phenomenon at all. Furthermore, the people who continue to postulate its existence have built their case on a mountain of unscientific theories, made up words, and heavy doses of fallacious logic.

At one time, excessive drinking was thought to lead to SHC. A 17th century story concerns a German who combusted due to consuming a large amount of brandy. And in Charles Dickens' 1852 novel *Bleak House*, the author used SHC to explain the death of a heavy drinking character. Of course, there is simply no possible way this could ever happen. The amount of alcohol one would have to consume would poison you long before your body could be considered even remotely flammable. Furthermore, if heavy drinking is all it takes for a human being to spontaneously combust, Mardi Gras and New Year's celebra-

tions would be rife with reports.

But the best known, and perhaps most often cited case of SHC was that of Mary Reeser; known in popular culture as the "Cinder Lady." Her remains, discovered on July 2nd 1951 in her apartment, were little more than ash and a left foot. The fire was confined largely to the area in which she had been sitting. For instance, her chair was destroyed, and yet objects across the room, while slightly damaged, were mostly recognizable.

There can be no doubt the case was perplexing. A physical anthropologist named Wilton Krogman investigated at the request of the local police chief and later wrote, "I find it hard to believe that a human body, once ignited, will literally consume itself." Continuing on, "I cannot conceive of such complete cremation without more burning of the apartment itself. In fact the apartment and everything in it should have been consumed. [...] I regard it as the most amazing thing I have ever seen. As I review it, the short hairs on my neck bristle with vague fear. Were I living in the Middle Ages, I'd mutter something about black magic."

But the FBI had already reviewed the case and concluded that Reeser's body had been incinerated by "the wick effect." Mrs. Reeser was an avid smoker, and fond of taking sleeping pills. In fact, her son, who was the last to see her alive, reported that she was sitting in the chair, wearing flammable night-

clothes, with a cigarette in hand. She reportedly told him she had already taken two sleeping pills, and planned to take two more shortly. The FBI hypothesized that Mrs. Reeser had fallen asleep while smoking, and set fire to her clothes. "Once the body starts to burn," the FBI wrote in its report, "there is enough fat and other inflammable substances to permit varying amounts of destruction to take place. Sometimes this destruction by burning will proceed to a degree which results in almost complete combustion of the body."

Granted, this solution sounds nearly as incredible as the very idea that a human being can spontaneously combust. But the truth is that "the wick effect" as an explanation for SHC cases has been proven time and time again in replicable experiments. And if you look at the details of a number of reputed cases of Spontaneous Human Combustion, similarities abound. Frequently, the person killed is a heavy smoker (or has come in contact with flame), is wearing flammable clothes, and is either on sleeping pills or under the influence of alcohol. If you put fire together with flammable substances, and couple that with a person who is impaired, results can often be deadly. Human fat acts as a fuel source. Often in the literature of SHC, human remains are reported to have been found mired in a brown, greasy substance. That substance, inevitably, is fat.

So, as we can clearly see, the more often cited case of SHC was proven to be quite explainable when the methods of science were applied by trained professionals. But the belief that humans spontaneously combust does persist. Why? For that we turn to the man who is perhaps the most tireless proponent of SHC, Larry Arnold.

Mr. Arnold bills himself as the “Director of Parascience International” which, as best as I can tell, is largely a one man operation based out of a house in Harrisburg, PA. Having had the chance to interview Arnold before, and following him online, I am aware of his “theories” for the existence of Spontaneous Human Combustion.

The first thing he posits is the existence of a subatomic particle which he calls a Pyrotron. He believes it is a “high-powered particle” that “zips through the spaces between the quarks that make up the atoms.” He thinks it is possible that, “on rare occasions a rogue particle scores a direct hit with a quark and sets off an internal chain reaction.” Oh, and he also says this is all based on quantum physics. Which, of course, it isn’t. It is a made up name for a particle that does not exist and has never been shown to exist. It is all speculation with no basis in fact that shows an immense ignorance of cellular life and spontaneous nuclear fusion. I would bet that Mr. Arnold has no better understanding of quantum physics than do most laypeople, and is invoking the name of this serious scientific study in an effort to make his argument sound credible in much the same way that ghost hunters and psychics do.

He also theorizes that kundalini, an untraceable, unmeasurable “bio-energy” that, when “out of balance” acts like a “quasi-plasma-like ball” that can reduce the human torso to ash. Again, this is just ridiculous. These aren’t “theories” in the scientific sense. They don’t even count as hypotheses because they can’t be tested. In other words, it is nonsense that is far more complicated than it has to be, since natural explanations has already taken care of the details. It is unnecessary to invent particle

names, or appeal to unknowable, untraceable energy fields.

When it comes to Spontaneous Human Combustion, the urban legends can’t be verified, believers speculate instead of investigate, and the best science available disproves its very existence. But don’t expect this to sway Mr. Arnold, or other proponents of SHC. Arnold himself states, “...I have nothing I can take into a scientific laboratory and reproduce under controlled conditions.” But when you theorize before you have facts you will twist facts to fit theories instead of base theories on facts. And that, as the great fictional detective Sherlock Holmes would say, is a capital mistake.

REFERENCES & FURTHER READING

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MAKING AMENDS:

WHY I NO LONGER BELIEVE IN THE GHOST/EMF CONNECTION

When I first heard the idea for The Bent Spoon, the most important thing to me was that the magazine become a middle ground for true believers and those skeptical of paranormal explanations to have a conversation. I, like many now skeptical, was once a believer in many aspects of the paranormal. Ghosts, Bigfoot, extraterrestrial visitation, psychic phenomenon - it all seemed very real to me. I read about it, wrote about it, and I talked about it. I wasn't even aware there was strong, scientific-based arguments against these ideas because I never felt reached out to by the skeptical community. I was in an echo chamber, hearing about only what I believed in, and I didn't know how to properly challenge those beliefs.

One of those beliefs were not just that ghosts were real, but that they were made of electromagnetism. I once wrote, in an article titled "Theories About Ghosts," that "since we know everything around us, including our very bodies, are composed of electromagnetism, it is very possible that a ghost is made up of the same thing, albeit in somewhat different amounts and of differing levels of stabilization." I believed at the time that, since ghosts were possibly made of electromagnetism, they could be detected with EMF meters. I was watching a lot of programs

like Ghost Hunters on television. They claimed to be following scientific methodologies, and would sometimes "debunk" certain claims. They seemed honest and authoritative and so I believed a good deal of what they were saying.

But it was when I took my ghost hobby out of the house and into the real world that I began to doubt what I was hearing. For instance, I can remember going out with my friends Bobby Nel-

But it was when I took my ghost hobby out of the house and into the real world that I began to doubt what I was hearing.

son, Jeremy Dunbar, and Amanda Gannon to a place we had dubbed "The Radcliffe House." It was at this location that Bobby once believed he had experienced paranormal activity as a child. It was the same home that several members of his family had apparently witnessed apparitions. I remember one night being upstairs in the master bedroom, all of us shining our flashlights on a digital EMF meter and asking any ghosts present to make the reading go up. After nearly a half hour of coaxing, the EMF meter began to behave strangely. It went

from .1 to .9 within a few seconds and then leveled off. We kept at it, and eventually we got it to go up to around 1.5 before it finally went back down to .1 and stopped. We were blown away! The EMF readings had gone up while we were asking ghosts to do it. It was just like we had seen on television. This stuff was real!

In one of the days that followed, three of us came back. Bobby, Amanda, and myself. While we were still excited, we had used the layover to doubt whether ghosts had really caused the fluctuations. Yes, it is true that we were speaking out loud asking ghosts present to alter the readings, but could we be sure that ghosts are what was doing it? We had the EMF meter on the floor that night, right above

a source of power. When we took readings in the living room below, the ceiling did give off higher readings from time to time. We noticed that anytime we would put our EMF meters near walls, floors or ceilings, readings might spike briefly. Could this be the explanation?

We went into another bedroom in the middle of the day and began playing around and talking about the events of that exciting night. But, at the same time, we began to ask ourselves serious questions. The readings had definitely

changed but what did that even mean?

Bobby pulled out his Blackberry and started Googling articles about EMF. He started reading out loud about how EMF is everywhere, and how fluctuations happen normally. If these statements were true, how could we ever know a ghost was causing the readings to change? We started experimenting a bit and found out that it almost didn't matter where you were in any house. If you sat an EMF meter around and watched it long enough, the reading would fluctuate from time to time. There are just too many factors involved that could have been causing the fluctuations that night. We had cellphones on us. We had electronic recording equipment. The house we were in was wired for power, and we even recalled how the neighbors were outside doing who-knows-what with their car while we were getting those readings. This isn't even to mention all the other many possibilities of the radio and micro waves that travel around us all the time that we cannot even see. We had to be honest with ourselves: there were so many contributing factors to our brief EMF fluctuations that we couldn't possibly point to the unproven possibility that a ghost did it in place of the many possibilities that were not only proven but were far more likely.

That was the day my excitement over EMF fluctuations died. But I'm glad it did. Because now I'm more informed than I was previously. Like a lot of enthusiasts,

I've said that I got into the paranormal to find the truth. What I originally thought was true ended up not being true at all. And once I had more information, I changed my mind. That is what we should all be doing.

The articles I used to write about ghost theories, and other related ideas, are still online. They can be found by googling my name. People have asked me what I'm going to do to remove them. Certainly, if I've changed my mind about my old beliefs, why keep the articles up? To me the answer is simple. I keep them up because they are an ever present reminder that, as smart as I thought I was, I had been easily deceived. Though I'm more knowledgeable now, I am also aware how I could be fooled again. Something I wrote just last week could end up being wrong. And if I find out, I'll correct my thinking, and never preach that incorrect information again. Like I said, I got into the paranormal to find the truth, beliefs be damned.

I'd like to contribute more articles like this in future editions of The Bent Spoon. I think it is helpful to start conversations by admitting past mistakes, and talking together about what we have learned. I hope this article about how I no longer believe in the ghost/EMF connection helped you out. Maybe in the future we can figure out similar problems together. See you next time!



“Feeling the Future” or Behavior Modification?

part one

by Rachel Wolf

Several months ago I stumbled across a brief news report discussing the latest study to “prove” precognition. A parapsychologist’s wet dream—scientific evidence to support what they have believed for years. Finally, laboratory results that skeptics cannot refute! Now I admit that I have no formal education in parapsychology, but I do have training and experience in reading psychological research papers. So when news outlets published articles positing that this may be the study that proves psi, I had to read it for myself.

The paper, approved for publication in *The Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, has been turning heads for several months. The author, Dr. Daryl J. Bem, even appeared on *The Colbert Report* to discuss his work. While the impact rating for this journal is quite low (6.594), this hyped research could have a much more significant impact on the field of parapsychology. However, in this review I will argue that this study does nothing to support parapsychology, and if anything, it may disprove it altogether.

The paper is a report of nine lab experiments done with student participants over the course of ten years. At 60 pages, it’s a lengthy article. In this review, I would like to focus on the results pertaining to precognition (approach and avoidance) and affective priming (retroactive priming). In a future issue, I will address the habituation and recall aspects of this paper.

#1: Precognitive Detection of Erotic Stimuli

The purpose of this experiment was to use erotic pictures as explicit reinforcers for correct cognitive guesses. 100 participants were shown 2 curtains and had to record a guess as to where the erotic image was. After the guess was made, the computer used a random number generator to select where to place the erotic image. Results showed that the

placement of the erotic images was correctly guessed above chance, at 53.1%. Explanations for the results, other than precognition, rule out clairvoyance because of the use of RNG’s, and support the idea that participants may have used psychokinesis to influence the RNG’s in the computer. Dr. Bem cites other work that seems to support this conclusion.

#2: Precognitive Avoidance of Negative Stimuli

150 participants were used in this study. The methodology was similar to the first experiment with some modifications. The participant was asked to express a preference between two near-identical images. After the selection was made, the computer randomly selected one of the images as the “target”. If the “target” was the same as the selected image, a positive image was flashed subliminally on the screen three times. If the non-target image was selected by the participant, a highly-arousing negative image was shown in the same way. Results show the hit rate to be 51.7%.

#3: Retroactive Priming 1

This procedure aimed to “prime” (or expose the participant to a similar image) only after selection was made. 100 participants (64 trials each) were shown an image and asked to press a key quickly to indicate if they thought the image was either pleasant or unpleasant. The dependent variable was the inter-response time. Half of the trials consisted of the priming word being flashed after selection, the other half before selection. 3 of the participants were excluded to due errors (which were not explained in the paper). Trials with longer or shorter inter-response times were considered outliers and not included. While the details of the data are difficult to decipher (largely in part to lack of definitions provided), it would appear that the percentage with priming

for retroactive priming (with IRT greater than 2,300 ms) was 56.7, and for forward priming 63.9.

#4: Retroactive Priming 2

This was a replication of #3 with an additional 100 participants, modified in three ways. The fixed prime was assigned to each picture prior to the experiment (a positive prime for a bowl of fruit was “luscious” and a negative prime was “bitter”, for example). The computer randomly selected the prime. The type of trial, retroactive or forward, was determined by a sampling-with-replacement procedure, which is different than randomizing the trials as in #3. The time between trials was decreased by 500 ms. Results were reported as nearly identical to those obtained in #3: the percentage with priming for retroactive priming (with IRT greater than 2,500 ms) was 61.6, and for forward priming 59.6

The results of this study do not lead me to conclude that precognition was demonstrated here for several reasons. First, Bem himself states that replications may not be viable, due to the participants and the erotic images shown. He argues that other populations may not react to erotic images the way these participants did. That may be the first red flag for this study. Experiments need to be designed for replication and generalization, which is clearly not the case here.

Another issue I have with the two experiments is the results. There is no accounting for error (which on average is about 1%). While that 3.1% above chance may be statistically significant, there is no accounting for other variables. In fact, the most probable explanation for these results was dismissed by Bem: the RNG and the selections made by the participants may have simply collided out of chance. Meaning that the RNG may have made a selection that just happened to match the selection of the participant. This type of effect is also responsible for creating superstitious behavior (because one time you wore dirty underwear and your favorite team just happened to win...). In behavior modification, this concept is referred to as non-contingent reinforcement (NCR). Basically, therapists hope that by providing NCR to a person with behavior problems, it will come in contact with positive behavior by chance, and reduce problem behavior. I see

this same effect in Bem's interpretation of the results.

I honestly hesitate to examine the results for #3 and #4, because I had a difficult time understanding the statistical analysis. However, the methodology does point to a potential combination of the effect I described above with what is called the carryover effect. The carryover effect is when effects achieved by one treatment or condition carries over to influence the effect of a proceeding treatment or condition. In this study, it is possible that the randomization of the priming may have had a carryover effect. This is also an effect seen in cancer patients who claim to be cured by prayer. They have gone through medical treatment, but when cancer symptoms decrease, they correlate that effect to the prayer, rather than noticing the carryover (and cumulative) effect of the medical intervention.

One of the issues raised by Bem is that the experimenter can influence the results, saying that previous studies have shown that skeptics get different results than proponents. He claims to have accounted for this effect by using students, however, in the end he is the author of the paper. He is interpreting the results, so of course his bias does reflect the conclusions made. I would argue that of course a proponent will get favorable results, because they are less likely to find other sources to explain the data, whereas a skeptic will look at the data and then find explanations.

And I would be remiss not to scoff at the interpretation of the first experiment. Bem, who claims to be providing scientifically sound methods to support a field struggling for legitimacy, explains the results could be due to participants using psychokinesis to influence the computer's RNG. I think my rudimentary explanations above more than disprove this. Ah, Occam's razor slices away woo yet again!

But what is perhaps more interesting is that the methods in the first two experiments may not have been testing psi at all, but rather behavior modification. Every individual has biases. For example, I always pick rock the first hand when playing rock paper scissors. I am left-handed, so I prefer to chose the left side first. One is not always conscious of these minor biases, but I believe this study developed a way to take advantage of these. By randomizing the images over the course of

36 trials, the participant may have come across reinforcement (the erotic image) early on in the session.

Psychologist B.F. Skinner wrote extensively that the goal for any organism is to gain access to the reinforcement again (in this case, the erotic image). In fact, this creates what is called a motivating operation for the value of that erotic image. Meaning that the image so reinforcing that the individual may break their biases to guess differently. Because this bias no longer exists, there may be an increased potential to correctly guess which curtain contains the erotic image. While this effect may not be explicit within 36 trials, a replication with more trials may show this effect and some modifications to the methodology may be able to contrive this contingency, essentially creating people with "precognition".

Additionally, this effect may be seen in #3 and #4. A previous negative prime with an image may affect responding as Bem states, but not with psi. Avoidance of the negative stimuli creates an abolishing operation for guessing correctly. The participant knows there is a 50-50 chance they will come across the negative image and may not put effort into guessing. They may simply pick as quickly as possible to get any punishing exposure over with.

The first four experiments of this study lead me to believe that Bem may have stumbled upon a scientifically sound explanation for psi phenomenon, one that psychologists and behaviorists have had since the day of Pavlov's dogs and Skinner's box. In fact, I'm informally developing an experiment to replicate and extend #1 to support my explanation above. However, the true believers will just have to shift their magical thinking from believing in psi to conspiracy theories about precognitive super soldiers.

An advanced copy of Dr. Bem's study may be obtained at: <http://dbem.ws/FeelingFuture.pdf>



PARANORMAL CONJECTURES

by Nicholas Callis

The paranormal mainstream has compiled a list of ideas that they hold as truths, deemed “theories” by the proponents, a semantic shift that seems accepted by the populous. In science, a theory is created by

Repeatedly reproducing the results predicted by a hypothesis. A theory is as close as science can come to a fact, vastly different from the usage in the paranormal community, where-in, it is used as a term for a speculation.

Because, of course, how could one make a falsifiable, predictive hypothesis in regard to a paranormal phenomenon? Such phenomena have no known method or procedure of measurement or detection.

In spite of this, there are a handful of these so called theories that I will examine and determine if they hold any grains of truth.

The first law of thermodynamics or conservation of energy is often given as a possible explanation of what comprises a ghost and how it came to be. Whether this misunderstanding is what led many investigators to believe ghosts are made of “energy” or that it was given as a supportive hypothesis of the former in unknown to me and, most likely, to the claimant as well. Though the underlying concept is a pretty common one. It’s the general misinterpretation of energy itself.

Simply put, energy scalar quantity of a physical system’s ability to perform work on another physical system. Think of a car’s horsepower. In this sense, some one saying “Ghosts are just energy” would be equivalent to saying “Ghosts are just heat” or “Ghosts are the chemical potential energy in glucose”. There is a tendency to imagine energy as a substance. Something our bodies contain or flow around us as an aura.

To those making the claim, are human

bodies like a jar of fireflies, buzzing with a swarm of glowing, free-floating energy that escapes the moment we die?

If that were the case, then I think they’d most likely speaking of energy in the metaphysical sense. Life force, Ki, Prana, Kundalini, or Spirit is the ever-present force connecting all things, giving life, creating auras, and the base of most alternative medicine. It’s also a handy reference to explain anything paranormal. While many cultures believe in some form of a life force or another, this “energy” of the body is not detectable in any way beyond the claims of self proclaimed sensitives. And why should it be? It is not energy in the physical sense, so the laws of physics need not govern it, right? If that is indeed the case, then conservation of energy would not apply and that “theory” is busted.

At this point, some might still ask, “What happens to our body’s energy when we die, then?”

This is pretty simple to explain. Being that the body is dead, it no longer needs to take in any energy in the form of food. The remaining energy in the body is radiated off as heat and the rest of the chemical energy stored in

our tissues is consumed by the body’s environment.

Another popular idea is the “Stone Tape Theory”, In the lexicon of your average ghost hunter, you’ll typically find between three and five classifications of hauntings. These range from the more sensational demonic

and poltergeist types to the less violent, yet still interactive intelligent hauntings and shadow people and finally, the “residual haunting” or restligeist (essentially “residual ghost”). This type is described as a non interactive scene

from the past, played on loop, like a

skipping record and can be represented by visual and auditory phenomena. The mechanism suggested to support this phenomena is localized minerals such as limestone and quartz act as a recording medium capturing the emotional energy resulting from a traumatic event, typically involving death. This conjecture presumes the existence of the non-conventional emotional energy despite no evidence supporting it and no known method of measuring or detecting it. While this fact invalidates the postulate outright, I want to delve a little further into the subject in order to discover the possible rationale behind it.

The second factor in the stone tape hypothesis rests upon the presence of quartz and limestone, the recording medium for the “energy” to be captured and replayed. Quartz is the most common mineral found in soil and limestone is prevalent many types of architecture and is also quite common. That properties do they have in common? The presence of silica is the only relation I’m aware of beyond the fact that quartz can be found in natural cavities of limestone. Between the two, quartz seems like a likely choice due to the new age fascination with crystals. Though crystals are thought to have paranormal qualities, one true property may be the source of the mystical misconception. Crystals are known to be piezoelectric, meaning that when the crystal is compressed, it’s crystal lattice deforms and disturbs the charge balance. When the lattice is changed slightly, the charge imbalance creates a potential difference, essentially producing electricity. While this property is fascinating, it lends no credence nor supports in any way the idea that it can record moments in time. I think we would see this happening all around us, all of the time if these minerals truly possessed this property.

In typical fashion of paranormal theories, this concept has been copy/pasted so many times over that it’s become unclear where it originated, but it was likely born from the 1961 book *Ghost and Ghoul* by

Thomas Lethbridge or Peter Sasyd’s teleplay *the Stone Tape*, the latter being responsible for the name, at least.

Similar to the stone tapes, the basic idea of the water tape theory is that neighboring bodies of water absorb the “emotional crisis energy” of a traumatic event, imprinting the event in the body of water and spontaneously

playing it back on repeat. While it seems possible the piezoelectric effect may be responsible for the attribution of mystical properties of crystals which may have led to the foundation of the stone tape concept, the property of water memory is based solely on bad science.

Originally proposed by Jacques Benveniste in 1988, Benveniste, a proponent of homeopathy, sought to explain a foundational mechanism of the practice. In an experiment involving human antibodies being diluted out of existence in water, Benveniste reported that human basophils responded as if reacting to the actual antibodies.

He is quoted stating “It’s like agitating a car key in the river, going miles downstream, extracting a few drops of water, and then starting one’s car with the water.”

It should be known that these results were only found in the solution that was violently shaken during dilution.

The Results were submitted to the scientific journal Nature and were the subject of some controversy. In the following issue, a follow-up investigation was conducted by Nature editor John Maddox and renowned skeptic James Randi. The results were found to be non repeatable, though Benveniste refused to retract the article stating that the protocol in the following investigations were not identical to his own.

Another proponent of magical water properties is Dr. Masaru Emoto who claims that thoughts or emotion can directly effect water droplets resulting in noticeable differences when the droplets are frozen, being deemed “beautiful” or “ugly”. His methods and protocol are highly criticized, though Emoto openly admits that he is not a scientist.

There are countless other pseudo-scientific

claims revolving around water that I could rattle off, but they most likely wouldn’t bring us any closer to the the origin of the water tape theory and it’s relation to residual hauntings.

If I were to speculate, I would assume that it is merely a modification of the stone tape theory, bolstered by confirmation bias. Being that water is even more abundant than quartz or limestone, finding a body of water near an alleged residual haunting is far more likely, creating an unfounded causal relationship between the two. This logical fallacy is known also as Post hoc ergo propter hoc (Latin for after this, therefore because of this) and is nearly as abundant in the paranormal community as bodies of water and limestone are to tragic events.

Let’s consider the concept. If water were capable of retaining the emotional energies produced by traumatic events, the world we live in would be cluttered by these projected playbacks. Water is run through all of our cities and houses through plumbing, there is water in the air, and the human body is 61.8% by weight. Think of it, we’d be sneezing ghosts!

A more recent concept is the Interdimensional being angle: This premise conjures up images from 1950s B movies, but seems to be quickly climbing the ranks in the paranormal community. Originally postulated as a proposed explanation for the sporadic behavior of UFOs, most notably supported by Jacques Vallee and J. Allen Hynek as an alternative “hypothesis” to the Extraterrestrial Hypothesis. Hypothesis, again, being a loose term and not intended in the scientific definition, being that the interdimensional hypothesis is not falsifiable or testable through experiment.

This concept has been adopted by paranormal investigators, seeking a possible explanation for what they classify as Intelligent Hauntings and more commonly Shadow People. The classification of intelligent haunting refers to an interactive entity, such as a poltergeist or a demonic entity. Unlike the residual haunting, these beings are fully aware and cognizant. Shadow people (shadow men/ shadow beings/ shadow figures) are

featureless silhouettes and are typically considered “evil entities”. The archetypal shadow person experience is reported at night, after waking or seen in fleeting visions in the witness’ peripheral vision. While this phenomena could be easily explained by sleep paralysis or hypnagogia, pareidolia, and even retinal detachment, paranormal investigators propose that these are living entities, entering our bedrooms at night through inter-dimensional portals or vortices. This notion, they feel, is supported by string theory, thereby making the inter-dimensional hypothesis scientific. What they fail to understand is that even if these extra dimensions exist (there are no experiments capable of confirming these dimensions and are purely hypothetical) they are thought to be extremely small, as in possibly below the scale of quarks and strings.

I believe this misunderstanding lies in the term dimension itself, being confused for a parallel world instead of the measure of spatial extent, because if you consider it in the light of the correct definition, it literally makes no sense.

Since ideas such as these have been passed back and forth so frequently and been adopted and promoted by television personalities, it’s very unlikely that they will be abandoned, eternally being played in loop within the closed system of the paranormal community, a stone tape itself. A parting word of advice to paranormal investigators; If you want to be taken seriously by science, take science seriously.

THE ARGUMENT FROM

IGNORANCE *by Bobby Nelson*

When I say someone is using an argument from ignorance, they typically think I am calling them stupid. That couldn't be farther from the truth, that is just a name for this specific logical fallacy. The argument from ignorance simply means that the lack of knowledge or evidence is used as evidence to support or contest a claim. This is how the argument from ignorance works:

"There is no evidence against p.
Therefore, p."

To relate this fallacy in terms of ghost hunting, we get, "since there is no evidence against the existence of ghosts, ghosts exist."

Or to use it in ways I have heard paranormal enthusiasts spew over and over again:

"I saw a shadow out of the corner of my eye, I don't really know what it was, and therefore it was a shadow person."

"We heard the sounds of walking upstairs, we know no one was upstairs at the time, therefore it was a ghost."

"We got an anomalous voice on a recording; no one was talking at the time of the recording, so it must be the voice of the dead."

"We got a spike on our EMF meter, there is no power on in the house, therefore it is ghost energy."

So when using the argument from ignorance, a person is saying that something is true because it hasn't been proved false, or vice versa, that

something is false because it has not been proved true. The problem with this type of logic is that it posits a false dichotomy, basically saying there are only two outcomes. Saying that you saw a shadow out the corner of your eye doesn't mean that it was the ever elusive shadow man. Yet on that same token it doesn't prove that it wasn't. There may be many reasons why an individual saw a shadow out the corner of the eye.

Usually when I am in a debate I will hear "you can't say ghosts do not exist, science hasn't disproven them." Again this is another argument from ignorance. Saying that science hasn't disproven the existence of ghosts any stronger or more relevant. Usually if this logic is being used it is a way for the person who is making the claim, to shift the burden of proof, another logical fallacy, which we will talk about in a future article. When in an argument, a person should always be proving their statement, not relying on the person opposing to disprove it.

Another important thing to remember is, if in a debate, someone is making a claim about something supernatural we have to remember that this person also has the burden of proof. If the person making a claim has no evidence to support their claim, in this case anything supernatural, it is not an argument from ignorance for the one opposing to assume the premise false until positive evidence is provided.



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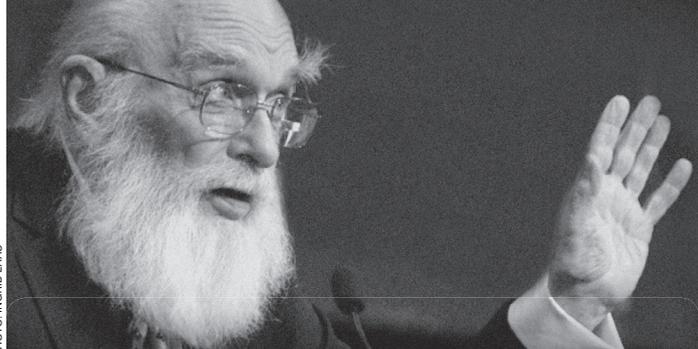


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INTERVIEW

GUNTHER VON HARRINGA



Being that this month (May 21st, 2011) is supposed to be the month when the Rapture is going to happen, we thought it would be fun to interview someone who is well versed and knowledgeable in “what is going to happen.” Not too long ago, on Strange Frequencies Radio, I interviewed a man named Gunther von Harringa. Gunther was recommended to me by the Family Radio Network, the organization started by Harold Camping.

It is no secret that I don’t believe in any of this end of the world, rapture, judgment day stuff. But The Bent Spoon is about going to the source and asking tough, but respectful questions. When Gunther was interviewed on Strange Frequencies Radio, he didn’t quote the Bible once; I think that is why I liked him so much; however I can’t say the same for this interview. The entire interview is littered with biblical scripture. So if you don’t want to read a bunch of Bible verses, I suggest you skip this interview. Nonetheless, it does show you exactly how and why people like Gunther follow this belief. The interview is a bit long, but another thing we are proudful about at The Bent Spoon is we don’t alter to make things make them say things that they don’t. You are getting exactly what Gunther typed to me, word for word.

One thing I have to point out is that Gunther is using circular logic. For example: “Gunther how do you know this is true?” “Well, because the Bible says it is.” “But how do you know that the Bible is true?” “We know that the Bible is true because it is the word of God.” “Well how do you know it’s really the word of God?” “It is really the word of God because the Bible says so.”

Just keep that in mind when reading the interview, thanks –Bobby Nelson

According to a select few, yourself included, you claim to have proof that the Rapture that is talked about in the Bible will be happening May 21st, 2011. Could you please talk about what the Rapture is and what "proofs" you have that this event is going to occur?

God will open all the graves around the globe by means of a worldwide earthquake of unparalleled proportions. Those who had died previously as genuine Christians will receive their glorified spiritual bodies and be "caught up" (i.e., "raptured") to meet the Lord in the air, closely followed by Believers who are still alive, whose bodies will be instantly transformed and they too, will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Whatever is left of those who have

died, but were not saved, will be expelled from their graves and be strewn in horrific fashion across the face of the earth and 153 days of God’s Judgment will commence with unmitigated fury until October 21, 2011, when God will incinerate the entire universe. Nothing will ever be remembered again about planet Earth, nor its inhabitants.

PROOF #1: IN 2 PET. 3:8, GOD REVEALS A SIGNIFICANT “TIME CLUE” (WHICH HE “DOUBLES” FOR EMPHASIS):

2 Pet. 3:8 states, But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

In Gen. 7:4-5 God specifically tells Noah, For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth. {5} And Noah did according unto all that the LORD commanded him.

The context of the worldwide Flood is apparent in verses 4-6 of 2 Pet. 3, as well as that of the final Judgment by fire in verses 7-12, thus God links these two judgments together in order to alert mankind as to His divine agenda:

According to the Bible the Flood occurred

in 4990 BC. Effectively, God is warning that mankind has “7 days” or “7000 years” to enter into the safety of the Ark (which represents salvation). In other words, 4990 BC + 2011 – 1 (since there is no year zero) = 7000 years.

PROOF #2: IN GEN. 7:11, GOD FURTHER PINPOINTS THE VERY DAY, MONTH, AND YEAR (“...THE SIX HUNDRETH YEAR OF NOAH’S LIFE...”) OF THE FLOOD:

In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

Noah’s lifespan is actually a calendar even as we date time by the Lord Jesus Christ today. There were other men referred to as “calendar reference patriarchs” covering about 9,500 years of history in Gen. 5 and 11. Although Noah’s calendar used thirty-day months, a year has always been based on 365.2422 days. During the time of Moses God instituted another calendar based on the lunar cycle, or 29.53 days. Amazingly this lunar calendar reveals that May 21, 2011 is the 17th day of the second month! The last time that May 21st landed on 17th day of the second

month occurred in 1994, and it is not scheduled to happen again until 2032 (if time were to continue).

PROOF #3: It has been stated that “History is the unfolding of God’s salvation plan.” As such, two events tower over all the others: Christ’s first advent and His Second Coming. According to the Bible, The Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the capstone of Christianity as it demonstrates God’s sacrificial love for His people, and His power to destroy death which is the punishment that all mankind deserves for their sins.

ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE, THE CRUCIFIXION OCCURRED ON APRIL 1, 33 AD AND BETWEEN THAT DATE AND MAY 21, 2011 THERE ARE 722,500 DAYS, INCLUSIVELY. WHEN THE NUMBER 722,500 IS BROKEN DOWN INTO ITS BASIC FACTORS WE DISCOVER YET ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF GOD “DOUBLING UP”:

$$5 \times 10 \times 17 \quad \times \quad 5 \times 10 \times 17 = 722,500$$

I offer the following quote from an online

post which explains how significant 722,500 is, including its integers; secondly, I would like to show the spiritual significance which God attaches to the integers 5, 10, and 17.

Dan Stevens writes: “In the following statement by the OP: ‘Please note: I do not accept any “proofs” which involve finding the value of a time interval and factoring this value in “significant” numbers since I have concluded that this involves several fallacies. Fundamentally, this process excludes lots of data points and only accept factors such as 3,5,7,10,12,13,17,23,37, and 43 (and the multiples of these). This is “cherry picking” the data by which sooner or later lots of patterns are sure to happen by the laws of probability. Consequently, I reject the $722,500=(5 \times 10 \times 17)(5 \times 10 \times 17)$ argument as involving invalid reasoning.’

“The contention is made that the 722,500 day link between the day Christ was crucified (April 1, 33AD) and the 7000th year anniversary of the flood on May 21, 2011 is essentially meaningless, being a happy (or unhappy) coincidence that arises due to the laws of probability which (in the OP’s mind) virtually guarantees many numbers will have the ability to be factored because of the 10 or so biblically significant factors being used. But as I read this post I notice one very important piece of information was missing, the analysis the OP used to support this position! Anyone can make a claim, but unless they back it up with something, their claim itself is meaningless!

Now it happens that I’ve heard others making similar unsubstantiated assertions, so awhile back I analyzed several numbers relating to the proofs Mr. Camping outlines in his books, and one of these included a look at the 722,500 days. In that analysis, I checked every number from 722,500 +/- 10,000, to see how many of those numbers could be factored by any of the above significant factors (3, 5, 7, 10, 12, 13, 17, 23, 37, 43). What I found was of the 20,001 numbers in this range, only 80 numbers could be factored. What percentage is this? Well, 80 out of 20,001 numbers is just 0.40%. Now any probability less than half a percent is considered very small (better than 4 sigma), meaning the probability that any number within

+/-10,000 of 722,500 can be successfully factored is statistically rare. This does not support the position of the OP, who assumed without proof that the laws of probability would “sooner or later” produce ‘lots of patterns’. Yet in this one simple analysis we find there are not ‘lots of patterns’, at least in regard to this number. By the way, if you add an additional criteria, that this number must be a perfect square of factors, then the probability reduces to just 0.015% (3 out of 20,001).

Of course we don’t need to be math experts to realize that all the proofs offered in regard to May 21, 2011 are astoundingly significant, meaning the probability that this date just happens to pop up because there are lots of factors and lots of OT/NT dates that could be matched up comes from ignoring all the fingers pointing in that direction. By the way, it should be noted that the biblical calendar in a sense points fingers at 4 key dates, May 21, 1988, Sept 7, 1994, May 21, 2011, and Oct 21, 2011...”

We must bear in mind that there are no numerals in the Bible, only words. God has also designed each and every word in the Bible very carefully in order to teach spiritual (or parabolic) truth. This is not new by any means, as the Reformers (some of which wrote books about the subject over 500 years ago) and even earlier believers right up to our present day have understood this:

The basic factors in 722,500 days, underscore the following spiritual realities found throughout the Bible:

The number 5 relates to either salvation or destruction.

The number 10 refers to completeness.

The number 17 symbolizes Heaven

By God “doubling up” these two identical sets of basic factors, He is drawing our attention to the Biblical principle found in Genesis 41:32, when Pharaoh’s dream was doubled: And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

As an example, let’s consider just one of these numbers - the number 17 (which relates to “Heaven”) - and in so doing we will also see the importance of the number 7 (which relates to “perfection”). It surfaces in connection with the year

2011 in these significant Biblical events, as well as the number 1000 (along with its integers (10, 100, 10,000, etc.), which signifies "completeness."

4017 years from Jacob's (Israel's) birth in 2007 BC to 2011

3017 years from David's coronation (the 3000th anniversary of this event was celebrated in Israel in 1994) in 1007 BC. to 2011.

2017 years from the birth of Christ in 7 BC. to 2011.

23,017 days from Israel becoming a nation on May 14, 1948 to May 21, 2011. It includes the numbers 23 for Judgment; 1000 for completeness; and 17 for Heaven.

Could you tell the readers what events are going to happen leading up to and on this date?

The events of May 21st I listed above. With regard to the events leading up to the date, all 52 "signs" are outlined in Mat. 24 and the parallel chapters of Mark 13, and Luke 21. These have all been fulfilled...there is nothing left to be fulfilled, hence the day is indeed upon us. I would like to briefly outline five of these signs [however if you would like to see a study on Mat. 24 which I have done, I would be happy to send it to you (it's about 30 pages long)]

Mat 16:1-3 is a very compelling pronouncement: The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. {2} He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. {3} And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times.

In 2 Thes. 2:3-4 we read about three of these important "signs" or events that must take place before May 21, 2011: Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away (apostasia) first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God

sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

"A falling away (apostasia) first": This refers to the chief characteristic of the "Great Tribulation" of our day —namely apostasy, as the following three references in Mat. 24 delineate:

Mat. 24:4-5 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

Mat. 24:11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

Mat. 24:24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; inso-much that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

2. "...That man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." - Satan, according to:

(This is the fulfillment of) Isa 14:13-14, For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

1 John 4:3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it [he] should come; and even now already is it [he] in the world.

3. "...so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God."

God granted Satan his wish to rule in all the churches. (God finished utilizing the churches and denominations, after 1955 years – as He did with national Israel, after 1480 years – whom He was married to). These two events are perhaps the saddest in the Bible. The very two organisms that God instituted and utilized as His representatives of the visible "kingdom of God on earth", are under His wrath, and salvation is no longer available there.

Mat. 24:15-18 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place [the temple or church], (whoso readeth, let him understand:) {16} Then let them which be in Judaea

[the churches and denominations] flee into the mountains: {17} Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: {18} Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

Rev. 18:1-4 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. {2} And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great [the churches and denominations] is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. {3} For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. {4} And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

Lam 4:12 The kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world, would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy [Satan] should have entered into the gates of Jerusalem. [symbolizing the churches and denominations worldwide and without exception]

Let us briefly consider the last two of the five "signs of the times" for the purposes of this presentation:

4. We are in the "Great Tribulation"

We have already touched upon some of the main elements of the current "great tribulation" that we are now in. This is a time of unprecedented spiritual deception and division. What makes this especially frightening is that God Himself is furthering this spiritual blindness, according to 2 Thes. 2:11-12 (and other passages),

And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Sadly, there is a great spiritual division that is taking place world-wide, even as the Lord Jesus warned that it would in Mat. 10:34-36,

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. {35} For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daugh-

ter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. {36} And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

The "sword" is of course "...the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." This spiritual division is separating the true believers from those who think they are God's elect; the ones who will be impacted the most are those who belong to a church or denomination, and who are fully expecting to be "caught up" with Christ. Sadly, their churches leaders are assuring them of a false sense of security (or salvation) namely - "peace and safety" (1 Thes. 5:1-5) - which has no basis in reality, since they are the "tares" spoken of in the parable of the "wheat and the tares" as Mat. 13:34-43 teaches.

Please note the opening verses (34-35) which delineate the way in which God wrote the Bible

All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them. {35} That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. {36} Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. {37} He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; {38} The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; {39} The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. {40} As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. {41} The Son of man shall send forth his angels [messengers], and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; {42} And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. {43} Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

The Bible highlights three "great tribulation" periods. (in Gk. - mega thlipsis). They include:

The 7 years of famine when Joseph was

Prime Minister in Egypt and Jacob and his family had to leave Canaan (symbolizing the Promised Land or Heaven) in 1877 BC and go into Egypt - a portrait of slavery to sin.

The 70 years of exile when Judah went into captivity to Babylon from 609 BC to 539 BC.

The 23-year period of our day (from May 21, 1988 to May 21, 2011)

All three of these "great tribulations" are tied to the number 84:

84 months in 7 years.

840 months in 70 years.

8400 days in 23 years. (May 20th 2011 is the 8400th day)

Each of these "tribulations" are divided

unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed."

5. The "Great Multitude"

The second period began on September 7th, 1994 (a Jubilee year) when God the Holy Spirit began to pour out His Spirit again (as He did on the day of Pentecost on May 22, 33 AD) to save a "great multitude" of people from around the world over the course of the next 6100 days, as Rev. 7:9 indicates:

After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindred's, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

Rev. 7:9 as well as other passages



into two distinct divisions of time. In our day, the first period of the Great Tribulation began on May 21, 1988 (coinciding with the end of the church age) and for the next 2300 days, (until Sept. 7th, 1994) virtually nobody was saved, as we read in Dan. 8:13-14

Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said

describes the salvation that God is orchestrating as millions become saved during these 6100 days, or these last 17 years (since 1994). This is actually a stupendous spiritual representation of the 120,000 plus inhabitants of Nineveh - many of whom God saved - by sending Jonah to them with a 40-day warning of impending Judgment. However, on May 21, 2011, the door to salvation will be forever shut, even as God shut Noah and his family into the Ark (Gen. 7:16), or as the 5 "foolish virgins" were denied access to Heaven in Mat. 25.

According to Harold Camping and followers of this message, a lot has to do with numbers. Could you explain the significance of these "important" numbers?

See above.

Since the beginning of time, I think it is safe to say that human beings have been obsessed with predicting the end of the world, Jesus Christ himself has also said that the end would come in the life of his disciples, which obviously didn't happen. (From Gunther: THEN THAT COULD NOT HAVE BEEN WHAT HE MEANT OR IT WOULD MAKE HIM A LIAR!) Harold has also made an end of the world prediction previously that didn't come true, why is anyone to believe that this prediction is any different? Please try answering without saying because the Bible tells us, because many people made end time predictions before using "proofs" from the Bible that simply failed.

Nobody has ever made a prediction with "proofs"...only God Himself could do that - as He has at this present time. Mr. Camping stated in his book "1994?" that "we could have missed something" because he only had 2 years to study the "high likelihood" that 1994 could be the Rapture/Day of Judgment. And indeed he was correct because he had misunderstood Mat. 24:22, which speaks about a shortening of the 23-year tribulation period, which he understood at the time to indicate a "shortening" of 2300 days, which took him to Sept. 6, 1994. I should point out that in that book he also referenced 2011 as the date some thirteen times. Indeed 1994 was a tremendously important (Jubilee) year, which marked the beginning of the "Latter Rain," a period of 6100 days until May 21, 2011, in which God would be saving a vast number of people ("the great multitude") as described in Rev. 7:9, After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

Incidentally, the conclusion regarding May 21st was arrived at, about 7 years ago; however it was only recognized as "tentative," until the three main proofs

(mentioned above) were discovered. When one looks at the Scriptural basis for previous "predictions," one sees very readily where they went wrong in their exegesis. Moreover, the reason they were wrong was because it was not God's timing to divulge that information until our day, as Acts 1:6-8 recounts,

When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 7 And he said unto them, It is not for [of] you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. 8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Verse 8 emphasizes one of the reasons that God had carefully hidden the timing for the Rapture and the Day of Judgment - in order for the New Testaments churches to focus on their task of evangelizing the world. There is also another very practical reason for this: there was no possible way to warn the world of this either until the advent of the electronic media in our day.

Incidentally, the only other reference where both Greek words, "the times" and "the seasons" are used together is in 1 Thes. 5:1-2, But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

The difference in our day is that God Himself has given us the dates for the End, and they are guaranteed by the Bible itself with undeniable proofs in order for genuine Christians to warn the world by utilizing all forms of mass communication possible. It is indeed a privilege to be aware of this information; yet it comes with a great responsibility to faithfully declare this announcement to the world in the little time remaining.

I should add that God Himself has disclosed this information (although He has used Family Radio as a "platform" to announce it to the world, just as He had "hidden" the information in the Bible as the following passages clearly reveal:

Dan. 12:4 reads, But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

Dan. 12:9 adds, And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.

The above-mentioned citations in Dan. 12:4 and 9 are exceedingly relevant because God Himself - not Daniel the man - "shut up the words" or "closed the words", and "sealed the book." Daniel is a compound Hebrew word: Dan- which means judge; and -el is God. (Gen 49:16 Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel.) In other words, "God the Judge" hid this end-time information until our day. In like manner, it was God alone that "opened" or "unsealed" the book (biblion - which is the Bible - see same word used in Heb. 10:7; Rev. 22:7, 9-10) as Rev. 5:1-5 so clearly explains:

And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. {2} And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? {3} And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. {4} And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. {5} And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

5. I recently read an article about a man from NYC that spent his entire life savings of \$140,000 to promote that the end of the world will be happening this month, actually in about 6 days. How do you feel about people doing this type of thing? Spending their entire life savings on a prediction.

For true believers as this man (and I know him), this is a personal decision arising from a deep-seated conviction that this is guaranteed to happen by the Bible itself. These individuals (myself included) believe that this message is not coming from any man (as I have indicated above, in Rev. 5:1-5 - but from Christ Himself). Because we have a love for our "fellow man" (our "neighbor") we want to alert them to the great HOPE for salvation that still exists until May 21st; after which it will too late.

The response of the Ninevites in Jon. 3:5 is worth mentioning in this regard - they did not believe Jonah - they believed that Jonah's message was from God Himself: So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. Each genuine Christian who is convinced of May 21 believes that this date is from God and is 100% trustworthy - not from a vision or dream or twisting Scripture to make it fit.

I know that there is supposed to be rolling earthquakes that will take the world by surprise, if they don't occur, does that mean that the prediction was wrong?

No, because even though this scenario has considerable Biblical validity, it might not turn out this way exactly...it's still being studied...even though in certainly answers a number of other verses.

Recently I heard a statement claiming if the rapture doesn't happen that doesn't mean the prediction was wrong, it just means it didn't happen. To me this sounds like the start of a cop out, what is your opinion on this?

Yes, that would be a "cop-out". I must repeat that this information is being declared by God Himself...it is guaranteed to happen...unfortunately the vast majority of mankind does not believe God or His Word - the Bible -which is man's chief problem, hence they will be caught "off guard,"

One of the main reasons that God has revealed the precise date of the Rapture/Judgment Day on May 21, 2011 is so that Believers, in turn, can confidently warn their families, friends, neighbors, and the world-at-large, as God so emphatically commands in Eze. 33:1-9,

Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: 3 If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; 4 Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. 5 He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood

shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. 6 But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. 7 So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. 8 When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. 9 Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

During Old Testament warfare it was an absolute necessary for the "watchmen" to "sound the alarm" when the enemy was seen approaching; this was done by means of a "trumpet" or ram's horn. In order to warn effectively, it was imperative that a "clear sound" be made, according to 1 Cor. 14:8, For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?

There is an organization called "Rapture Ready Radio" that are actively working on a Family Radio protest. They claim the Harold Camping is a false prophet and that when everyone is still here on May 22nd, 2011 they will be demanding Family Radio has Harold Camping step down and retire. Do you think that this is something fair to do?

God never sides with the "majority"...He only blesses and fulfills His Word - the Bible. Do you recall the insightful words of Paul the Apostle's teacher Gamaliel when he uttered the following statement under divine inspiration in Acts 5: 34-39?

Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space; 35 And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. 36 For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of

men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought. 37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed. 38 And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: 39 But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

I know that you are a person who takes the Bible as the literal word of God. I have a question about the chapter 24 in the book of Matthew. It talks about great deceivers and that if people tell you God has come do not listen. Why does this not apply to this prediction?

I quoted the verses you mentioned above (under question # 2). However these verses do not say, "...if people tell you God has come do not listen..." They are saying that many false prophets or deceivers will arise claiming to be (or belonging to) Christ (when in fact they are not) and will be deceiving people with "great signs and wonders" - this has to do particularly with the charismatic churches (and all churches who embrace them) and validate their "visions," "dreams," "speaking in tongues," "so-called miracles," "slain in the spirit experiences", "prosperity gospels," etc.

Mat. 24:4-5 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

Mat. 24:11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

Mat. 24:24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

The nature of the current (23-year) Great Tribulation period that we are now in, and is about the end on May 21, 2011 (It began on May 21, 1988) is one of unparalleled spiritual deception. This delusion is so clever and pervasive that verse 24 asserts that if it were possible (and it's not possible) even the elect (the true believers) would be deceived. This is primarily

due to the fact that God has given Satan unrestrained access to promote sin in the world (as we see everywhere) in unprecedented fashion; additionally, He has also installed Satan (as of May 21, 1988) to rule in all the churches, as we read earlier in 2 Thes. 2:4, Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. 2 Cor. 11:13-15 depicts how this takes place through the the leadership in all churches and denominations worldwide, and without exception:

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ 14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

As frightening as the above situation is, what is even more horrific is that God Himself is perpetuating the spiritual blindness even further according to 2 Thes. 2:11-12, And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

I know Harold Camping has been preaching a lot on two things the sort of go hand in hand. Crying out mightily to God and about how God was going to destroy the Ninevites in the book of Jonah. But since the Ninevites cried out to God, they were spared. Is this the contingency plan for Harold? Will he say on May 22nd or 23rd that Judgment day was supposed to happen, but like the Ninevites in Jonah, God heard our pleas and spared us?

In actuality, the Ninevites had no clue that God would spare them until He did, as we read in Jon. 3:5-10,

So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. 6 For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. 7 And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles,

saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: 8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. 9 Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? 10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.

Unfortunately, that will not be the case today, as God informs us in Luke 11:29-32,

And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign, and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. 30 For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation. 31 The queen [Sheba] of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. 32 The men of Nineve shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

The word "generation" in this context has to do with "the generation of evil" (all who are not genuine believers).

If we all wake up on May 22nd and nothing has happened, no earthquakes no rapture, just another normal day, will you at least be able to admit that it was wrong to try and make end time predictions?

Bobby, God outlines in Zeph. 1:14-17 what will take place on May 21st...it is guaranteed to happen, and nothing - absolutely nothing - can stop it. These are not my words (obviously). This is God's promise for those who unfortunately "are left behind" ...each day following will only increase in horror, shame, death, and destruction:

The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the

mighty man shall cry there bitterly. 15 That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, 16 A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. 17 And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. 18 Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD'S wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.

May God have mercy on you and your family Bobby...and on me and my family... as He wills.

Gunther (an unworthy servant)

Lam. 3:21-29, This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.

22 It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

23 They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

24 The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.

25 The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.

26 It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.

27 It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.

28 He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him.

29 He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope.

****UPDATE****

The first thing I did when I woke up on the morning of May 21st is I emailed Gunther von Harringa. Gunther has been very patient and willing to answer some of my questions that I had

concerning the “Rapture” that was supposed to come.

My correspondence with Gunther went like this.

Bobby: “Well its May 21st and no one in any other country has been raptured. There has been no earthquakes, no bodies flung from the graves. Family Radio will not answer me, so I will ask you, very respectfully - what happened?”

Gunther: “Hi Bobby, I don’t know... we continue to wait upon God.”

I felt that maybe I emailed him a bit prematurely; after all it was only about 10am on May 21nd. The following day May 22nd I decided to send another email to Gunther, this time asking he some very specific questions.

Bobby: “Gunther, I don’t mean to be a pest, but you are the only one who takes time out to answer my questions. I want to make it clear I am not here to ridicule or poke fun of. I just have a few questions I feel deserve honest answers.

1. What happened? Why was no one raptured if the Bible guaranteed it?
2. Was this a result of human error or is the Bible lying?
3. What happens next?
4. Can you now admit you were wrong and that it is wrong to try and end time predictions?
5. The embarrassment that Family Radio must feel is probably immense. The fact that the website has been down since Friday night is not a coincidence. Since nothing happened that Harold Camping said would happen, does this now make him a false prophet?”

Gunther: “Bobby, Thanks for the email...I’ll be happy to answer these questions tomorrow.”

However I am sad to say Gunther never responded to my questions, instead he sent me this email.

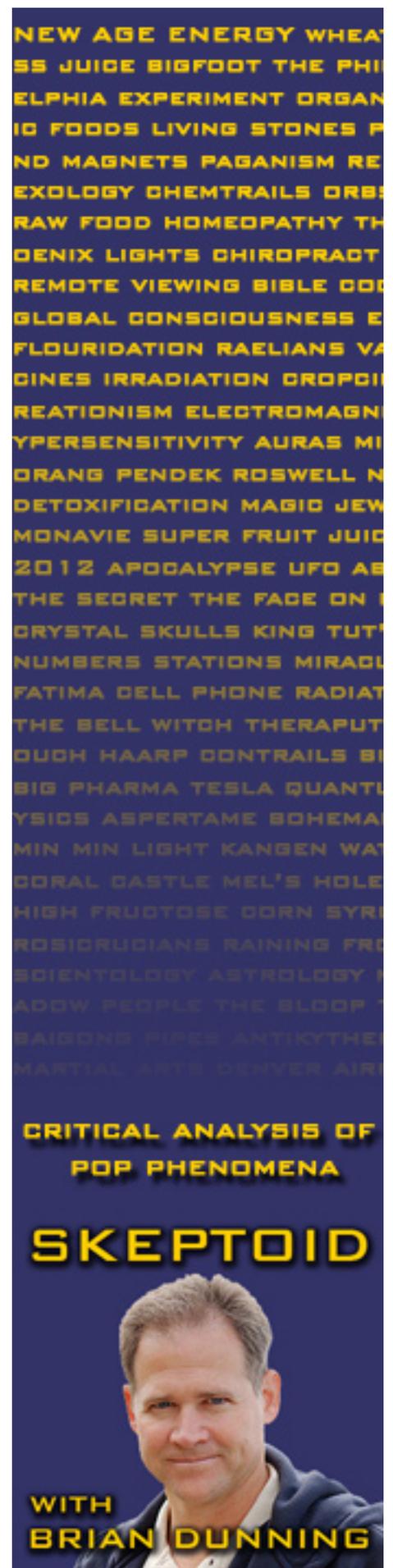
Gunther: “Dear Bobby,

I have no comment, but as you seem to know Family Radio is making an official statement on the Open Forum show tonight hosted by Mr. Camping tonight (5:30 PM-7:00 PM PST). There will be no calls, and he will be addressing the media and the public only tonight.”

Well it is no surprise that I tuned into this broadcast, because I so desperately wanted to hear what Harold had to say.

Well according to Camping, the rapture did indeed happen, except it was spiritual not physical. Jesus came back in a spirit form and the end of the world is still to happen on October 21st, 2011. Now if anyone reads my personal blog at www.porkrhine.com I actually made this very prediction. I said and I quote “Camping may go the route of the Jehovah witness and say Jesus is here except he is invisible.” I also said “Oh God has spared us Judgment day. Most merciful God has left the day of salvation open for us, be thankful for this everyone. I was not wrong about May 21st, the Bible guaranteed it, not me, I am just a humble servant. But our little peanut brains can’t understand the mind of God, just be glad salvation is still available to us because the world is still going to end October 21st, 2011.”

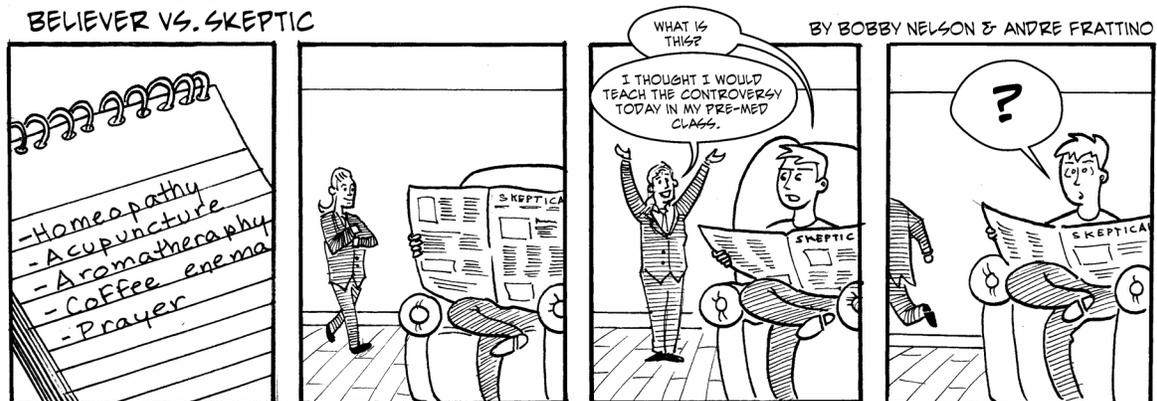
This is pretty much what Camping said last night in his statement. So for the next 5 months people are going to be preaching the end of the world over at Family Radio. Me on the other hand I am done talking about this non-profit organization.



PAREIDOLIA OF THE MONTH



Pareidolia of the month goes to Christine Snowdon. Snowdon is a lifelong believer in angels. She believes in angels so much that she has no doubt that the image she saw in the clouds was an angelic being of some sort. Snowdon claims to have been seeing angels since the age of four, however if they look anything like, oh I don't know, a cloud! I would definitely have to disagree with her.



NEXT ISSUE:

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THE BENT SPOON

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