

INSANITY DEFENSES

Escaping the Madness of Faith

INSANITY DEFENSES

Escaping the Madness of Faith

MICHAEL J. WILMOT



© 2016 by Michael Wilmot. All rights reserved.

Published by Redemption Press, PO Box 427, Enumclaw, WA 98022,
Toll Free (844) 2REDEEM (273-3336).

Redemption Press is honored to present this title in partnership with the author. The views expressed or implied in this work are those of the author. Redemption Press provides our imprint seal representing design excellence, creative content and high quality production.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any way by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without the prior permission of the copyright holder, except as provided by USA copyright law.

English Standard Version (ESV)—The Holy Bible, English Standard Version Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

Good News Translation (GNT)—Copyright © 1992 by American Bible Society.

International Standard Version (ISV)—Copyright © 1995-2014 by ISV Foundation. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED INTERNATIONALLY. Used by permission of Davidson Press, LLC.

King James Version (KJV)—Public Domain.

New International Version (NIV)—Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

New King James Version (NKJV)—Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

ISBN 13: 978-1-63232-785-7 (Print)
978-1-63232-786-4 (ePub)
978-1-63232-788-8 (Mobi)

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2016930948



For Bobby

I miss you so very much, brother.

If I could paint, I would slather a mural.

If I could sing, I would warble on stage.

I am a writer. I live in words.

And so, for you, a book.



רוח: רעיון הוא שגם־גיה לְדַעְתִּי וְשִׂקְלוֹת הוֹלְלוֹת וְנָעַת חִכְמָה לְנַעַת לְבִי וְאֶתְנָה

And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness
and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit.

For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth
knowledge increaseth sorrow.

—Ecclesiastes 1:17–18, HHH and KJV



Dread of the task before us;
Self-inflicted as may be.
Entreat proceed with caution;
Wary maelstroms of the sea.
Equal to the task are we;
Madness possibilities.

CONTENTS



Cornerstone	15
Well Met	17
Infinite Insanity	21
Spirit Maimed	27
Life at Forty	35
The Void	37
Lions and Tigers	41
Bottom of the Hole	47
God Who?	55
Mind Whispers	57
Marco . . . Polo	63
Apples to Oranges	67
Things I Never Thunk Before	75
Deal or No Deal	79
Scribbles and Scratches	85
Historicity	89
Discovery and Revelation	97

A Long Time Ago When the Sky Was New	107
An Epic Narrative.	109
Once upon a Time	115
You're a Wizard, Harry	123
Meddlesome Dragon	129
Christianity?	139
Churchianity	141
Miracle or Mission?	151
God Walks into a Bar	155
A Reasonable Service	159
Out of Gas	169
Excellent Seats	177
Quit Often.	185
Was That a Christian?	191
Big Rocks.	199
Suffering	201
Warp and Woof	209
Christ Wept	217
Issachar Failures.	223
My Times.	225
Lost Boys	231
His Master's Voice	239
Joy of Wilderness	241
Slaying Canards	247
Pay Attention	253
And We Weep	261
Mary Beth	265
Suki	269

Little Drummer Boy	271
Small Wooden Boat	275
Au Revoir	281
Rejection	283
Random Thoughts	287
The Rules	289
The Sinner's Prayer	291
The Apostles' Creed	293
The Lord's Prayer	295
Michael's Library Contributing to This Book	297
About the Author	301
Endnotes	303

CORNERSTONE



You can do almost anything with soup stock,
it's like a strong foundation.
When you have the right foundation, everything tastes good.
—Martin Yan

WELL MET



I hope that I am up to the task of extracting what is in my mind, heart and soul to the inferior medium of words with accuracy and clarity. To be quite frank with you, this whole enterprise terrifies me. This book is a confession and an odyssey of my attempts to live a Christian life. There has been no experience I have had, thus far, which has been as frustrating, daunting, and raw-teeth and nails-hard as being a Christian. If anyone tries to claim otherwise, I can only surmise they have some problem with pathological lying or have no inkling to what true Christianity is all about. Christianity is not easy, but I have discovered that it offers overflowing rewards of fulfillment and contentment. The richness and rewards of being Christian, however, can only be fully appreciated by living them.

Let me be candid with where I am coming from. I am a Christ follower, a Christian. I take as foundational truths the declarations stated in the Apostle's Creed and accept the Bible to be the inspired, perfected message of a creator to His creation. I believe in these things but I reject accusations of indoctrination or blind faith. To really believe in anything you have to know *why* you believe *what* you believe, and this takes almost as much reason as it does faith. Almost.

I believe in gravity and have good foundations for doing so based on study, observation and experimentation. In the same way, I believe in

INSANITY DEFENSES

the Christian God and the Bible as His authoritative manual for living. I have studied it, I have observed it, and I have experimented with it. I do not understand all of it, in fact there is much I don't understand. But this gap in my understanding is akin to my lack of understanding gravitational forces. I do not know the math or the science of gravity, but I know the reality. I know enough about gravity to respect the repercussions if it is violated or ignored. I have the same relationship with my faith. You just can't know something by remaining abstract; you have to get into the game. This book explores how I have played with God and He with me.

In keeping with the image of gravity, I also want to be clear that I am as flawed as any other man. I trip and stumble as much with faith as I do with gravity. Sometimes I lose my balance and land right on my ass. My understanding of the truths of God, my worship of Him or my obedience towards Him does not mean I am all that good at any one of those things. I have a heart to do well with rough and good days. Knowing more about gravity does not mean I am less likely to fall when the conditions are right. Awareness of my faults helps me approach this topic with meekness and fear. I claim no aspect of perfection.

I do not claim a religion; I hold a worldview, and there is a host of differences between them. My simple explanation of a worldview is: a view of reality and an individual person's placement in it. Another definition I like is: a collection of beliefs about life and the universe held by an individual or a group. The Truth Project, sponsored by Focus on the Family, defines worldview as, "the set of individual truth claims which I embrace so deeply that I believe they reflect what is really real—and therefore they drive what I think, how I act, and what I feel." This is far beyond a religious experience, dogma or catechism.

At the core of existence there can only be truth or error. Truth is that which conforms to reality. But it's much deeper than that. Truth is the catalyst for examining one's personal worldview. Truth is what I am in pursuit of, not dogma. To put it in simple terms, if your big brother knocked you to the ground, this would not mean gravity is flawed or

WELL MET

has failed. It just means your brother was being a jerk. In the same way, I have a worldview that accepts absolute truths and those are revealed in the Bible and by the intimate revelations from God to man. The fact that there are a lot of ignorant Christian jerks in the world has nothing to do with my accepting if the Bible or my faith is true or false. To the contrary, these only serve to make my faith stronger.

I want close this introduction by setting some expectations or lowering them if I can. The only aspects of this book on which I am an expert are my own experiences and those moments of personal revelation I have received from God. Other lessons I have learned along the way are gifts received from others. I am unapologetically stealing product from greater minds, humbly attempting to organize and phrase their ideas, discoveries and revelations, and merge my own into another tapestry.

There are many more apologetics, histories and testimonies on the Christian faith beyond this little thing, and I encourage anyone to grab them up as quickly as they can and feel the need to do so. If by reading this book someone sets off on a quest of deeper understanding on this subject, I will see this enterprise as a success.

INFINITE INSANITY



Sunrise from Rattlesnake Ledge, North Bend, Washington

It happens with impossible silence. The magic of morning rises as the blanket of night descends. Dawn comes with assurances earned from eons of experience. In deference to cosmic laws beyond our reason, forces of unimaginable power weave infinitesimally tiny objects of galaxies, planets and stars into a tapestry of wonder. Not one thing is out of place or out of control. No rogues or revolutionaries are permitted here. It is a creation in motion and of motion, swirling around an inestimable space. Collisions or near misses are never random happenstance. Everything that is in movement is a slave to a compass enjoying the freedom of a universe. Energy and time are congealing with gravity and mass, producing horrendous consequences. Stars are forming or collapsing,

INSANITY DEFENSES

each with power beyond our measure. But still they are no more effective than a plow in the ocean—mere blips of energy. They are barely of notice, hardly remarkable at all to the whole as they cascade around us with an endless tide of energy.

And then there is us, caught in the maelstrom of the universe, thrusting around a burning star and twirling on a delicate axis in a thimble of space with busy neighbors. Each orbiter feeds off of and affects the other in their cosmic dance. Brutal waves of radiance slam against the oh-so-thin layer of clear smoke above the earth. A tiny moon reaches out to caress the earth's oceans, pulling them forward and thrusting them back endlessly, tirelessly, relentlessly. Heat from heaven is falling and deep furnaces from below are rising. Compressions and contractions from titans of earth are elbowing for room and vibrating with unreleased tension. Mountains of earth are rising or falling, oblivious to the consequences, altering far distant horizons, and re-sculpturing the foundations of the deep.

All of this is happening at once—sleepless and restless. It is happening at this very moment.

And yet the dawn comes without a whisper, quieter than a cat's paw on rich velvet. The wind rising from the trees of the valley deep below that is running through my hair, I sense. The call of birds, I hear. The cold damp of sweat from my shirt against my skin, I feel. The vision of a haze of light over the distant horizon is drawing brighter, and yet I feel it not. Even knowing exactly when it will come and reaching out with all that I know, all that I am, is futile. I am trying to catch smoke in a butterfly net. It seems wrong like something is broken inside of me, severed by some form of pitiless surgery or butchery. The universe is observed only by my failing eyes and crippled mind. I am a starving man gorging at a banquet. I am dying of thirst while under the crushing cascade of a waterfall.

Dwelling too much on these thoughts are trails into the heart of madness. How can I be oblivious to something as enormous as the universe and yet be so obviously affected by it? The earth is spinning

INFINITE INSANITY

on its axis and around the sun at 1,000 and 67,000 miles per hour respectfully, and I don't feel a thing. It just does not seem plausible until I remember a boy I met in high school named David.

I believe David was afflicted with a form of Down syndrome or mental retardation, but in 1984 I did not understand what those things were. To be honest, I don't know much more about those conditions today. I only remember that David was obviously different. He was nearly always an exuberantly, happy person but fragile in temperament with dramatic swings in mood. He was my first experience of persons with special needs. David could converse and sing in the choir, but much happened around him that was beyond his comprehension. I remember asking him a simple riddle once: "David, why do birds sing?" The answer is: "Because they can't dance." But David's innocent reply stunned me, "Birds sing?" he asked looking puzzled.

I found this odd because David knew what singing was, and he knew that birds made sounds. But David had not made the connection that the sounds birds made were songs to other birds. Somehow that simple fact eluded him. "Birds sing?" How could he miss that? It just seems too obvious a thing to not know but until that moment, David didn't understand it. Once it was revealed to him though, then *all* of the birds were singing and so were cats, dogs, squirrels, and for some reason, spiders. Maybe spiders do sing and only David knows this.

I think it is easy to look at someone like David and feel sympathy, perhaps even empathy, for his condition. If only, we wish, he could be a "normal" boy with a "healthy" brain. "Pray for David," some would say so that he could be . . . what? More like us I suppose. But are we any better off? I can have the knowledge of infinitely powerful forces raging around me, and yet I have no way to be aware of them! And that, my friend, makes all the difference between knowing about a thing and actually knowing it. I am aware of Queen Elizabeth II, but I know my brothers and sisters, mother and father, wife and children.

So the universe and all its power and energy and dynamics goes by unnoticed by me, and that is one thing. But let us together take a tiny

INSANITY DEFENSES

step further and ask the real question. How is it that God, the creator of all that is known and unknown of whose presence we are assured is all around us, can Himself go unnoticed? How can I not feel Him as intimately as I do my own skin? Just how broken can a person be to miss noticing God?

For so many years in my Christian walk, this was how I experienced God, or rather did not experience Him. If God *is*, then where *is* He? There exists I believe, a form of spiritual retardation that afflicts man. There is a yearning for grasping the infinite built inside of us, but we feel severed from it, cut off or degraded from what our full potential was designed to be. Being unaware that birds sing and unaware of the existence of God seem to be points of ignorance with the same type of malady.

Perhaps the Christian legend of the fall of man meant a great deal more went wrong with us than we want to consider. There are a lot of hard problems that people, Christian or not, would much rather avoid, and this is one of them. Just how flawed is man, really? Perhaps we do have some form of brain damage as well but, more importantly, I see that man has a damaged spirit which careens inside of us in a wailing dirge, unsatisfied by anything that can be aroused in nature.

This moment of standing before the void exposes a person to the insane nature of clutching for the infinite. The only remedy I have found for this disorder is to learn how to sense and relate with reality from the source of the spirit and not only the flesh. It is, perhaps, the hardest transformation which takes place for people when embracing a worldview that includes the supernatural, whether they are Christian or not.

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

(Ecll. 3:11 NIV)

INFINITE INSANITY

I witness many Christians who flounder to experience God in the same way I did early on, where the presence of God was like smoke in a butterfly net. To compensate for not truly sensing God, they accept surrogates and substitutes that are found in religion, duty, obligation, and ritual or emotional experiences in order to sedate feelings of detachment. I have found that none of these proxies contain any satisfaction that sustains faith, particularly in times of crisis. Instead, I have found that while God desires for us to know Him, we must be willing to play the game His way. He has provided a wealth of astonishing ways to share true intimacy with Him on His terms.

This book explores my discoveries of God and of His voice. For me, as it is with all others, it started with the discovery of my own desperate need for God's grace to come into my life. Following this was the dismaying unearthing that experiencing God was no different than attempting to feel the dawn slip over the eastern horizons. I will explore the challenges and failures I have had in attempting to live out the life as a Christian while unable to sense God's presence. I will conclude with my beginnings to learn how to listen, hear and trust His voice and feel His presence.

This is the very stepping stone of madness.

SPIRIT MAIMED



Malcolm Gladwell used the phrase *mind blind* in his book, *Blink* in talking about autism and other maladies relative to cognition. It seems to me that there is some form of disorder in me as well that prevents me from gaining awareness to aspects of the natural world and the vast infinite beyond. For all I know, trees and mountains sing, and I suspect that they truly do. Perhaps Jesus was not speaking metaphorically here when He said this:

“I tell you,” he replied, “If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out”
(Luke 19:40 NIV)

It seems a mystery that stones could cry out, but one thing we do know in theology and in science is that stars emit sound. In February, 1942 some scientists for the United States Army while working on a radar system to detect German aircraft, were puzzled when their systems began to receive high levels of noise. Initially they assumed the Germans had employed some form of jamming technique, but later they traced these phenomena to sun spots. Today we are now able to detect stars by sound as well as sight.

INSANITY DEFENSES

When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God
shouted for joy?

(Job 28:7 NKJV)

When I read the scripture above, it makes me question if everything is singing, and I just cannot hear it. Is this just figurative language to describe the host of heaven singing praises to God's creation? It could be, but the stars are something real not just figurative, which certainly stirs my imagination. Do stars sing? Perhaps David knows this answer better than I. I wonder how much different my experience of the new dawn is from a sinless Adam's before the fall.

Thus far my frustration with the infinite is with its seemingly intangibility to my senses. It is there but distantly removed from my personal experience. In truth though, this is a weak argument because there are parts of it I do feel quite intensely. Gravity, for instance, is a real force that I sense. I can detect variances in temperature and other natural elements of our own world that are available to me. I have a sense of balance, touch, hearing, smell, and taste with which to explore this world. Without looking I can tell exactly where my left foot is, and I can sense my butt in the chair I am sitting in. My ears respond to alterations in air pressure, I can tell the difference between acceleration and braking, and I can perceive the pulling of centrifugal force while navigating a curve at high speed.

There are also ways I can measure or observe nature by using tools. Obvious household items like thermometers, wind chimes or rain gauges spring to mind. But there are other, more exotic, things like seismographs which capture shifts in the earth that would otherwise go unnoticed, that is until an earthquake erupts under my feet. Barometers measure air pressure, and Geiger counters measure radiation. All of these natural effects are taking place that, while not perceived by human senses, can be detected and observed by humans. Should not we be open to the possibility that there are other types of tools for the supernatural?

SPIRIT MAIMED

There are other less tangible or measurable senses that I have. There is anxiety that I feel when I am in physical danger or when aggression and anger is about to slip out of control. I know when my wife is upset without her saying a word, and I am also intimately aware of her waves of love that seem to wrap around me as a blanket. There are times I can tell exactly what my mother is thinking and, most peculiar to me, I sometimes know moments before a phone is about to ring. I have even had dreams which foretold of events years in advance with disturbing exactness. I can't explain why these things happen but they do, and I am not unique in those experiences.

What I am really trying to say is that compared to the amount of energy being exerted to keep the universe . . . well . . . *the universe*, I would expect to see a more dramatic impact. Considering, however, what that could do to my mortal coil though, I suppose it is a good thing that I am protected from it all on our little rock, third from the sun. Perhaps this is the same protection we are receiving from God. Moses seemed to have suffered some effects of having a close encounter with the Almighty that may not be manageable for all of humanity.

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him. But Moses called to them; so Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him, and he spoke to them. Afterward all the Israelites came near him, and he gave them all the commands the Lord had given him on Mount Sinai. When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face.

(Ex. 34:29–32 NIV)

But is this what we are regulated to in our experience with God? Does this relationship offer either nothing at all or an experience so powerful it alters our very existence? Or are there ranges of experiences of which we can be with God's presence? I believe the answer is yes;

INSANITY DEFENSES

any of those realities are totally available to us. Which we catch depends on us for what we are willing to accept and on what God purposes for us. One thing for sure, no doubt about this, I know that God desires our fellowship and community. He has ways of which His will can be fulfilled and while they are not always in the ways we experience the physical world, He has left us hints of Himself in His creation.

I spend quality alone time with God a few times a year in the wildernesses. I go to an ocean beach, ascend into the mountains or slip under the canopy of forests as often as I can. I kiss my family goodbye, pack a rucksack or lunch, and drive to the wilderness to watch the waves or drink in the smell of pines or climb out onto a ledge overlooking a deep chasm on one side and a snow capped peak on the other. From time to time I spend a day in the stark desert and experience vast emptiness. Washington State is a great place to live for all of these. In two hours, from where I live in Tacoma, I can be on a beach, in a forest, clinging to a mountain or in a desert. It just depends where I point the nose of the car and what I want to think about.

Mount Rainer has its splendorous vistas and there are few finer than Reflection Lake. If I want to think deep thoughts, those are the places to be. The Yakima Valley desert offers vast emptiness and vibrant colors, and if I need to purge myself and get centered, that is where I go. When I need to let my mind wander along on its own and help me unravel some hard problems in life, there is nothing sweeter than a forest trail in the Olympic National Forrest. There is something spectacular that happens to the soul of man when it is immersed deep into the natural world. Like tea in hot water, lingering in the gardens of the earth creates richer and stronger sensations over time.

But for me there is nothing as inspiring as the vastness of the ocean to think big thoughts. When I see the waves rolling endlessly to the shore, the perspective of my smallness next to the infinite drops of water is a humbling experience. The first stanza of a poem I have yet to complete comes crashing down upon my mind.

SPIRIT MAIMED

I am just the captain
of a small wooden boat
seeking mercy from your power.

The oceans are not infinite, but they are good actors of that role. There actually are limits to them. Shorelines contain their expansion, the sea floor defines a finite depth, and they are at the mercy of the pull of the moon and the spin of the earth. Oceans are powerful beyond my imagination, able to give and take life. They shape the earth at their whim and sometimes remind us in tragic ways the potential of their destructiveness. Oceans are immense but not infinite. Neither is the cadet blue sky above during the day or the speckled tapestry of stars at night. Science claims the universe is limitless, but I have my doubts about that too. The oceans and the sky are forgeries of infinity, but my God, oh my God, they are impressive ones.

Standing on the shore, it feels like I am in a bridge-type of existence, hovering between the infinitely large universe and the infinitesimally small spaces of nature. I stand before the ocean and look up at a night sky pocked with stars from the Milky Way knowing that beyond them are unknown millions of galaxies. Then I gaze down to the grains of sand on the beach, knowing that they fill not just this ocean floor but all of the oceans of the world. I stand in wonder at the sheer magnitude of it all, and to be honest, the longer I contemplate this image, the more unnerved I become.

The ocean devastates me. Seeing myself juxtaposed against just the small part of infinity that my mind can grasp is akin to staring into the gray swirling mists of the abyss, wondering if anything is staring back at you and whispering, “Touch me, and I will touch you back.”

Do not go into that dark place. Fear it.
Fear the embrace that awaits you,
for you must know it touches once and then will not let go.¹

—Foyles’ War: A Lesson in Murder

INSANITY DEFENSES

In the same way, there is a supreme level of frustration for the Christian who seeks after God in experimental ways and not obtaining Him, at least on our terms. And that really is the problem, is it not—wanting God on our terms, on our side and doing our will? Fortunately God works on a vastly different set of rules that transcend the natural world. Our ability to tap into God hinges on our capacity to use faith, the belief in things unseen, which is not at all in our natural wheelhouse of abilities. I think this is what the scripture is talking about here:

“If you can?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for one who believes.”
Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

(Mark 9:23–24 NIV)

I often feel like this man in the scripture. But what is it really that I am afraid of? I suspect it is that God is just too big for me, and when I start to get a glimmer of this, it terrifies me. How big would you like your God to be really? I suspect the poet Wilbur Reese understands this problem all too well.

I would like to buy three dollars’ worth of God, please.
Not enough or explode my soul or disturb my sleep,
But just enough to equal a cup of warm milk, or a snooze in the sunshine.
I don’t want enough of Him to make me love a black man, or pick
beets with a migrant worker.
I want ecstasy, not transformation.
I want the warmth of the womb, not a new birth.
I want a pound of the eternal in a paper sack.
I would like to buy three pounds of God, please.²

It is frightening to believe in a sovereign God, or in the words from *The Lion, Witch and the Wardrobe* when referring to Aslan, “Is He safe? No, but He is good. After all He is not a tame lion!” And let’s be honest, a tame lion would be about as useful as a milk bucket under a bull or

SPIRIT MAIMED

a screen door on a submarine. We need God to be as big and powerful as He is, but how contented are we with the idea that God's design for His creation is a whole lot larger than ours will ever be? It is one thing to stare at a picture of a vast, deep valley taken from a mountain peak and be inspired. It is quite another experience entirely of actually standing on that peak, seeing those boundless wide and open spaces around you, and knowing the terror of falling.

Where I begin to get afraid is the idea that I am supposed to be an influential force as well, not on my own abilities, but because of God's spirit in me. The big question in the heart of man is, "Am I powerful?" and the greatest fear in our soul is that the answer might be yes! Because then he just may begin to see himself that way and be expected to act accordingly. It is much safer to consider that we are pathetic, timorous, and fragile instead. It is when we start to get a sense for just how big God is that the temptation kicks in to turn our heads and hide our faces with fear and trembling.

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, "Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented or fabulous?"

Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. You're playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.

It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.³

I do not know if this fear is fully surmountable for man in its current flawed state, but I do believe that fear is controllable through faith. For the Christian, our faith flows from the power of the Spirit which comes

INSANITY DEFENSES

from the awaking of the mind to the true nature of God. In the end, our capacity to walk with God depends on the answer to a simple question: “How big of a God can we handle?” I find that God continues getting better and larger the more we play together. It is akin to how my dad seemed to get a whole lot smarter after I left the veil of his protection. It was not that my father gained a new set of wisdom, it was that I became so much more desperate for it.

My first real entanglement with God started when I was nearing forty years old and was the catalyst for exchanging a lifetime of comfortable ignorance with one of searching for understanding. I began exchanging complacent passivity with the struggle to grasp an all-powerful yet intangible being who refuses to be harnessed. The next few chapters are my testimony of how God became real to me. God snatched me by the scruff of the neck, pulled me out of a dark pit of anguish, and welcomed me into His tender embrace. Then He thrust me back into the world and gave me a job.

This is the playground of madness.