

**Postmodern Metamorphosis:**  
the Apologetic Power of Materialism's Demise

*(3298 words excluding Title Page, Footnotes, and References, adhering to the 3000 words +10% parameter)*

By Josh Roberts  
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Dr. Chuck Gutenson  
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Thesis: *The postmodern era has reintroduced mystery into the world through advances in science, psychology, and the validation of subjective experience, thus opening the door for the legitimacy of the Biblical framework to provide a worldview upon which these paradigm-shifts can be mapped.*

## Introduction:

A major obstacle in the path of the Christian apologist is the mass consensus in the West that the positivist materialism paradigm explains reality to the point where God is no longer needed. The remnants of modernism still inhabit many people's worldviews today as they by default align with a closed-system universe that operates under classical Newtonian physics. This shuts down openness to metaphysical frameworks and hence Christianity due to its supernatural<sup>1</sup> claims. With the dawn of postmodernism there is a new openness to a multiplicity of perspectives, as well as a mystery undergirding our understanding.

This paper attempts to deepen that mystery, surveying scientific studies that expose the reader to aspects of reality that go against the paradigm of positivist materialism, attempting to transcend our chronocentric views of knowledge, and all the while locating ourselves within a broader perspective of historical development. The length of the paper prohibits in-depth exploration of each topic but, because worldviews are composed of interconnected webs of information,<sup>2</sup> the

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<sup>1</sup> It must be noted that the word supernatural is used here merely to distinguish itself from the materialistic paradigm, and that the so-called "supernatural" may well be merely a different layer of "natural" reality.

<sup>2</sup> Murphy, Nancey, and Richardson, W. Mark, "Postmodern Apologetics, Or Why Theologians Must Pay Attention to Science" in Richardson, W. Mark, and Wesley J. Wildman. *Religion & Science: History, Method, Dialogue*, (New York, New York: Routledge, 1996), 105-120

aim is to give a bird's-eye view of the web that encourages broad, holistic paradigm transformation.

This paper is divided into three sections: the first will address matter; the second mind, and the third phenomenological anthropology. The first section will explore matter through the lens of empirical science by examining how discoveries in quantum physics, psi research, the placebo effect, and theoretical physics align with Biblical notions better than materialism. The second section will explore mind by looking at the field of psychology's validation of aspects of the Biblical paradigm, including neuroplasticity, self-transcendence, and mystical experience. The third and final section of the paper will step into phenomenological anthropology by overlaying anomalous experiences onto a Biblical framework, examining materialistic-defying phenomena such as near death experiences and encounters with the deceased, as well as combining Western analytical methodology with the indigenous shamanistic cultural practice of psychoactive substance use.

By the end of the paper it will become clear that there are legitimate aspects of our reality that align better with a Biblical framework than a positivist materialist one. In this way the metanarrative of the Bible will be shown to have the apologetic capacity to tie together the threads of our webs of knowledge.

## Section 1: Faith - Consciousness's Interaction with Matter in Empirical Science

The Biblical narrative is saturated with stories of the power of intention to affect matter: Moses was able to initiate the split of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21), Elijah and Jesus were able to control the weather (1 Kings 17-19 and Mark 4:39 respectively), and Jesus was able to turn water into wine (John 2:1-11). Does this prove that the Bible is unscientific and therefore false as some ardent materialists claim? Recognizing our cultural locatedness and the authoritative weight placed upon the scientific method in our context, using empirical science to open the path for apologetics is a powerful strategy to pry open epistemological cracks, and it is therefore the approach that opens this paper.

## 1.1 Quantum Physics

Firstly, the empiricism of physics is notable, and its investigation into quantum physics has shown that consciousness directly impacts matter, reconfiguring the closed-system, classical Newtonian model of reality. It has been shown that, as Nancey Murphy puts it, “observation of a system inevitably interacts with and changes the system.”<sup>3</sup> The dual nature of photons in the so-called double-slit experiment is an example of this effect, with photons taking the form of particles when observed and waves when not, and the act of conscious observation causing the collapse of the probability wave function. These principles are historically informed, and Biblical thinkers such as Origen had posited similar theories eighteen centuries ago. Edwards explains that for Origen, matter is “the unqualified receptacle of all qualities, a mere potentiality for exis-

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 112

tence in contradistinction to essence, of which nothing can be predicted until it is actualized as determinate being.”<sup>4</sup>

This emphasis on consciousness leads us to our next field of exploration, psi research, as scholars like Amos Yong of Fuller Theological Seminary suggest that psychic experiences are effects of the percipient's consciousness similar to the collapse of the probability wave function in quantum physics,<sup>5</sup> and that physics provides “an ontological context for psi events.”<sup>6</sup>

## 1.2 Psi Research

Psi can be defined as “psychic or paranormal abilities or phenomena.”<sup>7</sup> Expanding on Augustine’s notion<sup>8</sup>, faith leads not only to understanding, but also to experience, and studies have shown that beliefs in psi tend to become self-fulfilling prophecies, leading to psi experiences.<sup>9</sup>

This section of the paper draws heavily on the thought of Pentecostal scholar of science Amos Yong in order to demonstrate the respect with which the field of psi research is endowed by reputable theologians, indicating the breadth and diversity of theological perspectives. Indeed, with

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<sup>4</sup> Edwards, Mark J., "Origen", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), accessed 2/2/2018, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/origen>

<sup>5</sup> Yong, Amos, *The Spirit of Creation: Modern Science and Divine Action in the Pentecostal-Charismatic Imagination*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co), 2011, 189

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 196

<sup>7</sup> “Psi”, Collins Dictionary, accessed 2/28/2018, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/psi>

<sup>8</sup> Augustine said, “Therefore do not seek to understand in order to believe, but believe that thou mayest understand” in “*Tractates on the Gospel of John*” tractate XXIX on John 7:14-18, §6, *A Select Library of the Nicene And Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* Volume VII by St. Augustine, chapter VII (1888) as translated by Philip Schaff Christian Classics Ethereal Library, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf107.iii.xxx.html>

<sup>9</sup> Yong 2011, 194

Christians claiming belief in supernatural phenomenon, of which the resurrection of Christ is an axiomatic one, Christian scholars should be on the forefront of investigation into non-materialistic domains. Yong expresses the apologetic power inherent in the field by claiming that psi investigations “give an empirical basis for religious claims and constructs,”<sup>10</sup> attributing the previous lack of scientific attention on psi phenomena as the result of nonscientific materialist commitments.<sup>11</sup>

Yong follows Tart in delineating the psi “Big Five.”<sup>12</sup> These are: 1) telepathy, 2) clairvoyance, 3) precognition, 4) psychokinesis, and 5) psychic healing.<sup>13</sup> The Jesus narratives alone make claims of every one of these phenomena, which are attested to by all four of the gospel authors. Instances include Jesus: 1) telepathically reading people’s thoughts in Luke 5:22, 2) displaying clairvoyant abilities by seeing Nathanael under the fig tree in John 1:48, 3) having precognition about his death in Matthew 16:21, 4) possessing psychokinetic abilities in Mark 4:36-41, and 5) displaying psychic healing in John 9:1-12. What’s more, Jesus claims that *we* have the capability of exhibiting these abilities, indeed saying that we will do *greater* things than what he has done (John 14:12)! Are these psi phenomena scientifically possible?

The scientific verification of psi phenomena is overwhelmingly against chance. It is beyond the scope of this paper to describe each study extensively, but rather to provide the big picture. An overview based on a meta-meta-analysis of 1,019 controlled laboratory studies that involved

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 197

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 185

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 187

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

about 40,000 sessions ultimately calculated the odds against chance of  $13 \times 10^{104}$  to one.<sup>14</sup> Even ardent materialist and so-called “new atheist” Sam Harris points to “a body of data<sup>15</sup> attesting to the reality of psychic phenomena, much of which has been ignored by mainstream science.”<sup>16</sup> The fact that these phenomena exist, which calls into questions materialistic assumptions, is incontrovertible, and the 5th category of psi: healing, is also medically verifiable.

### 1.3 The Placebo Effect

In the New Testament, faith is an essential component in miraculous healings (see Mark 5:34 for instance). Science verifies the power of the mind to heal the body through belief, which is well-recognized as the Placebo effect, a word that has its origins in Jerome’s translation of the Bible.<sup>17</sup> Indeed studies have shown that placebos can be “55–60% as effective as active medications.”<sup>18</sup> This is an example of the openness of the biological system to top-down causation as described by Murphy in her discussion of Peacock’s panentheism.<sup>19</sup> Openness to top-down causation is deeply embedded in history. Smith, summarizing Charles Taylor’s thought, explains that before

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 195

<sup>15</sup> Harris, Sam, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason*, (New York, New York: W.W.Norton & Company Inc., 2004), 242) refers to D. Radin’s *The Conscious Universe*, R. Sheldrake’s *The Sense of Being Stared At*, and R.S. Bobrow’s *Paranormal Phenomena in the Medical Literature Sufficient Smoke to Warrant a Search for Fire*.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 41

<sup>17</sup> Jacobs, B. “Biblical Origins of Placebo.” *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 93.4 (2000): 213–214

<sup>18</sup> Evans, FJ, “Expectancy, Therapeutic Instructions, and the Placebo Response” in White L, Tursky B, Schwartz GE (eds) *Placebo: theory, research and mechanisms*, (New York, New York: The Guilford Press, 1985)

<sup>19</sup> Murphy 1996, 117

the world underwent a process of disenchantment, and meaning [became] solely allocated to an interior mind, the human agent was understood as being porous.<sup>20</sup>

### 1.4 Dimensionality in Theoretical Physics

Lastly, theoretical physics posits the existence of additional dimensions, which the Biblical framework attests to. The existence of the spiritual realm is a consistent theme throughout the Bible, with Hebrews, for example, employing a somewhat Platonic framework to explain the construction of the Jewish temple, explaining that it is “a copy and shadow of what is in heaven” (Hebrews 8:5). Paul also tells us that we do not fight against physical forces but ones in “heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12 TNIV). Science is now starting to catch up. String theory requires the existence of many more dimensions than our 4D reality, with 10 being posited in superstring theory, 11 in M-theory, and 26 in bosonic theory.<sup>21</sup> Carl Jung described these dimensions as psyche, and the next section of the paper examines alignments of the Biblical paradigm with the field of psychology.

## Section 2: Psychological Validation of Biblical Principles

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<sup>20</sup> Smith, James, K.A., *How (Not) to be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014), 29

<sup>21</sup> Zwiebach, Barton, *A First Course in String Theory*. 2Nd ed., 5th printing, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 352-385

The science of psychology is intimately linked to spirituality, with the words spirit and psyche both meaning breath.<sup>22</sup> This section will examine how the Biblical paradigm resonates with neuroscience, Maslow's theory, and the psychological study of mystical experience.

## 2.1 Neuroplasticity and Mind-Directed Matter

Our thought affects not only our behavior, but the very neurocircuitry that materialists propose produces the thought itself, another instance of top-down causation. This aligns with New Testament teaching, with Paul telling us to be “transformed by the renewing of [our] mind” (Romans 12:2 TNIV). He also exhorts us to think about the true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8 TNIV). Neuroscience has proven the principle of neuroplasticity, the brain's ability to rewire itself, as well as the personality and behavior transformation that result from reconfigurations of neurocircuitry and neurotransmitters induced by meditating on the right things.<sup>23</sup> This is believed to be produced by quantum events which, as we have already seen, are fundamentally affected by consciousness. Walker explains that “a synapse is so small that electrons would be expected to cross from a postsynaptic to a presynaptic membrane through a quantum process known as quantum mechanical tunneling.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> The word psychology was likely brought into use in the mid-16th century by Melanchthon from the Latinized form of the Greek *psykhe* -"breath, spirit, soul" used by Plato + *logia* "study of." Reference: "Psychology," Online Etymology Library, accessed 2/13/2018, <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=psychology>

<sup>23</sup> "Changing Behavior and Renewing the Brain: Neuroscience and Spirituality" in Maddix, Mark A., and Dean Gray Blevins, *Neuroscience and Christian Formation*, (Charlotte, North Carolina: Information Age Publishing, 2016), *eBook Academic Collection (EBSCOhost)*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 7, 2018), 137-153

<sup>24</sup> (E. H. Walker, 1970) Barušs, Imants, and Julia Mossbridge. "Interactions with discarnate beings." In *Transcendent mind: Rethinking the science of consciousness*, 83-101. Washington, DC, US: American Psychological Association, 2017. *PsycBOOKS*, EBSCOhost (accessed February 25, 2018), 11

## 2.2 Self-transcendence

Secondly, psychology validates the Biblical notion of self-transcendence as opposed to materialism's "*The Selfish Gene*".<sup>25</sup> A central theme in the Christian message is dying to oneself in order to grow into a higher mode of being (see 1 Corinthians 15:31, Romans 6:8, Luke 9:23-25, and Philippians 2:3 for example). In the field of psychology, Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is well-known to have self-actualization at the peak. What is lesser known is that in 1969, one year before his death, Maslow adjusted his model, putting self-transcendence as the final step beyond self-actualization,<sup>26</sup> validating the Biblical exhortation.

Furthermore, William James, in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, also endorses this Biblical notion of dying to self, claiming that "There are two lives, the natural and the spiritual, and we must lose the one before we can participate in the other."<sup>27</sup> James, a pioneer in the study of religious experience, introduces a discussion of the psychological validity of mystical experience.

## 2.3 Psychological Validation of Mysticism

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<sup>25</sup> See Dawkins, Richard, *The Selfish Gene*, (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2006)

<sup>26</sup> Koltko-Rivera, Mark E., "Rediscovering the Later Version of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: Self-Transcendence and Opportunities for Theory, Research, and Unification," *The American Psychological Association*, Vol. 10, No. 4, (2006), 302-317, <http://academic.udayton.edu/jackbauer/Readings%20595/Koltko-Rivera%2006%20trans%20self-act%20-copy.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> James, William, *The Varieties of Religious Experience : A Study in Human Nature*, (Waiheke Island: The Floating Press, 2008), eBook Academic Collection (EBSCOhost), EBSCOhost (accessed March 7, 2018), 236

Mystical experiences have been affirmed not only by psychological scholars of the highest repute like William James and Carl Jung, but even by the neuroscientist and new atheist Sam Harris, who attributes the dynamics of mystical experience to a collapse in subject/object duality, which he claims “has been at the core of human spirituality for millennia.”<sup>28</sup> James and Jung also affirm experiences of non-duality to be higher, mystical experiences of reality. James describes this non-dual realm as “a continuum of cosmic consciousness, against which our individuality builds but accidental fences, and into which our several minds plunge as into a mothersea or reservoir.”<sup>29</sup> Jung, through his collaboration with quantum physicist pioneer Wolfgang Pauli, developed the notion of the *unus mundus*, in which he asserted that psyche and matter are two aspects of the same thing. When the ego’s consciousness becomes dimmed we are able to witness this unity of the *unus mundus* through the collapse of subject/object duality in a phenomenon Jung called synchronicity.<sup>30</sup>

Critics may argue that there is no empirical evidence for these theories, but contemporary thinkers such as the philosopher of science and Nobel prize nominee Ervin Laszlo refute this objection, claiming that non-dual frameworks can resolve many of the puzzles at the forefront of science in quantum physics, cosmology, consciousness research, and biology.<sup>31</sup>

Witnessing this deeper reality can be utterly transformational, and can lead to powerful apologetic witness. In fact, Penner describes the act of Christian witness precisely in this line: “the

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<sup>28</sup> Harris 2004, 219

<sup>29</sup> James 2008, 589

<sup>30</sup> Mackey, J. Linn, “The Collective Unconscious and the Akashic Field,” *Jung Journal: Culture & Psyche* 1, no. 2 (2007): 12

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 9

unity of the inner and the outer, subjectivity and objectivity.”<sup>32</sup> Penner’s emphasis on the legitimacy of subjectivity leads us to our final section: the postmodern consideration of anomalous subjective experience.

### Section 3: Anomalous Experiences as Phenomenological Anthropology

Postmodernity has reopened subjective experience as a legitimate field of investigation. This certainly applies to apologetics. Penner attributes a heavy apologetic weight to phenomenology, asking “Will someone who believes they have heard God speak bother to make clever arguments...?”<sup>33</sup> These powerful subjective anomalous experiences are well-worthy of examination for apologetics, and are likely a component of Pentecostalism’s rapid spread in the global south.<sup>34</sup> This section of the paper will examine anomalous subjective experiences that defy positivist materialism, including the widespread report of near death experiences and encounters with the dead, as well as the altered states of consciousness induced by psychoactive substances in both Shamanistic and modern cultures. We will see that the Biblical framework validates the existence of all these phenomena, whether it condones or condemns them.

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<sup>32</sup> Penner, Myron Bradley, *The End of Apologetics: Christian Witness in a Postmodern Context*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2013), 129

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 81

<sup>34</sup> Street, Nick, *Moved by the Spirit: Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in the Global South*, (Los Angeles, CA: University of Southern California Press, 2013)

### 3.1 Subjective Near Death Experiences and Encounters with the Dead

Firstly, there is an extensive body of research validating the legitimacy of near death experiences.<sup>35</sup> These experiences map well to the Christian tradition, and Yong says that "In the near-death experience, we have a modern empirical model for understanding early Christian conversion and Pentecostal experiences."<sup>36</sup>

Additionally, reported encounters with the deceased are incredibly widespread. In a 1984 National Opinions Research Council poll, a full 42% of people believed they have had contact with the dead.<sup>37</sup> Having a Biblical perceptual framework through which to understand these encounters could connect huge numbers of people to Christian systems of meaning for their experiences as opposed to these individuals adopting Occultic, Spiritist or New Age worldviews when conventional Christianity dismisses their experiences. The Bible affirms the existence of discarnate entities (see Job 4:15, Revelation 4:4, Revelation 16:13-14), and the deceased Moses, Elijah, and Samuel<sup>38</sup> appeared in the realm of the living.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Examples include: 1) Moody, Raymond A, *Life After Life: The Investigation of a Phenomenon--Survival of Bodily Death*, (Harrisburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 1976); 2) Ring, Kenneth, *Life at Death: A Scientific Investigation of the Near-Death Experience*, (New York, New York: Coward, 1980); and 3); Basford, Terry K., *Near-Death Experiences: An Annotated Bibliography*, Garland Reference Library of Social Science, Vol. 481, (New York, New York: Garland, 1990)

<sup>36</sup> Yong 2011, 189

<sup>37</sup> Barušs, Imants, and Julia Mossbridge, "Interactions with discarnate beings" in *Transcendent mind: Rethinking the Science of Consciousness*, (Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 2017), 85, *PsycBOOKS*, EBSCOhost (accessed February 25, 2018)

<sup>38</sup> Moses and Elijah appear in Matthew 17:3, and Samuel appears in 1 Samuel 28:15-16.

<sup>39</sup> It must be noted that Jesus said in his parable of the rich man and Lazarus that an impassable divide has been put up between the dead and the living (Luke 16:26). Nevertheless, these experiences point to the phenomenological validity of an encounter with *some* kind of Other.

Yong links these two subjective encounters, near death experiences and contact with the dead, with a third. He claims that the the ontological existence of discarnate spiritual entities is suggested by near death experience data, and this is particularly suggestive when combined with our final topic: out of body experiences triggered by psychoactive substance use.<sup>40</sup>

### 3.2 Western Exploration of Indigenous Spiritual Practices

Finally, Shamanic cultures have long believed in the existence of other dimensions of reality, using psychoactive plants to connect with their ancestors and spirit beings. The extra-canonical book of 1 Enoch implies the same methodology being explored and condemned in ancient Israel, with the angels teaching humanity “charms and enchantments, and the cutting of roots, and [making] them acquainted with plants” (1 Enoch 7:1-2). Secular science is now starting to acknowledge the legitimacy of the realms that these substances can put people in touch with.

A number of modern Western academic books have linked the use of these substances to legitimate spiritual experiences.<sup>41</sup> One such scientific inquiry which directly contributes to the apologetic task at hand is psychiatrist Rick Strassman’s research on Dimethyltryptamine (DMT), the psychoactive ingredient in the Ayahuasca brew used in South American shamanism. After rigorous experimentation and research, Strassman came to the conclusion that the mystical experiences and encounters with discarnate beings experienced in these states could best be mapped to

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<sup>40</sup> Yong 2011, 191

<sup>41</sup> Examples of these include: 1) Richards, William A, and G. William Barnard, *Sacred Knowledge: Psychedelics and Religious Experiences*, (New York, New York: Columbia University Press, 2016); 2) Hume, Lynne, *Portals: Opening Doorways to Other Realities through the Senses*, (Oxford, UK: Berg., 2007); 3) Wasson, R. Gordon, ed., *Persephone's Quest:entheogens and the Origins of Religion*, Ethnomycological Studies, No. 10. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986)

the Biblical prophetic framework. Strassman analyzes medieval commentaries to show how Jewish metaphysics provides a top-down model for both the DMT and Hebrew prophetic states. The model that he calls ‘theoneurology’ bridges spirituality and neurobiology by claiming that the Divine communicates with us using the brain, and that naturally produced or ingested DMT is a crucial factor in such visionary experience.<sup>42</sup> Strassman posits that DMT is created in the pineal gland of the brain, traditionally known as the third eye and seat of the soul, and is produced in excessive amounts in dream-states and at death.<sup>43</sup> This biological explanation, combined with Jung’s psychological explanation of the collective unconscious being accessed through the subconscious mind, validates the Biblical stories in which so many of the mystical encounters happen in the dream state.<sup>44</sup>

From the Christian camp, dean of the School of Theology at Point Loma Nazarene University Mark Maddix agrees with Strassman’s affirmation of the biological root of mystical experience, claiming in his book *Neuroscience and Christian Transformation*, that “Studies show that whether drug induced, seizure-related, magnetically stimulated, or born of normal brain processes, religious experiences remain clearly tied to physical brains.”<sup>45</sup> It is no wonder that a modification of the brain’s neurochemistry can cause experiences in different realms of consciousness,

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<sup>42</sup> Andrei Burke, “Rick Strassman Returns With ‘DMT and the Soul of Prophecy’”, <https://ultraculture.org/blog/2014/10/10/dmt-soul-prophecy-rick-strassman/>, last accessed 3/6/18

<sup>43</sup> Strassman, Rick, *DMT: The Spirit Molecule: a Doctor's Revolutionary Research into the Biology of Near-Death and Mystical Experiences*, (Rochester, Vt: Park Street Press, 2001), 64

<sup>44</sup> Examples include Jacob in Genesis 28:12, 13; Nathan in 2 Samuel 7:4; Isaiah in Isaiah 6:1-8, and Joseph in Matthew 2:13

<sup>45</sup> Maddix, Mark A., and Dean Gray Blevins, *Neuroscience and Christian Formation*, (Charlotte, North Carolina: Information Age Publishing, 2016) *eBook Academic Collection (EBSCOhost)*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 7, 2018), 137

realms that “are as real as this one,” Strassman’s research participants claimed.<sup>46</sup> The shamanic Desana tribe concurs, describing “existence in *this* world as a dream, a reflection of the reality which exists in the ‘other dimension.’”<sup>47</sup> There is a world of discovery to be found in dissolving some of our cultural and dimension-centrism. As Barušs and Mossbridge put it:

“Anomalous phenomena defy classical physics, but are compatible with contemporary physics (Broderick & Goertzel, 2015b), which, as we have already seen, has painted a radically different picture of reality. In any case, theories need to fit the empirical evidence, not the other way round, so if there were to be a disparity between observation and theory, then it is the theory that would need to be rewritten.”<sup>48</sup>

Who better to rewrite these theories than the followers and imitators of the Author of Life (Acts 3:15)?

## Conclusion

Jesus was a paradigm-shifter, a boundary dissolver who reframed the Old Testament in-group/out-group mentalities. It is up to us as Christians who aim to be like him to explore and dissolve the boundaries that prohibit the incorporation of supernatural phenomena into our knowledge

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<sup>46</sup> Strassman 2001, 315

<sup>47</sup> Hume, Lynne, *Portals: Opening Doorways to Other Realities Through the Senses*, (Oxford, UK: Berg Publishers, 2007), eBook Academic Collection (EBSCOhost), EBSCOhost (accessed March 9, 2018), 142, (emphasis mine)

<sup>48</sup> Barušs, Imants, and Julia Mossbridge 2017, 23

web. These pursuits can reframe the Bible's timeless truths in new, exciting light that will attract the next generation, adapting our apologetic approach to our local cultural context.

We have seen how postmodern exploration has brought with it mysterious counter-points to positivist materialism, opening up new doors for Biblical truth to shine through. This has been shown to be the case in humanity's understanding of matter (empirical science and physics), mind (psychology), and cultural anthropology (anomalous experiences), with the Biblical paradigm transcending the solely Jewish and Christian contexts in which it was given, and allowing for the mapping of these extraordinary phenomena in a postmodern era.

Smith, in discussing Charles Taylor's work, explains that atheism was nearly inconceivable in the Medieval imaginary, in which the natural world was a sign that pointed beyond itself, society was grounded in a higher reality, and the world was an enchanted, open system charged with presences.<sup>49</sup> If the data mentioned in this paper is digested thoroughly enough for it to change our social imaginary, atheism may once again become inconceivable, or at least have sizable hurdles put in its way.

It is time for our understanding, and therefore our apologetic approach, to evolve. Joel Green, dean of the School of Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary, says that a paradigm shift like Galileo's is coming in the theological world due to neuroscience.<sup>50</sup> Let us be The Galilean's influence in this Galileo shift, inviting the new epistemological world to revolve around paradigm-transforming Biblical truth!

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<sup>49</sup> Smith 2014, 27

<sup>50</sup> Green, Joel B, *Body, Soul, and Human Life*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic), 16

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