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I. Floating in Time and Space

If we were to get into a time machine with this computer and a power source and go back 1000 years, we would likely be accused of witchcraft. To the people 1000 years ago this computer machine would have been considered impossible. Its abilities would be considered the power of the devil. To them, this computer is supernatural. To us it is just another machine.

Unless we are to consider ourselves utterly uneducated and primally brutal, we must admit that what we consider to be supernatural today may to future generations be as natural as home made pie.

Physics has given us some clues into the nature of alleged ghosts and their origin. We suspect from Physics research that it is possible for beings to be in a plane of existence different from our own which may give us a ghostly image when those two planes open to each other in some way. Through this research we may eventually come to understand how angels (and ghosts) are able to do what they do. Also through this research we may find some kinds of Ghosts that are not Ghosts at all in the way we normally think of them, but an event of time/space distortions or other quantum phenomena.

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II. What the Bible Says about Ghosts

A. Seeking out Ghosts

We will leave the speculative physics for another time. Now let us discuss the experience of ghosts in this plane of existence. We begin this discussion with an examination of some of the Scripture verses that give us clues on this subject.

Scripture does not have much to say about this and certainly God has made it clear that this is an area we are not to seek out

*Lev. 19:31 tells us to not turn to mediums or to seek out spiritists

*Lev. 20:6, 27 equates the seeking out of mediums with prostitution (doing so is an act of infidelity to God that is not just adultery, but involves a prurient interest in the occult things equating it with prostitution -- a medium also is "hired" which is also an image of prostitution).

*Deut. 18:10-11 gives a whole list of prohibitions involving the occult and spirit world.

Whatever Ghosts are or are not, it is clear that we are not to seek them out in any way.

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B. What do We Know About Ghosts?

1. Composition of Ghosts

*What are ghosts composed of? Well, we have a little hint of that in Luke 24:39 where the Resurrected Jesus is

mistaken for a ghost. Jesus says "a ghost does not have flesh and bones".

Thus we can know that whatever ghosts are, they are spiritual beings without flesh and bones.

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2. Ghostly Visitations during Sleep

*Is there an example of a ghostly visitation during sleep? Job 4:15 "A spirit glided by my face and the hair on my body stood on end"

This "spirit" was most probably an angel, but it does give us a clue of the human experience of meeting a spiritual entity and that such entities can and do come to us in that vulnerable time of twilight and dreams. This account is very close to the common experience many have of which can be described in technical jargon as cataleptic somnambulism with a sensed or visual phantasmic perception.

Also in 2 Maccabees 15:12-16 This passage is about a dream (vision) of the Jewish leader Maccabeus. In this dream the ghosts of the high priest Onias and the great prophet Jeremiah appeared to him and encouraged him concerning the battle to come.

Maccabeus told this dream to his men which encourage his men greatly. Maccabeus and his men afterwards defeated blasphemous Nicanor and his men who thought to destroy the Jewish people.

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3. Human spirits in Ghostly Form?

*Can a human being's spirit be transported? We know from accounts of Padre Pio that bi-location is possible, but those are yet unverified -- But what about in Scripture. Well, there are a couple of verses that indicate this. One is in Rev. 21:10 (17:3) where John was "carried away in the spirit". But the most direct notion of this is in 2 Corinthians 1:22 "I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know -- God knows."

From this we know it is possible for man's spirit to be apart from even his living body at God's discretion. In the occult world this is called Astral Projection.

*Can a person's body be transported spiritually? Acts 8:39, after Philip was miraculously running up along the chariot of the Ethiopian, and after Philip baptized him, Philip then disappeared. "When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again..."

This episode appears to be a bodily transport in the spirit, but I suppose it could also be a corporeal bi-location too. Who knows?

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4. Other examples of ghostly visitations

*1 Samuel 28 the Witch of Endor. In this story Saul goes to a medium asking her to contact the dead Samuel. She apparently succeeds and Saul talks with Samuel and Samuel prophecies. The Scripture specifically states that "Samuel said". There is no indication at all that this was a demonic imposter.

*Sirach 46:20. Again Samuel prophecies from the grave.

*The Transfiguration Matt 17:2 Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus to Peter, James, and John

*The Rich Man and Lazarus Luke 16:19-31 In verse 25 Abraham says that there is a great chasm between him and the Rich Man that cannot be crossed. This is not talking about a chasm between the earth and hell; it is a chasm between Abraham's bosom (which, in principle can be likened to heaven), and that of hell. Those in hell cannot come to the place of the saved, and the saved cannot reach down with compassion to those who are lost. It is in the next request from the Rich Man that we have a possible clue. The Rich Man wants Lazarus to go to his brothers to warn them of hell. Abraham says that there is no point in doing so. v.31 "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead".

This passage implies the possibility of at least Lazarus being able to go to the living (it implies the Rich Man in hell cannot), but Abraham refuses the request not because it is impossible to do so, but because there is no point in doing so.

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C. Conclusion *So what do we have?

- 1) We know that ghosts do not have flesh and bones. (Luke 24:39)
- 2) We know that the dead can communicate with the living. (1 Sam 28; Sirach 46:20)
- 3) We know that at least in some context allowed by God, the dead can be conjured in some fashion. (1 Sam 28)
- 4) We know that it is possible for the dead to appear on the earth (Matt 72; 1 Sam 28)
- 5) We know that it may be possible for the dead to not only appear on the earth, but appear to people and talk with them (Luke 16:27-31; 1 Sam 28)
- 6) We know that it is possible for the living to bi-locate (Rev. 17:3; 21:10; 2 Cor 12:2)
- 7) We know that it is possible for spirits to communicate in dreams and the person to have a bodily reaction to the visitation (Job 415)

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III. Comments from Peter Kreeft

Now, let's take a look at what Peter Kreeft says about this. He wrote at least two books that mention this subject, "Angels (and demons) What Do we Know About Them?" and "Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Heaven". His comments stem from his study of Thomas Aquinas, Philosophy, and other Catholic saints and observers on this subject.

Kreeft makes mention that many very reputable people, such as C.S. Lewis, have reported seeing a "ghost" of their wives. There are many instances from reputable sources of experiences that do not have ANY flavor of the demonic.

Based upon these anecdotal accounts Kreeft and others talk about identifying three kinds of ghosts. I would add a fourth and a fifth category (from Kreeft's material that he talks about but doesn't categorize) and a sixth and seventh type from my own thoughts and observations.

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IV. Seven Kinds of Ghosts

A. GHOSTS OF THE FIRST KIND: The first kind Kreeft calls the "sad ones" or "wispy ones". These Ghosts seem to be working out some unfinished business of some sort, or suffering some purgatorial purification.

He says that these Ghosts would seem to be the ones who just barely made it into Purgatory, who feel little or no joy yet and who need to learn many painful lessons about their past lives on earth. God, in his compassion, may realize that to allow the person to get through Purgatory that it may be useful for them to learn some lessons on this earth.

B. GHOSTS OF THE SECOND KIND: A Second kind may be some of these purgatorial ghosts who might have been so material minded in their earthly life that they can't detach themselves from these Material places or possessions. God may allow them to remain attached as they work out their need to "let go".

C. GHOSTS OF THE THIRD KIND: A third type might be those who don't yet realize their dead. Again, in God's compassion, I can see why He would allow a spirit to linger for a short while so that they may realize their fate before leaving this world completely. In both the "second kind" and "third kind" God could, of course, force the person to let go of the material place or to come on through the "gate" and not linger. But a compassionate Father can also allow for a "little" tolerance to help the person to adjust.

D. GHOSTS OF A FOURTH KIND: A Fourth type is the malicious and deceptive spirits. These are the one who probably appear at séances and the like and are most likely from hell. And most likely are demons disguised as dead loved ones and not the human persons themselves.

E. GHOSTS OF A FIFTH KIND: A Fifth type is the bright, happy spirits of dead friends and family who appear unbidden at God's will, not ours, with messages of hope and love. They seem to come from heaven. These types may come to a loved one to say goodbye or to comfort after a funeral for example. Or these types may come to a relative or friend in "great" need. There are very trustworthy empirical and psychological evidence for these phenomena.

F. GHOSTS OF A SIXTH KIND: A sixth type might be a form of time/space instant replay. We know from Einstein's work and other scientists that it may indeed be possible for events of the past to be in the present in a sort of time/space warp. This gets into some very complicated notions, but the idea is that some "ghosts" are not ghosts at all but are an instant replay of a past event.

In such cases what one sees is the ghost performing a certain scene repetitively. For example, a ghost of this type may go from the top of the stairs to the bottom and then disappear. This may happen over and over again. It never changes. The Ghost never interacts with anyone, and we cannot interact with it. It never changes facial expression nor does it ever acknowledge anything around it. Thus phenomenon is exactly like an instant reply on T.V. As some sort of time/space loop or instant replay, this Ghost is NOT a demon, or soul, or spirit. It is a phenomenon that given the right circumstances can probably be explained by physics. This type is NOT supernatural.

G. GHOSTS OF THE SEVENTH KIND: Some "apparent" ghostly apparitions or effects may be the bi-location of the living...the Astral projections of living people. This can be postulated from scriptural evidence (Rev. 17:3; 21:10; and 2 Cor 12:2), and from verified reports of bi-location of people like Padre Pio.

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V. What should our demeanor be toward "any" ghostly event?

In a one liner the answer to that question is skepticism, caution, and testing.

Because Satan can so easily fool our senses, we should look upon all ghostly events with great skepticism as to the idea of whether they come from God.

First, we must recognize the GREAT possibility that we are imagining things. The human mind has great imagination

capacity and we can psyche ourselves into seeing things that are not there or to misinterpret optical illusions.

Second, we must always presume that we may be tricked by Satan and what we see is a demon in disguise or Satan taking advantage of our overactive imaginations or taking advantage of optical illusions.

Third, we must be aware that it is possible for the event to be ordained by God.

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VI. How can we tell the difference between a Godly Apparition and one not of God?

1) a Godly apparition will NEVER contradict ANY Public Revelation. (So we need to be well versed in Public Revelation)

2) a Godly apparition will NEVER lead you to disobey your elders, superiors, or the Church. (so we need to be aware of Church teaching and the like)

3) Although meeting a Spirit is scary, a Godly apparition will lead you to peace.

4) A Godly spirit will ALWAYS and without hesitation affirm the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Thus we need to test the spirit with the formula of 1 John 4:1-3

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VII. Some Common Questions and Answers

1) In reference to the Ghosts of the Second Kind, how can we even begin to think that God would let someone stay on to work out their need to "let go"?

ANSWER To a degree, purgatory may serve this function in some cases. Letting go can even be an obstacle to Heaven completely

"Jesus looked at him [now sad] and said, 'How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.' Those who heard this said, 'Then who can be saved?' And he said, 'What is impossible for human beings is possible for God.'" (Luke 18:24-27)

I don't think allowing adjustment time would be a scripturally unfounded statement.

2) Referring to the Third and Sixth kind of Ghosts, how can we even begin to think that God would allow someone to not realize they're dead, or allow for a "little" tolerance to help the person to adjust, or create a type that might be a form of time/space instant replay????

ANSWER "Who is this that obscures divine plans with words of ignorance? Have the gates of death been shown to you, or have you seen the gates of darkness? Which is the way to the dwelling place of light, and where is the abode of darkness, that you may take them to their boundaries and set them on their homeward paths?" Job 38:17,19

"... For stern as death is love, relentless as the nether world is devotion, its flames are a blazing fire." Cf. Song of Songs 8:6

"... for nothing will be impossible for God." Luke 1:37

I do believe such a conjecture IS possible for God; the question is whether it is likely? A key to that would be whether

it would be loving, for God is love (1 John 4:7).

Let us look into Church traditions of the past for precedents.

"A very probable opinion,' says St. Thomas [Aquinas], 'and one which, moreover, corresponds with the words of the saints in particular revelation is, that Purgatory has a double place for expiation. The first will be destined for the generality of souls, and is situated below, near to Hell; the second will be for particular cases, and it is from thence that so many apparitions occur.'

"The holy Doctor admits, then, like so many others who share his opinions, that sometimes Divine Justice assigns a special place for purification to certain souls, and even permits them to appear either to instruct the living or to procure for the departed the suffrages of which they stand in need; sometimes also for other motives worthy of wisdom and mercy of God.

"Such is the general view concerning the location of Purgatory. Since we are not writing a controversial treatise, we add neither proofs nor refutations; these can be seen in authors such as Suarez and Bellarmin." (Fr. F.X. Shouppe, S.J., "Purgatory Explained by the Lives and Legends of the Saints," 1893)

3) But Scripture says that if you are not alive on earth, then you are in the presence of God.

ANSWER: Most definitely; but what does that mean?

Case in Point, we know that Souls in Hell are in the "presence" of God because God is everywhere. Those in Hell, however, do not "perceive" God's presence because they have chosen to blind themselves to the light of God. The nature of Hell is to exist without perception of God's presence (thus without Love and all good things) ... to be "free" from God, yet those in Hell are still in the presence of an omnipresent God.

Similarly, souls in Purgatory only have a partial awareness of God's presence. The veil of mortality has not yet passed away, yet they are still in God's presence.

"The first point about eternal life is that man is united with God. For God himself is the reward and end of all our labors I am your protector and your supreme reward. This union consists in seeing perfectly. At present we are looking at a confused reflection in a mirror, but then we shall see face to face." (St. Thomas Aquinas, "Credo in Deum")

The point is that even when we are in the presence of God it does not mean that our perception of Him is clear. We also know that it is possible to be in the presence of God while on the earth. The angels can be standing right next to us yet they are also in the constant presence of God - the beatific vision. With God all is possible according to His will.

4) The Bible doesn't delineate how, why or if God places spirits on the earth other than visits by Gabriel, the Archangel Michael, or Elija and Moses.

ANSWER: Let me use another example from tradition that responds to "if God places spirits on the earth anywhere." I qualify this example to say that it does not necessarily prove anything regarding "hauntings," but is one of many documented examples of ghostly apparitions.

"We read the following in the Life of Father Nicholas Zucchi, written by Fr. Daniel Bartoli, of the Company of Jesus ...

"... a fortnight afterwards, this young man died, carried away by a rapid death, that left him little time to put the affairs of his conscience in order, so that there was everything to fear for his salvation.

"One evening, whilst the three novices were engaged together in holy conversation, the youngest was called away to the parlour. There she found a man wrapped in a heavy cloak, and with measured steps pacing the room.

'Sir,' she said, 'who are you? and why did you send for me?' The stranger, without answering, drew near and threw

aside the mysterious mantle which covered him. The Religious than recognized the unfortunate deceased, and saw with horror that he was entirely surrounded by chains of fire that clasped his neck, wrists, knees, and ankles. 'Pray for me!' he cried, and disappeared." (Fr. F.X. Shoupe, S.J., "Purgatory Explained by the Lives and Legends of the Saints," 1893)

On an anecdotal side note, Padre Pio's first visit from a deceased human's soul was that of a monk who had died 300 years before in the cell Padre used at the time. The man had been guilty of some infraction of his duties as a monk, and so God sentenced him to remain in his cell until a monk would offer up some prayers and sacrifices on his behalf. I forget what laxity the monk had been guilty of, but I found it interesting that his "sentence" very much fit the "crime." .