

Biblical Evidence for the Premise that God Wishes to Remain Concealed

An Appendix to:
The Concealment Argument for Why No Proof for God's Existence Will Be Found

December 5, 2014

Eric Rasmusen¹

Abstract of the main paper

Logic and Biblical evidence suggest that God wishes some but not all humans to become convinced of His existence and desires. If so, attempts to either prove or disprove God's existence, past miracles, or present supernatural intervention are doomed to failure, because God could and would take care to evade any such efforts. This "concealment argument" also implies that whether God exists or not, empirical studies of prayer will find no effect, that Christians will have suffering in their lives, that apparent archaeological discoveries validating Christianity will turn out to be fakes, and that non-theistic theories of sociobiological and physical evolution and of cosmology will not be definitively disproved. It also implies that failure of these things to happen are not evidence against Christianity, since they are its necessary implications.

Main paper: <http://www.rasmusen.org/papers/conceal-rasmusen.pdf>.

This appendix: <http://www.rasmusen.org/papers/conceal-rasmusen-appendix.pdf>.

If God wishes to be known, He could make Himself known much more clearly and to more people if He simply appeared on Earth and performed miracles. That He does not do so implies weakly that He is not eager to be made widely known by convincing logic or evidence. We can go further, however, using verses from

¹ Dan R. and Catherine M. Dalton Professor, Department of Business Economics and Public Policy, Kelley School of Business, Indiana University. BU 438, 1309 E. 10th Street, Bloomington, Indiana, 47405-1701. (812) 855-9219. erasmuse@indiana.edu, <http://www.rasmusen.org>.

the Bible to show that God is not simply neutral: he positively wishes to stay concealed. This appendix contains additional verses to nail down the point made in the main paper by a small selection of them.

For non-Christians, these verses show that the Christian system is consistent: the Christian God wishes to remain concealed and lack of evidence does not refute Christianity, frustrating though that situation may be. For Christians, the verses show that God wishes to be concealed, so we must be modest about our ability to convince nonbelievers and patient with their nonbelief.

Before coming to specific verses, note that according to Christianity, God has already appeared in secret— as Jesus Christ. He appeared as a man, without public claims of divinity. Thus, continued concealment is natural. If He did not make His existence indisputable in the 1st century, we would have to find an explanation for what changed to make Him want to make His existence indisputable in the 21st century. The 18th-century skeptic Peter Annet makes this point well, though he misses the point, thinking that the lack of a public Resurrection shows that the the Christian narrative is absurd:

" Is it probable, that an extraordinary action done for an extraordinary end, and highly necessary to be known to mankind, should be so secretly done, that no man saw it! That so great an action should be done in so improper a way! That Jesus should require the men to believe his Disciples, rather than their own senses, in an affair where reason can be of no assistance! (RJC 59; 133)

That he [Jesus] appeared in such a manner to his Disciples, which scarce convinced themselves; yet sent them to convince the world! . . . That Jesus rose again from the dead, staid forty days afterwards, no body knows where, and purposely avoided the most rational method of its being certainly known to the world, viz. by avoiding to appear to the world! (RJC 60: 133)"²

Let us now come to specific verses.

Verses that say some people— and not the smartest ones, either— learn things that are hidden from others.

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

—Matthew 13: 44

But as for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because of any wisdom that I have more than all the living, but in order that the interpretation may be made known to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of

²Peter Annet (1744) *The Resurrection of Jesus Considered. In Answer to the Trial of Witnesses. By a Moral Philosopher.* 3rd edition. Printed for M. Cooper. As quoted on page 19 of John Earman (2000) *Hume's Abject Failure: The Argument against Miracles*, Oxford University Press.

your mind.

—Daniel 2: 30

At that time Jesus declared,

“I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children;

—Matthew 11: 25

All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

—Matthew 11: 27

Verses that say God wants some people left in ignorance.

In the cover of your presence you hide them from the plots of men; you store them in your shelter from the strife of tongues.

—Psalms 31: 20

It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out.

—Proverbs 25: 2

But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, so that they might not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying.

—Luke 9: 45

Truly, you are a God who hides himself, O God of Israel, the Savior.

—Isaiah 45: 15

But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away.

—II Corinthians 3: 14

Verses that say God deliberately works in the minds and hearts of some people so they will not believe Him.

For the Lord has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes (the prophets), and covered your heads (the seers).

—Isaiah 29: 10

Then the disciples came and said to him,

“Why do you speak to them in parables?”

And he answered them,

“To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says:

‘You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. For this people’s heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’

But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.”

—Matthew 13: 10–17

They know not, nor do they discern, for he has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, and their hearts, so that they cannot understand.

—Isaiah 44:18

Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

“Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said,

“He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.”

Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.

—John 12: 37–41

And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement:

“The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet:

‘Go to this people, and say, You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. For this people’s heart has grown dull, and with

their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.' "

—Acts 28: 25–27

What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, as it is written,

"God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day."

And David says,

"Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever."

—Romans 11: 7-10

Verses that say even miracles do not persuade some people:

They refused to obey and were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them, but they stiffened their neck and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and did not forsake them.

—Nehemiah 9: 17

He said to him,

"If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead."

—Luke 16: 31

Verses that say those who by investigation hope to prove facts about God will be disappointed.

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written,

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews

and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

—I Corinthians 1: 18–24

But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;

—I Corinthians 1: 27

For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written,

“He catches the wise in their craftiness,”

and again,

“The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.”

—I Corinthians 3: 19–20

For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

—Hebrews 4: 2

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

—Hebrews 11: 3

Verses concerning experiments to test for God’s presence. I quote below from Luke (the Temptation in the Wilderness), and Exodus (water from a stone in Massah).

And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him,

“If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written,

‘He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’

and

‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’

And Jesus answered him,

“It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’ ”

—Luke 4: 9–12

But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said,

“Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?”

So Moses cried to the Lord,

“What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.”

And the Lord said to Moses,

“Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.”

And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the Lord by saying,

“Is the Lord among us or not?”

—Exodus 17: 3–7

“You shall not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah.

—Deuteronomy 6: 16

Verses that say some things are known only to God.

The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

—Deuteronomy 29: 29

And I will not hide my face anymore from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord God.

—Ezekiel 39: 29

Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages

—Romans 16: 25

But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.

—I Corinthians 2: 7

...and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things,

—Ephesians 3: 9

... the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.

—Colossians 1:26