

DIVINE COINCIDENCES

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MY CHILDHOOD ADVENTURES

As a child growing up in the suburbs of Washington DC, we used to play in the forest along the Potomac River. In that forest were vestiges of Revolutionary War, Civil War, and World War I artifacts and fortresses; long overgrown like the Mayan temples, replete with huge trees growing out of them.

One such Virginia playground for us was Fort Hunt, a complex of gun emplacements that protected Washington DC from invaders in conjunction with Fort Washington on the Maryland side of the Potomac River. Inside the dark bunkers of Fort Hunt, the ceilings were crawling with camel crickets while vines choked the openings. Further from the river, other concrete facilities with 3-foot thick walls were boarded up by the National Park Service, but that didn't stop adventurous kids from going inside.



Battery Slater (1904)

It was not until a number of years ago that I discovered that we were playing in "P.O. Box 1142"... a secret American military intelligence facility that operated during World War II.



"Disappearing Gun" Emplacement

The American Military Intelligence Service had a special unit with the core duty of interviewing POWs. It was known by the codename "P.O. Box 1142."

P.O. Box 1142 was started in 1942 based in Fort Hunt, Virginia, formerly part of George Washington's farmlands. German scientists, submariners, and soldiers were interrogated there. P.O. Box 1142 obtained valuable intelligence from German POWs. The camp was in violation of the Geneva Convention because the Red Cross was not notified of the transfer or location of the prisoners, but according to the surviving wardens, torture was not used.

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P.O. Box 1142 was one of a number of secret internment facilities commissioned by the United States with the goal to exploit the German scientists recruited as part of "Operation Paperclip". Notable prisoners housed in these facilities included rocket scientist **Wernher von Braun**, spymaster Reinhard Gehlen, and Heinz Schlicke, inventor of infrared detection. German U-boat commander Werner Henke was also a prisoner but was fatally shot when he tried to escape by climbing the fence.

Dr. Wernher von Braun was a member of the Nazi Party and Allgemeine SS holding the rank of Sturmbannführer, as well as the leading figure in the development of rocket technology in Nazi Germany. He helped design and co-developed the V-2 rocket at Peenemünde during World War II. Following the war, he was secretly moved to the United States, along with about 1,600 other German scientists, engineers, and technicians, as part of Operation Paperclip. He worked for the United States Army on an intermediate-range ballistic missile program, and he developed the rockets that launched the United States' first space satellite Explorer 1 in 1958. In 1960, his group was assimilated into NASA, where he served as director of the newly formed Marshall Space Flight Center and as the chief architect of the Saturn V super heavy-lift launch vehicle that purportedly propelled the Apollo spacecraft to the Moon.

PATHS CROSSING IN SPACE BUT NOT TIME

So, I didn't know that I would be following Dr. von Braun's path over the years, first as a kid playing in a Nazi interrogation facility, then as an engineer working on classified projects at the Marshall Space Flight Center, located at the Redstone Arsenal in Alabama, and then on various projects for NASA and NATO at the Kennedy Space Center.

Dr. von Braun and I had something in common, besides occupying the same space on the planet at different times... Dr. von Braun was a Christian. He came to a saving knowledge of Christ while at Ft. Bliss, Texas. Von Braun contrasted the large empty cathedrals of Europe to the large numbers of churches he found in Texas, many meeting in temporary buildings, pastored by "humble preachers driving second-hand buses," who led "thriving congregations." The German scientist was impressed and noted: "Here is a growing, aggressive church and not a dignified, half-dead institution. Here is spiritual life."

Dr. von Braun's story and his thoughts on faith and science were published in an article in the June 2, 1966, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel*, as well as in a 15-page booklet, *The Farther We Probe into Space, the Greater My Faith* (Gospel Publishing House, 1966), of which almost 500,000 copies were published.

His secretary said that he liked to whistle "The Old Rugged Cross," and Psalm 19:1, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork" (ESV), became his favorite Bible verse.

He often spoke of the harmony between science and religion. "**Science and religion are not antagonists,**" he wrote. "**On the contrary, they are sisters.**"

CONCURRENCE OF THOUGHT

So, Wernher von Braun and I hold many similar views regarding science and Christianity. There is no contradiction between science and Christianity. Contradictions that arise are because of our misunderstanding of both the Scriptures and science. In fact, they mate perfectly. We see God in the Scriptures, and we see God in nature all around us-- but most are blind, "*For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.*" (Romans 1:19,20)

We live amid "divine coincidences" (really not coincidences at all). So much in the world is amazingly "coincidental" but not by chance, rather by design. How many planets in our solar system have a moon of a specific diameter and at a specific orbital distance to perfectly coincide with the Sun during a solar eclipse? Most solids sink in their own liquids, but the most essential liquid on Earth: water-- has a solid (ice) that floats! Were this exception not to exist, neither would we (the planet would freeze over if ice sank in water— I can explain why if you don't understand). 19th century Presbyterian minister, Maltbie D. Babcock wrote "This Is My Father's World" (a song that sadly we sing all too infrequently during worship in lieu of repetitive pop cultures trivia). Christians sing the first stanza,

This is my Father's world,
And to my listening ears
All nature sings, and round me rings
The music of the spheres.
This is my Father's world:
I rest me in the thought
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas--
His hand the wonders wrought.

I dare say, that few Christians have *any* concept of "The music of the spheres" about which they sing, though perhaps Wernher von Braun did. The music of the spheres is a philosophical concept that regards proportions in the movements of celestial bodies – the Sun, Moon, and planets – as a form of music. The theory was more extensively developed by 16th-century Christian astronomer Johannes Kepler.

He believed that this harmony — while inaudible — could be heard by the soul, and that it gave a "very agreeable feeling of bliss, afforded him by this music in the imitation of God." Kepler laid out an argument for a Christian-centric creator who had made an explicit connection between geometry, astronomy, and music, and that the planets were arranged intelligently.

Kepler explained how the ratio of the maximum and minimum angular speeds of each planet (i.e., its speeds at the perihelion and aphelion) is very nearly equivalent to a consonant musical interval. Furthermore, the ratios between these extreme speeds of the planets compared against each other create even more mathematical harmonies. Check out this brief YouTube video for an explanation:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7I_o-i5GnRo

NEW CHILDHOOD ADVENTURES

The other night I took my little 4-year old grand daughter out to look at the stars up in the North Georgia mountains where there is less light pollution. She could see the planet Mars and the Milky Way, and was impressed with the number of stars until I brought out a AN/PVS-14 GEN III night vision optical device and all of a sudden there were hundreds of stars for every one she had seen with her naked eye— plus satellites! Satellites going in all directions.

I explained to her about the planets and how they differed from the stars in that they did not emit light, but reflected light from the Sun. Each planet is in its orbit, but are the positions of the planets accidents? NO! The planets are not randomly spaced. In 1766, Johann Titius, and then in 1772, Johann Bode, proposed similar versions of what became known as the Titius-Bode law. This law "predicted" the spacings of planets' orbits around the Sun and they are all related to one another by the "Golden Ratio". In mathematics, the golden ratio is a irrational number $(1 + \sqrt{5}) \div 2$, often denoted by the Greek letter phi and equal to roughly 1.618.

In the 18th century Titius discovered, that all the planets known to astronomers in his time possessed a special order in the mean orbital distances from the Sun. The astronomer Bode formulated that discovery a few years later into a law, which, when the outer planets were later discovered, fit the whole solar system quite accurately.

The orbits become progressively greater by an average factor of 1.618. The Russian astronomer Butusov in 1978, established that the ratios of the adjacent planets' cycle times around of the Sun are equal to the golden ratio of 1.618, or its square 2.618.

So, the Solar system is a manifestation of the golden ratio phi, which is so prominent in Nature and art. The spiral in Nautilus shells, the arrangement of the seeds in a sunflower, the curve of horns on a ram, the positions and relative sizes of the pyramids of Giza, and the proportions of Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa. The dimensions of the Earth and Moon are in a phi relationship, forming a triangle based on 1.618.

All coincidences? I think not, but sadly most Christians are clueless to the order God as placed in everything around them.

ORBITING BACK

From Nazi SS Sturmbannführer-- to a Christian apologist: Dr. Wernher Von Braun could see God's hand in creation. Apparently a film of Dr. Von Braun was found in a New Jersey dumpster in 1982 in which he speaks from a Christian perspective as filmed in 1961. You would never hear this from a government official in a NASA-sponsored film today. My childhood was a blessing— I feel sadness for my young grand daughter who will probably never experience this kind of officially-sanctioned Christian freedom of speech. You must see this 2-minute video from a converted Nazi here:



Wernher von Braun at NASA

http://www.angel-strike.com/documents/Wernher_von_Braun_Christian.mp4