As most of you know, my new book *Heaven and Hell: A History of the Afterlife*, is due to come out in two days, on Tuesday March 31. I am very lucky to say that I have done an interview with Terry Gross for Fresh Air that will be playing that day. If you’re not familiar with the show, it is probably the premier interview radio program in the country, with millions of listeners; it will be playing on your local NPR station and, of course, can be listened to online. Check it out at [https://www.npr.org/programs/fresh-air/](https://www.npr.org/programs/fresh-air/)

It is an unfortunately very timely book just now. But, as I’ve mentioned before, even though lots of people have more time to read now than ever because of our time of crisis, it is almost impossible for publishers to get the word out about their new books. The only effective market strategies these days (I don’t mean corona-days but 2021-days in general) are social media (to a limited extent) and TV/radio media. And TV/radio media is not interested in talking about the latest non-fiction, for the most part.

So this will be the one big media push for my book. Please think about telling others to listen to the program, family, friends, anyone who might be interested in the topic. It will be on at different times throughout the country, depending on when your local NPR station runs Fresh Air.

I’m feeling very fortunate the interview happened at all, since so many things have been cancelled. Terry is the best interviewer on the planet, in my opinion (over the years I’ve done her show maybe eight times now? But all you have to do is listen to *any* of her nightly shows — she’s extraordinarily good). She has the uncanny knack of knowing the right questions to ask, on an unbelievable range of topics.

I once asked her how she did it. I imagined she had a small army of assistants feeding her 3×5 cards with possible questions to ask next, but no, not at all. She told me she gets the books that she’ll be dealing with the next week on Thursday evening, spends the weekend reading them carefully, and then is ready by Monday. What a job. But only someone incredibly smart, insightful, and attune to what is truly interesting about a subject – and able to interview by asking just the right question and letting the person get on with the answer — can pull it off. Almost no one can.

Until now, her interviews have always been done in radio station, remotely. If you listen to the show, you know that it always *sounds* like she’s talking to a guest across the table from her. Not so. It’s remote. I’ve never seen her face-to-face. This time we had to do it via Skype, so we’ll see how the sound quality is.

My last interview with her was about *Triumph of Christianity*, and when I told her at the time, before the recording began, that my next book was on the history of heaven and hell, she got all excited (more excited than about the Christianization of the Roman Empire!); this time I told her I should have written my next book first, since it’s about how the conservative Christian expectation that “The End is Near,” based on a misinterpretation of the book of Revelation has infiltrated into popular culture in the 20th and 21st centuries, especially in novels and films. Now THAT is a relevant topic! And she wanted to talk about it. Obviously current events are starting to reshape how I imagine the book, and now it will almost certainly be one of many on the topic instead of the interesting idea that I thought someone needed to do a year or so ago. And so it goes. But it means I’ve been watching all these disaster movies (nuclear war; robots; and, uh, viruses) for a couple of months. And still am. Yikes.
In any event, the interview runs on Tuesday. Hope you can listen, and spread the word, even though, int these days, we have so much else on our minds and hearts....

Is The End Today???
How To Begin with Heaven and Hell: An Excerpt