

Arguments of Atheism, Responses of Christianity

The arguments below are often presented in support of atheism, or in opposition to Christianity. The arguments and their responses cover most of the ideas that would be encountered in a discussion between believers in atheism and believers in Christianity. Many arguments are closely related, but each is intended to be somewhat comprehensive and self-contained, therefore some ideas will be repeated many times in this chapter and in other places in this reference book. This chapter is primarily intended to serve as a reference, but can also be read from beginning to end. **(Section By Daniel Faris)**

Chapter Contents (Hyperlinked):

- 1) *Atheism is not a belief system; it is a lack of belief in any god. This is the default position of humanity, and no harmful system can be formed from it, like what happens with religion.*
- 2) *All modern people are atheists with regard to Zeus, Thor and Woden, who were simply invented out of ancient superstitions. Full atheism just takes it one step further; it doesn't believe in the Christian God.*
- 3) *Because the Christian God can't make a rock so big that he can't lift it, He's not omnipotent. Therefore, He's a defective God, unworthy of human devotion.*
- 4) *Pascal's wager states that "if you disbelieve in God and you're wrong, all is lost; but if you believe in God and you're right, then all is gained; so 'wager' that God exists." However, this is nothing more than a spiritual gun to the head.*
- 5) *Atheism relies upon hard evidence, while religion relies upon anecdotal evidence and story-telling which must be believed by a blind faith. Since religious belief is not based upon reason like atheism is, it shouldn't be trusted.*
- 6) *Science is the tool with which we can find all the answers of life (this view is known as scientism). Religious inquiry does not provide any acceptable answers.*
- 7) *All valid explanations of phenomena must explain complex phenomena in terms of simpler phenomena. God cannot be an explanation for anything because God is more complex than anything else that can be explained; He is the ultimate in complexity.*
- 8) *If it is claimed that God created the universe, then we'd have to ask the question: "Who created God?"*
- 9) *God does not answer the question of our existence, because asserting His existence creates more questions than it answers.*
- 10) *Science has not determined what caused the universe to come into being out of absolute nothing. However, Christians are not justified in claiming that God did it.*
- 11) *Evidence of a Grand Designer in physics and biology is only apparent. There is no justification for claiming that God created and designed the universe and life.*
- 12) *Evolutionary theory is scientifically based; it explains why life came about and how humans finally arrived on the scene. Therefore, God is superfluous to the question of the origin of life.*
- 13) *Because scientists have created self-replicating synthetic life, and witnessed mutations, it supports evolutionary theory. Therefore, God is not necessary for life.*
- 14) *Evolutionary theory, because of its explanations on how we got here, enables atheists to be intellectually fulfilled.*
- 15) *Because this life is all that we have, everything in this brief human experience becomes more meaningful, rather than less meaningful. Or, from the opposite perspective: life has no meaning, so let's just get on with it.*
- 16) *Religious and theistic belief systems are merely an idea that aids in survival, and are therefore not necessarily true. (This is Richard Dawkin's meme theory).*

- 17) *Scientists can explain most every natural phenomenon by the laws of physics, chemistry, and biology. Therefore, God is not an explanation for any natural phenomenon. (This is the agency Vs mechanism debate).*
- 18) *Human morality is not ultimately objective, it is pragmatic. It's simply a product of evolution that aids in survival. Therefore, it can't be used to assert God's existence. Besides, we don't need God to be good anyway.*
- 19) *When interacting with secular scientific ideas, the Christian church has left a history that reveals anti-scientific and anti-intellectual attitudes (such as creation in six literal days). If Christianity is against truth and technological progress, then it's a weak belief system that should be eradicated.*
- 20) *Extraordinary claims, such as the resurrection of Jesus Christ, require extraordinary evidence to be believed.*
- 21) *God is not an acceptable explanation for any gaps in scientific knowledge. This was common in the days of superstition, but in the scientific age there is no room for God. (This is the "God of the gaps" criticism).*
- 22) *If Christianity were true, we'd see God protecting His believers and improving their earthly lives. But on average, that doesn't happen, so Christians are exercising a false hope.*
- 23) *Christian experience, no matter how positive and personally tangible, is not valid evidence for the truth of Christianity or for the existence of the Christian God.*
- 24) *Christians are brainwashed into believing their doctrine.*
- 25) *Most religious people maintain their faith because of being born to religious parents within a religious culture. This does not show that a truth claim is valid, but instead shows how gullible people generally are. (This is the genetic fallacy).*
- 26) *Christians maintain their faith because of their desire for a loving God – for a benevolent father figure who will take care of them. This says nothing about the actual existence of God, or not.*
- 27) *Religion is simply a coping mechanism for people who need outside help to make it through this life. Coping mechanisms are not true or false, only useful. People should wake up to what the great enterprise of science can tell us about the truth.*
- 28) *All religion is born out of fear.*
- 29) *The Bible is full of stories of God advocating violence and immoral practices.*
- 30) *The Bible is full of errors and contradictions.*
- 31) *The Bible's teachings are outdated and do not apply to modern culture.*
- 32) *Religion evolves. Because it's constantly changing, it cannot be trusted as a source of objective, unchanging truths.*
- 33) *Religion, through its systems of control and indoctrination, restricts personal freedom and thought. Atheism has escaped this prison, it alone fosters free thinking.*
- 34) *Great crimes have been committed in the name of Christianity throughout history, therefore it's not a valid belief system. In fact, it's dangerous and needs to be eradicated.*
- 35) *The problem of evil and suffering in the world contradicts the Christian doctrine of a good and powerful God.*
- 36) *The God Delusion.*

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1) Atheism is not a belief system; it is a lack of belief in any god. This is the default position of humanity, and no harmful system can be formed from it, like what happens with religion.

- a. **Details.** Since there is no God, the default worldview is naturalism, which is the idea that nature is all there is. There is no room for the *super*-natural. Religions are viewed as dangerous: people do bad things because of their irrational belief in a God. Since atheism lacks this belief, the claim is that atheists don't do bad things "in the name of atheism".
- b. **Christian Response.** Then why is atheism argued for, as if it should be believed? And exactly *who* is atheism denying? It is human nature to shape one's life after one's belief system. Atheisms' "lack of belief" is really a *rhetoric-style restatement* of what actually is believed; and from that belief follows a whole world of entailments concerning human existence. It shapes one's outlook on life, the search for meaning and pleasure, the view of human nature, morality, and politics. There seems to be this inevitable characteristic of human nature to systematize belief systems, of which atheism enjoys no exemption. But notice also the negative side of atheism when it becomes systematized – *by way of communism, in particular*. It kicks the door wide open to the possibility of "might-makes-right" institutions run by the whim of those who hold the most power. "Might-makes-right" is consistent with the "survival-of-the-fittest" aspect of *macro*-evolutionary theory, a system upon which atheism fully depends. And finally, the practice of atheism is protected as a religious freedom by U.S. courts. Legally then, atheism is somewhat like a religion [106].

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2) All modern people are atheists with regard to Zeus, Thor and Woden, who were simply invented out of ancient superstitions. Full atheism just takes it one step further; it doesn't believe in the Christian God.

- a. **Details.** Gods of modern religions, and Christianity's God in particular, are no more real than the fictitious gods of the ancient world, who are obviously anthropomorphized. Those gods were invented by humanity, and gods of religions that have managed to survive on to modern times were likewise invented [50, p. 53].
- b. **Christian Response.** The problem with the analogy is its sweeping generalization. It lacks any honest distinction between easily debunked gods of fiction and the Christian God. This method of rhetorical argument is not uncommon. Zeus, Thor, Woden, etc., were *created* gods with very significant limitations of power and moral failings. By definition, the Christian God is *the perfect being*: eternally existent (uncreated), all-knowing, all-powerful, all-present, and all-loving (omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, and omnibenevolent). He is the source of rationality, love, justice, and all creation (except for evil). He transcends the created order, yet is immanent within it. Unlike "created" gods, He has no marriage partners and no faults. This is *worlds apart* from the other gods of antiquity. Equating the Christian God to these other gods in order to deny His existence is like saying that bachelorhood is like marriage; it's just one relationship less (Credit goes to John Lennox for the analogy).

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3) Because the Christian God can't make a rock so big that he can't lift it, He's not omnipotent. Therefore, He's a defective God, unworthy of human devotion.

- a. **Details.** Atheism objects to the Christian claims of God, and one of those objections is to God's all-powerful nature. There are still some things God cannot do, such as lift that big fat rock.
- b. **Christian Response.** In theory, God is omnipotent, but in practice, it seems that God is not. There is only one reason for this: He has chosen to grant free will to all of humanity. Free will is a gift of unfathomable value, because it enables a relationship of love. In doing so, God *freely* chooses to limit His power; not interfering with each person's exercise of their own free will.

Furthermore, to criticize God's omnipotence with the "rock-so-big argument" is known as a category mistake in philosophy. Can God make a square circle? No! A square cannot be a circle, *by definition*. They are *mutually exclusive* ideas and to speak of a square circle is nonsensical. The idea of God harboring a contradiction within His being is similarly nonsensical. He cannot do that which is mutually exclusive – He cannot use His power to contradict Himself. Atheism might still feel free to criticize God on these terms, but might as well argue that omnipotence itself is impossible.

Another criticism is the apparent contradiction seen between the idea of an all-powerful and all-loving (omnipotent and omnibenevolent) God, and the presence of evil and suffering in the world. Critics charge that God should use His power to eradicate evil and suffering. (Well, God does just that in heaven, which is a result of both His *power and a giving up of His power*, embodied in the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross). As alluded to earlier, for love to be possible, free will must be possible, which brings with it the opposite possibility – that of evil and the suffering that comes in its wake. The dichotomy is that atheism will dismiss God because He *cannot* contradict his omnipotence, and simultaneously dismiss God because his omnipotence *should not be in contradiction* to the state of evil and suffering in the world. Put another way, if one thinks God should be able to contradict Himself, then why do critics also look for a *non-contradictory* answer to the problem of evil and suffering to begin with? [1, pp. 112-3].

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4) Pascal's wager states that "if you disbelieve in God and you're wrong, all is lost; but if you believe in God and you're right, then all is gained; so 'wager' that God exists." However, this is nothing more than a spiritual gun to the head.

- a. **Details.** Pascal's wager is betting your life and eternal destiny on whether or not God exists. From the Christian perspective, "betting" that God exists entails the reward of eternal bliss in heaven. "Betting" that He does not exist reaps the consequences of eternal separation from God, which is known as hell. From a perspective of atheism, this wager does not motivate genuine belief or devotion to a God, only external coercion. Atheism claims that God does not exist, but even if He did, what God would honor *feigning* a belief in Him to avoid judgment and punishment? What God would honor the "devotion" of a person who just wants to avoid hell? It's nothing more than "fire insurance". Furthermore, who could really devote themselves to a God who demands devotion by means of threatening eternal punishment? It's nothing more than a spiritual gun to the head. Besides, who knows what God to believe in anyway?
- b. **Christian Response.** Based upon the seven of the arguments for God's existence given in a previous chapter (Rationality, Causality, Intelligent Design, Morality, Desire, Historical Jesus, and Experience), there is strong evidence to consider the idea of the Christian God very seriously. Pascal's wager is not content with the "devoted" tarrying on the level of an impersonal wager. Pascal knew that even a feigned devotion to the Christian God could eventually give way to a genuine devotion and a changed life.

On the other hand, hell is not properly perceived only as a threat. It is more properly seen as the result of a personal choice to be without God. In the words of C.S. Lewis, "the doors of hell are locked on the inside" [12, p. 130]. If God is the ultimate reference point for our human identity, then complete communion with God is the joy of fully realized humanity, while total separation from God is the ultimate in dehumanization. Both of these ends are each person's choice.

Ravi Zacharias powerfully drives the point home: "The atheist... having rejected God, flutters between pleasurable options, with inner peace forever eluding him. If, after death, he should find out that there is a God, his loss has been irreparable; for not only did contentment and peace elude him in this life, but death has opened the door to an ultimate and eternal lostness. All judgments bring with them a margin of error. But *no judgment ought to carry with it the potential for so irretrievable a loss that [by comparison] every possible gain is unworthy of merit. The atheist makes*

precisely such a hazardous judgment. It is an all-or-nothing gamble of self, thrust into the slot machine of life. It is a faith beyond the scope of reason” [36, pp. 153-154].

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5) Atheism relies upon hard evidence, while religion relies upon anecdotal evidence and story-telling which must be believed by a blind faith. Since religious belief is not based upon reason like atheism is, it shouldn't be trusted.

- a. **Details.** The conclusions of atheism are based upon hard scientific evidence, not anecdotes or storytelling. Science answers most questions of life, so a creator is simply superfluous to the scientific endeavor, and to life itself. Religious faith, including Christianity is not based upon the scientific method. It is blind devotion to what people *want* to believe, rather than to what truly corresponds to reality. There simply is no truth to it and no evidence for God [109, p. 5], [3, p. 26], [75, pp. 198, 330].
- b. **Christian Response.** It is true that a large percentage of Christians do not dig deep into the evidence of their faith. Story-telling often takes the place of what could be supporting evidence and solid argumentation. Story-telling is the position that the skeptic criticizes, and quite rightly. However, Christian beliefs in their truest sense are undergirded by philosophy, science (yes, including physics and biology), history, biblical truths, personal experience, and sound arguments which all converge to the very reasonable conclusion that God exists, and that He is directly involved with His creation. Admittedly, a lot of evidence for the truth of Christianity is forensic, meaning that scientists and scholars must learn about the past, and certain intangible realities, by interpreting the tangible evidence that is found today. By definition, unique past events cannot be recreated, so the acquisition of knowledge must resort to forensic science. One example would be how scholars painstakingly study ancient biblical texts to draw archaeological, historical, and theological conclusions, all in an effort to provide the modern reader with the most reliable version of the Bible. And this methodology is not unique to Christianity or religious belief in general, but is ubiquitous across very broad categories of scholarly research, and it is readily accepted within established academic communities that do not consider belief in its trustworthiness to be blind. Christianity requires faith, but it does not require *blind* faith either.

Reason is a real emphasis in true Christianity. “In the beginning was the Word (Greek: “*Logos*”), and the Word (*Logos*) was with God, and the Word (*Logos*) was God. All things were created through Him, and apart from Him not one thing was created that has been created. ... The Word (*Logos*) became flesh and took up residence among us (John 1:1-3,14). As John Lennox has asserted, *Logos* was a term used by Greek stoic philosophers for the rational principle behind the universe. It referred to order, knowledge, and rationality in philosophical inquiry. Based upon the Apostle John's use of *Logos* in his own Gospel, it was infused with additional meaning by Christians [14, p. 177]. We think rationally, and we live in a rational universe to which our thoughts rightly correspond, and that is because the universe was infused with reason from the very beginning. The rationality of reality is anchored in the rationality of God. It is not “anchored” in a non-rational beginning to the universe and a mindless, random process of evolution – this is a philosophical impossibility. In fact, the six creation “days” of Genesis 1, each being completed with the phrase “*there was evening, and there was morning, the Xth day*”, are a direct metaphor for how God moved creation from “*chaos*” to “*order*” [70, p. 102].

Is atheism really a worldview extrapolated from hard evidence or does it also have its forensic categories? The beginning of the universe cannot be replicated, and numerous significant principles of *macro*-evolutionary theory cannot be reproduced in the lab. In particular, *macro*-evolutionary explanations of the origin and diversity of life are highly forensic. *Macro*-evolutionists study thousands of unique past events which at present cannot be recreated or tested. This leaves the door wide open to anecdotal explanations of the evidence, or story-telling, which the evolutionary

biologist readily constructs and accepts as a substitute (a place-holder, a fill-in, etc.) for hard evidence. Why does this happen? *For atheism, macro-evolutionary theory is too good not to be true, in part because of the anti-theistic conclusions that so desperately depend upon it. Ironically, this approach exudes an overtly religious tone, which is the very sentiment that atheism deplores.* The 1998 Nobel laureate in physics, Robert Laughlin, had this to say: “Much of present day biological knowledge is ideological. A key symptom of ideological thinking is the explanation that has no implications and cannot be tested. I call such logical dead ends anti-theories because they have exactly the opposite effect of real theories: they stop thinking rather than stimulate it. Evolution by natural selection, for instance, which Darwin conceived as a great theory has lately come to function as an anti-theory called upon to cover up embarrassing experimental shortcomings and legitimize findings that are at best questionable and at worst not even wrong. Your protein defies the laws of mass action – evolution did it! Your complicated mess of chemical reactions turns into a chicken – evolution! The human brain works on logical principles no computer can emulate? Evolution is the cause!” [65, pp. 168-9].

Beyond the forensics there is much faith as well. Atheism exercises an incredible faith that the rationality of our minds directly corresponds to the rational intelligibility of the universe. Answering why this is true will forever escape the grasp of science; it can only be addressed in philosophy. There’s also an incredible faith in the incomprehensible chance that the universe and life appear designed for no reason, and that life itself arose spontaneously and evolved to its present state against statistically impossible odds. Atheism is not a worldview mandated by scientific study; rather, it’s extrapolated from it. A further appropriate description might be that atheism is *wrestled* from or even *hijacked* from science. *When an atheist says “there is no evidence for God”, one could rightly respond with “what evidence is there for atheism?”*

It’s fitting to conclude this section with some wisdom by Ravi Zacharias on how God has designed reality with the perfect balance of faith and reason. “God has put enough into the world to make faith in him a most reasonable thing, and he has left enough out to make it impossible to live by sheer reason or observation alone” [36, p. 112].

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6) Science is the tool with which we can find all the answers of life (this view is known as scientism).

Religious inquiry does not provide any acceptable answers.

- a. **Details.** “Whatever knowledge is attainable, must be attained by scientific methods; and what science cannot discover, mankind cannot know” [110, p. 243]. Professor Peter Atkins of Oxford University is also a staunch advocate of scientism, and more can be learned about the view from his works.
- b. **Christian Response.** This is Russell’s classic self-refuting statement of scientism, the idea that only science can give mankind trustworthy knowledge. Ironically, the statement itself, no matter who says it or in what variation, cannot withstand its own scrutiny. It cannot be proven scientifically, and therefore it’s not a statement of science; *it’s a statement of philosophy*. And if taken at face value, it doesn’t give us knowledge.

Now to be fair, Russell did admit, immediately prior to this statement, that science cannot decide questions of ethics and value (morality), claiming that they can’t be intellectually decided at all because they lie outside the realm of how science determines truth and falsehood. He held that morality is subjective; it doesn’t find its grounding in any objective moral lawgiver (this is a position to be addressed elsewhere). Peter Atkins, however, takes the stronger view that science applies to all areas of life.

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7) All valid explanations of phenomena must explain complex phenomena in terms of simpler phenomena. God cannot be an explanation for anything because God is more complex than anything else that can be explained; He is the ultimate in complexity.

- a. **Details.** Scientists are accustomed to explaining complex things in terms of simpler things. Two popular examples are the complexity of the universe emerging from a single point of the Big Bang, and the complexity and diversity of life “evolving” from a single-celled organism. God is not a valid explanation for complex phenomena in physics and biology because God, by definition, is even more complex than what needs to be explained [50, p. 147].
- b. **Christian Response.** Scientists already accept very complex things as explanations for simpler things, such as the use of theories of energy to describe interactions of matter. Scientists don’t really know what energy actually is, but they assume its existence in order to explain other things. It is believed in because it has enormous *explanatory power* [14, pp. 178-80]. (Scientists don’t fully understand other concepts such as gravity, light, space, or time, either). Similarly, scientists have written very complex books, but they themselves are much more complex than the books they have written, by many orders of magnitude. The real underlying issue is a debate about ultimate origins. *The buck has to stop somewhere.* Either the ultimate explanation for everything is infinitely complex or near infinitely simple. It’s either *mind-ful* or *mind-less*. It’s either *eternal God* or *eternal matter*.

Now if universe was created by an infinitely complex God, then it should be no surprise if this God cannot be fully explained. There is plenty of mystery in the minute workings of nature, so one should expect there to be some mystery in the God who made it all.

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8) If it is claimed that God created the universe, then we’d have to ask the question: “Who created God?”

- a. **Details.** Claiming that a God is the creator of the universe just pushes the question of origins back further. The question then becomes: “Who created that God?” [50, p. 158]. This pattern can go on *ad infinitum*. This doesn’t solve the question of ultimate origins; it shuts down the scientific inquiry of it. Furthermore, the existence of an ultimate, eternal God is an impossibility.
- b. **Christian Response.** This problem is similar to what Nobel Laureate Francis Crick introduced into biology. Because of the overwhelming design and complexity he saw in the genetic code of DNA, he postulated that first life must have been created by some higher intelligence, who seeded Earth with it. This idea is known as directed panspermia [111]. But that just backs the question up one step further, where did this intelligence come from? Who *created* it?

To continually ask who created the creator, and the creator’s creator, etc., leads to an infinite regress of causes. This is problematic because mathematicians and philosophers have demonstrated that an *infinite regress of causes* is impossible in reality; it can exist only in theory. Practically speaking, the impossibility looks like this: to get to the *final cause* which is responsible for the *effect* of the way things are right now (from an infinite regress of causes), it would be like trying to jump out of a bottomless pit. Christianity agrees: it has claimed all along that created gods are indeed a delusion. The true God is eternal; uncaused; uncreated. If the buck has to stop somewhere, with something – or with someone – which (or who) is uncreated/eternal, then it looks like Christianity has defined a legitimate candidate.

Note that atheism does not really have a problem with eternity. It maintains that matter is eternal in some way, or some kind of quantum vacuum field is eternal. What it has a problem with is an *eternal person*. It does not want to accept that a person is the anchor of all reality.

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9) God does not answer the question of our existence, because asserting His existence creates more questions than it answers.

- a. **Details.** Science is in the business of finding ultimate answers to our questions. The idea of a personal God is so very complex that it creates many more questions than it answers. Therefore, the idea is unscientific.
- b. **Christian Response.** First of all, science cannot answer fundamental questions of life, so the criticism is unwarranted. As Sir Peter Medawar has said: "The existence of a limit to science is, however, made clear by its inability to answer childlike elementary questions having to do with first and last things – questions such as: 'How did everything begin?', 'What are we all here for?', 'What is the point of living?'" [112, p. 31]. So we're back to the original question: what best makes sense of reality? The short answer for Christians is "God". We need explanations for phenomena such as an ultimate beginning, intelligent design, information systems in nature (DNA), consciousness, the laws of logic, rationality, free will, morality, spirituality, real relationships, etc. These explanations rest on the foundation of the Christian God. *God embodies all of these* – the source of it all.

Atheism maintains a kind of faith in certain phenomena and theories of science such as energy, the general theory of relativity (GTR), string theory, etc. It's not because they fully understand them, but it's because these theories powerfully help to reveal a coherent picture of physical reality. There will always be some mystery in the person of God, yet He remains as the ultimate in *explanatory power; the ultimate picture of reality*. As CS Lewis has said, "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen. Not just because I see it, but because by it I see everything else" [100, p. 165].

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10) Science has not determined what caused the universe to come into being out of absolute nothing. However, Christians are not justified in claiming that God did it.

- a. **Details.** Even though the cause of the universe has not been scientifically explained, scientists expect that it will someday in the future. Claiming that a God is the cause is intellectually lazy; it's a science stopper. There could very well be a non-theistic explanation.
- b. **Christian Response.** Current theories still claim that the universe came into being *out of nothing* (Latin: *ex nihilo*) at the Big Bang. This includes space, time, matter, and energy, which did not exist "before" the Big Bang. Therefore, it is very important to keep in mind that whatever (or whoever) began the universe must have real properties other than space, time, matter, and energy. Another way of saying it is this: if the universe encompasses all that is natural, then it must have a non-natural cause for its existence. One non-theistic candidate that has been proposed is a quantum vacuum. But the problem is that it's *not nothing* - it still requires time and space, which are components of the natural universe. Therefore it still requires a reason for its original existence. The question about the "why" of its existence still baffles the minds of scientists.

Two candidates can fill the timeless, space-less, immaterial requirements: (1) abstract objects, such as numbers or (2) an immaterial mind. Note that the universe does not exist necessarily (there is no independent law of reality that says that it *must* exist). And abstract objects have no mind, motivation, or creative power, so the universe's cause cannot ultimately come from abstract objects. Therefore its cause must have been an immaterial mind. A personal consciousness, possessing free will, and incredible power and intelligence, is necessary because a decision is needed to get it all going. This "mind" is very consistent with the Christian conception of God [8, pp. loc. 977-988].

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11) Evidence of a Grand Designer in physics and biology is only apparent. There is no justification for claiming that God created and designed the universe and life.

- a. **Details.** Evolutionary pressures, in a step-by-step process over hundreds of millions of years, have brought forth the complexity of life we see today. It merely has the *appearance* of design. Since this mechanism is well understood, there is no justification for positing an actual Grand Designer. A designer is superfluous to *macro*-evolutionary theory. Furthermore, intelligent design is not a

scientifically testable hypothesis, so it's unscientific. If scientific inquiry ends with an unscientific conclusion, then that conclusion is a *science stopper*. Scientists cannot allow this [50, pp. 125-6].

If it seems like there's statistical impossibilities stacked against the fine-tuning in physics and biology happening by chance, then it can be accounted for by the multiverse theory. If there are an infinite or a near infinite number of other universes in existence, then one of those universes would look like ours, with all of its "design" and complexity, and any evidence of design would be merely illusory. Since a life-permitting universe must be fine-tuned, and only finely-tuned universes could have intelligent observers in them, then these observers would naturally observe that their universe is fine-tuned [113, p. 14], [8, pp. loc. 1904-9].

- b. Christian Response.** Scientists evidently do know how to recognize intelligent design as shown by the SETI project: the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence. However, they generally take the opposite stance with physics and biology [14, p. 175]. There, many take strident efforts to *explain intelligent design away*. As noted elsewhere, there are large knowledge gaps and philosophical conundrums with *macro*-evolutionary theory. While the commonality among related species has been used to support the idea of common descent, it could also be used to support the idea of a common designer.

The multiverse theory has been developed partly in response to the ubiquitous design seen in physics and biology. But while the idea of a grand Designer-God is not strictly a scientifically testable hypothesis, neither is the multiverse theory. Other universes are not scientifically accessible from our own universe. Since they are scientifically untestable and unfalsifiable, the theory cannot belong to the realm of science; it must belong to philosophy [43, p. 80]. Furthermore, if multiverse theory proposes all possible universes, then there must be at least one universe where the Christian God exists, and also a universe which is like the heaven of Christianity. But if the Christian God exists in one universe, then He exists in all universes [14, p. 76]. Finally, the need for an explanation of design and fine-tuning is still not done away with. A multiverse still needs fine-tuning in the mechanism that generates all the separate universes. And like the proposed quantum vacuum still begs an explanation for its own existence, so does a multiverse [8, pp. loc. 1910-17, 1927-33]. As the agnostic physicist Paul Davies has said: "There is for me powerful evidence that there is something going on behind it all... It seems as though somebody has fine-tuned nature's numbers to make the Universe ... The impression of design is overwhelming". [114, p. 203]

Finally, atheism might be inconsistent with design and cause in its approach to finding ultimate answers. Most atheists don't seem bothered in taking the stance that the universe and life appear to be designed, while themselves requiring no designer or cause behind it all. In stark contrast, when it comes to the problem of evil and suffering, they expect some kind of coherent explanation that tells of the design of it all, and the cause behind it. They create a glaring contradiction in denying cause and design in the universe and life, while at the same time demanding answers of cause and design concerning their questions of moral issues. They rule God out because they don't want a cause or design, then they rule God out because they don't see an expected cause or design. The opposite approaches of atheism to these two positions reveals their strong bias against the divine [1, p. 112]. Also note that Christians look for cause and design in both categories, and the consistency found in the Trinitarian God through His personal revelation in Jesus Christ gives meaning to life.

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12) Evolutionary theory is scientifically based; it explains why life came about and how humans finally arrived on the scene. Therefore, God is superfluous to the question of the origin of life.

- a. Details.** Evolutionary theory, a term most often abbreviated from *macro*-evolutionary theory, claims that all life came from a single celled organism(s) by way of natural selection of favorable genetic mutations, accumulated over hundreds of millions of years. If this theory is true, then it debunks the biblical creation account of God specifically creating fully formed species which have no *macro*-

evolutionary history. Even if God could have specifically guided *macro*-evolutionary processes (known as theistic evolution), He is still superfluous to account for life since a natural explanation does quite well [50, pp. 125-6].

(The true controversy of evolution Vs intelligent design concerns *macro*-evolutionary theory. There is little controversy concerning *micro*-evolutionary theory, which describes variance in genetic expression within species (i.e. different colored fur or feathers, taller bodies, longer limbs, etc.). *Macro*-evolutionary theory claims that all living things have a common single-celled ancestor(s), and that small successive changes over hundreds of millions of years from that original ancestor produced all of the millions of species of living things we see today. The real controversy arises when *micro*-evolutionary theory is far extended to support certain ideas within *macro*-evolutionary theory.)

- b. Christian Response.** There are large gaps of knowledge within *macro*-evolutionary theory, including the sudden appearance of many fully formed species during the Cambrian era, extremely limited numbers of transitional fossils, the unexplained emergence of the information system of DNA, lack of *macro*-evolutionary evidence on the molecular (cellular) scale and the rise of conscious, rational beings from unconscious, mindless, unguided processes.

Abiogenesis, the assumed process by which a first life arose on Earth from inorganic matter, is by definition not included within *macro*-evolutionary theory, yet it is *assumed* by believers to have happened in order to get *macro*-evolution going in the first place. As of 2016, after many decades of research, there are still no viable models for abiogenesis. In fact, the more that scientists research possible solutions, the more difficult the problem is revealed to be. They are not getting closer to the solution; the more they try to solve it, the more it runs away from them. In other words, they are not closing the gap, the gap is getting bigger [48, p. 348], [115].

Intelligent design is a viable competing theory for the origins, complexity, and diversity of life. It's most powerful argument is that the information system of DNA requires a designer [39]. Also in support is *irreducible complexity*, the idea that life requires hundreds of complex processes and biological structures working concurrently just to achieve basic functions. This relegates the hundreds of non-functional, in-between evolutionary steps to that end as unfavorable to survival, since they do not add to an organism's fitness for survival in the interim. These unusable steps actually pose a burden to biological systems, so there are strong pressures to select them out of the gene pool. This tends to render *macro*-evolutionary theory as statistically impossible, quite literally [69, pp. 39-40].

There are very interesting similarities between human DNA sequences and those of mice and chimpanzees, suggesting that there could be a common ancestor, but this is inconclusive based on a good study of all the current data [116, pp. loc. 3744-60]. More convincing is the presence of vestigial organs on countless numbers of species. They strongly indicate change over time, and there is even strong evidence for speciation itself. However, actual *scientific* evidence (as opposed to wishful thinking) for the step-by-step development of novel organs such as the bacterial flagellum or eye remain elusive [69, p. 186]. The overall evidence seems to suggest that a designer – God – comes into the system of Earth with His creative power and intelligence, He creates and/or reorganizes material (non-biological or biological) into new species, and this is followed by a period of winding down where genetic drift and degradation take place over long periods of time [14, pp. 100-1].

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13) Because scientists have created self-replicating synthetic life, and witnessed mutations, it supports evolutionary theory. Therefore, God is not necessary for life.

- a. Details.** Synthetic biologists have made incredible advances in the last several years, including injecting cells with fully synthetic genetic codes, getting them to replicate, and even witnessing

mutations. This shows that *macro*-evolutionary theory is true and that God is not necessary to explain the origins of life [50, pp. 125-6].

- b. **Christian Response.** This is one of the most preposterous non-sequiturs to infiltrate the entire debate. This scientific breakthrough in biology is the result of decades of research and design. No scientists have come remotely close to creating an entire cell, they merely substituted existing DNA with synthetic genetic code (XNA). Neither DNA nor XNA is itself alive, and scientists must work within the context of a cell that's *already alive* before they can modify DNA with XNA. The design of XNA structure is modeled after DNA because it seems to be designed (or is it merely the "appearance" of design??). This begs the question of the how the first cell and its DNA got there to begin with. What this science really does is make a *better* case for Intelligent Design, while inadvertently rendering *macro*-evolutionary explanations of life as even more far-fetched. Far from doing away with a designer God, this shows a better case for His existence.

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14) Evolutionary theory, because of its explanations on how we got here, enables atheists to be intellectually fulfilled.

- a. **Details.** "An atheist before Darwin could have said, following [atheist philosopher David] Hume: 'I have no explanation for complex biological design. All I know is that God isn't a good explanation, so we must wait and hope that somebody comes up with a better one.' I can't help feeling that such a position, though logically sound, would have left one feeling pretty unsatisfied, and that although atheism might have been logically tenable before Darwin, Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist" [18, p. 6].
- b. **Christian Response.** "A much better case might be made in the other direction. It is atheism that makes it possible for a man to be an intellectually fulfilled Darwinist" [107]. David Berlinski was saying that the bias to push God out of science and the drive for an atheist worldview significantly clouds the skeptic's judgment, so that when they are presented with the large knowledge gaps and philosophical conundrums endemic to *macro*-evolutionary theory, they automatically look the other way. A better argument could be made that scientific findings make it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled Christian (i.e. the beginning of the universe, intelligent design, biblical archeology, etc.).

Another reply to Dawkins could be this: ruling out the role of a Designer-God in biological design is in reality the logically *unsound* position. There was no good reason to rule out the designer before Darwin presented the scientific world with his theory. Now, according to atheism, Darwin gave the worldview a reason to feel legitimate. But with the systemic problems that emerge with the theory's attempt to explain all of life, the need for a Grand Designer becomes clearer yet, and reveals the bias of all those who accept *macro*-evolutionary theory without question.

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15) Because this life is all that we have, everything in this brief human experience becomes more meaningful, rather than less meaningful. Or, from the opposite perspective: life has no meaning, so let's just get on with it.

- a. **Details.** This sentiment is tied in with that of "this life is all we've got, so eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die". Due to the worldview of no afterlife or supernatural reality, atheism recognizes there is some absurdity to living. Regardless, this often leads those in the worldview of atheism to a heightened awareness of their limited time, driving them to focus on living a "full life" in this world, as they redefine it in their own terms. Mostly a western cultural attitude, temporal meaning may be sought in relationships, education, careers, entertainment and the arts, sports, nature, etc.

From the other perspective, some atheists more readily acknowledge the full absurdity of arriving on the scene by mindless, purposeless, natural forces (*macro*-evolutionary theory), that will inevitably vanquish their temporal existence back to the dust of a cold, uncaring universe (which will

itself inevitably suffer its own heat death). These were the sentiments of the more “honest atheists” of recent modernity: Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980). Amidst this gloomier existential cloud, these espousers of atheism still try to gain temporal meaning, as their more positive brethren do.

- b. Christian Response.** In the world of atheism, there is no meta-narrative – no upper story¹ – from which to draw meaning, from which to anchor objective truth and morality and human identity, and from which to rest in eternity so that our decisions in this life ultimately matter. There is no meaning in the big story, which in this case is the universe itself. And there’s no meaning in the little story, which in this case is the subatomic world. If we got here on the scene by these mindless, purposeless forces – a godless Big Bang, and unthinking, mechanical natural selection – and if we’ll inevitably die, hopelessly dissolved within the dust of an unthinking, chilly universe, then we as these in-between temporal collections of matter can know nothing of ultimate meaning. How can carbon and water molecules, of which we primarily subsist, suddenly conjure any transcendent meaning? Even more perplexing is this: how can carbon and water molecules end up cobbled together in this curious form we call a human being, and then spring forth questions of human identity, love, personal relationships, truth, justice, and ultimate meaning, but then there exists nothing and no one to appeal to for the answers to these questions? Did mindless matter have a mind to invent an illusion?? If we are robotically “dancing to our DNA” as Richard Dawkins had suggested [74, p. 133], then all of this is absurd. Robots don’t have any of these questions, or illusions, let alone consciousness.

What followers of atheism must do, then, is to resign themselves to defining the search for meaning within an infinitely smaller space. They must look for “little meanings” in this life, hoping they add up to “bigger meanings”. It’s an attempt as a temporal escape from the centrality of meaninglessness that the worldview has consigned them to. Relatively speaking, it’s not so difficult to be an atheist in a Western society that offers the greatest benefits mankind has ever seen: freedom, justice, equality, wealth, health, opportunity, education, security, positive relationships, entertainment, etc. However, none of these benefits rise above the bleak horizon of temporality; even the secular heaven itself – this world – will eventually fade back into the cold dust of the universe, which itself is dying a very slow death.

Even worse, this philosophy of life suffers from a severe lack of comprehensiveness. Unlike Christianity, which speaks universally to the questions of evil, suffering, and ultimate meaning, it cannot be applied to the human race as a whole. Throughout human history, most people have endured much greater suffering and evil than those in modern Western society, and have enjoyed only brief glimpses of the benefits it affords us in 2017. The oppressed, the unhealthy, the poor, and the uneducated were in no way at liberty to pursue a culture of pleasure and freedom that modern atheism immerses itself in, or find justice; that goes for much of the world outside Western society in modern times. The other problem with its lack of comprehensiveness is its Pollyanna sentiment towards creating meaning, as if all people in their search for meaning will move towards positive ends. What if a person’s creation of their own meaning involves oppressing and murdering other people? What objective moral standard, in a meaningless universe, can be appealed to, in order to brand that approach as wrong and fight against it? The theory of *macro*-evolution with its “survival-of-the-fittest” slogan? No! But if an objective moral standard is invoked, then it leads right back to the existence of a moral-law giver – God Himself.

¹ Francis Schaeffer employed the phrases “upper story” and “lower story” to argue that secular philosophies constrained humanity to a purely physical existence – the lower story – which left no way to satisfy the need for meaning in life which transcended that material world – the upper story [379, p. 164]. From the Christian perspective, the “upper story” is that transcendent realm of God, but one which envelops humanity’s “lower story” of physical existence, bestowing it with ultimate meaning that each of us longs for.

The goal of atheism is to create a secular heaven on earth, where each person enjoys the maximum autonomy and pleasure, which can be employed to drown out questions of ultimate meaning. Western society is the closest mankind has come to this. Therefore, it seems no accident that Western society is comprised of the highest number of atheists and agnostics that the world has ever seen. As established earlier, however, all the “little meanings” that one searches for do not add up to “bigger meanings”. One hundred multiplied by zero is still... zero. Admitted or not, pleasures disconnected from their supernatural source can only lead to despair. This is the high price that one must pay for personal autonomy – to be one’s own god – admitting no higher accountability than one’s own existence. Recognizing this state of affairs, Ravi Zacharias affirmed that “meaninglessness does not come from being weary of pain but from being weary of pleasure. This obvious truth is conspicuously absent in the arguments of skeptics. It is not pain that has driven the West into emptiness; it has been the drowning of meaning in the oceans of our pleasures” [1, p. 137]. Furthermore, “activity does not create meaning; it is the other way around. If life in its existential expression has no meaning, then a change of attitude does not change the reality of meaninglessness. It only changes how one functions in a meaningless world, which was precisely Jean Paul Sartre’s point in his book *No Exit*. What difference does it make, when the boat is going down, if one stands on the deck and salutes or plays a last game of poker?” [36, p. 78]

Ravi Zacharias offers one final insight which reveals the contradiction in trying to find meaning without God. “In the scientific struggle with the problem of origins, the Second Law [of Thermodynamics] was disregarded by arguing for biological progression in the opposite direction to the laws of physics. The physical law states that things move from order to disorder, but evolution moves from disorder to order. The scientist’s response was that what applied to the whole did not apply to its parts, so that biological evolution in its parts could swim against the entropic stream as a whole. Now, on the issue of meaning, the naturalist says that what applies to the parts (rolling stones, building temples, etc.) is meaningful, but does not apply to life as a whole. Life is punctuated with tiny little purposes and no ultimate purpose: tiny little values, but no ultimate value. The seriousness of the naturalists’ predicament is that they frequently handcuff themselves with ideas that are mutually exclusive. Their assumptions keep changing, depending on the arena of controversy; hence, the conclusions collide” [36, p. 79].

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16) Religious and theistic belief systems are merely an idea that aids in survival, and are therefore not necessarily true. (This is Richard Dawkin’s meme theory).

- a. **Details.** Meme theory, originated by Richard Dawkins, defines clusters of ideas and belief systems as competing with one another for survival in the minds of human populations [75, p. 192]. This is similar to how genes compete on the physical level of populations of organisms. Widespread memes that have prevailed on to modern times were simply the best ideas and beliefs for human survival. They are not necessarily true; they simply have contributed towards evolutionary success. Humanity has developed the god *meme* because it is somehow beneficial for survival. The most popular god meme in Western culture, Christianity, has become a dangerous, violent, and wasteful meme. Critics brand it as anti-scientific, increased health risks, and wasteful of money, time and resources, etc.

Dawkins himself has branded religion and the idea of God a “virus of the mind” that needs to be selected out of the prevailing meme pool [105, p. 121]. This approach is similar to how organisms suffering from real viral infections usually get selected out of the gene pool.

- b. **Christian Response.** Objective truth cannot arise from an unguided natural process such as those of *macro*-evolutionary theory. Neither can it arise from an all-encompassing theory of ideas such as meme theory, which also serves survival fitness, not truth. Therefore, even the idea of meme theory *itself* is not necessarily objectively true. But even if it were “true”, there could also be a meme for atheism. And if certain ideas are labelled as memes in order to debunk their “truth” claims, then one

could naturally conclude that the idea of atheism is not necessarily true. Meme theory, which was birthed by atheist motivation, cannot help but ironically euthanize its own ancestor.

Furthermore, empirical studies interestingly support the conclusion that atheism is unfit as a meme. If considering birth rate alone, atheism is being actively selected out of the meme pool as you read this. Heidelberg University (Germany) professor Dr. Michael Blume compiled studies from 82 countries, showing that those who attend religious services more than once a week reproduce at the rate of 2.5 children per family, while those who never attend religious services reproduce at the rate of only 1.67 children per family, a rate that would eventually ensure the demise of the irreligious population – if not for a compensatory higher rate of recruiting from the religious community [117].

The real issue is that the atheism *meme* is spreading faster in Western culture than its biological rate of dying out. If the trend continues, resulting in the entire world embracing atheism, while its birthrate remains at the deficient 1.67 children per couple, it would consign the human race to a path of inevitable extinction. Ironically, according to the “ethical standards” of atheism, which are of course in favor of human survival, the atheism meme should sacrifice itself – before it sacrifices all humanity. To turn Dawkins’ claim perfectly on its head, atheism just might be the true virus of the mind.

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17) Scientists can explain most every natural phenomenon by the laws of physics, chemistry, and biology. Therefore, God is not an explanation for any natural phenomenon. (This is the agency Vs mechanism debate).

- a. **Details.** Since scientists understand most physical laws and how they describe the physics of the universe, a supernatural explanation is completely superfluous. There are still some things scientists don’t know about the universe or biology, but a non-theistic, mechanistic explanation is fully expected, and even hoped for. This includes explanations for the cause of the universe and for first life.
- b. **Christian Response.** When Isaac Newton discovered the law of gravity, he didn’t say “Now that I have the mechanism, I don’t need God”. Instead he wrote the *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, one of the most important works in the history of science, and expressed the hope that the thinking man would believe in God [118, p. 32]. He marveled at the amazing God who created the elegant physical law of gravity. He knew the agent is still necessary as an explanation for the mechanism. Therefore they are not alternative explanations of reality; agency and mechanism are interwoven as complements of each other.

For example, Henry Ford and the physical laws of internal combustion are not alternative explanations for how an automobile engine came into being or how it works. They are complementary. Likewise, a complementary explanation including both the agent (God) and the mechanism (the laws of physics) best describe the combination of supernatural and natural realities that humanity finds itself in [14, p. 45]. Science simply cannot answer the *why* of existence, or even the *how* (why are we here? how should we live?). *Science can only give descriptions, not prescriptions.* The Christian worldview answers both the *why* and the *how* in the *person* of God. It encompasses a much greater view of reality. It gives both *descriptive* and *prescriptive* explanations.

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18) Human morality is not ultimately objective, it is pragmatic. It’s simply a product of evolution that aids in survival. Therefore, it can’t be used to assert God’s existence. Besides, we don’t need God to be good anyway.

- a. **Details.** “Ethics as we understand it is an illusion fobbed off on us by our genes to get us to cooperate” [73, p. 310]. “...If the universe were just electrons and selfish genes, meaningless tragedies... are exactly what we should expect, along with equally meaningless good fortune. Such a universe would neither be evil nor good in intention. It would manifest no intentions of any kind. In

a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference... DNA neither knows nor cares. DNA just is. And we dance to its music" [74, pp. 132-3]. Although this sets the stage for determinism, Dawkins argues elsewhere that "we have the power to turn against our creators. We, alone on earth, can rebel against the tyranny of the selfish replicators [DNA]... If we understand what our selfish genes are up to... we may then at least have the chance to upset their designs." [75, pp. 3, 200-1].

In practice, human "morality" is like a social contract of agreed upon behavior. If cooperation between humans aids in survival, then that's what is meant by "ethics" or "morality". Atheism further argues that "morality" cannot be modeled by the Bible, particularly because of its very negative view of an apparently violent and spiteful Old Testament God who administered unjust laws, and murdered people by the tens of thousands. Dawkins went on to say: "We do not, as a matter of fact, derive our morals from Scripture. Or, if we do, we pick and choose among the Scriptures for the nice bits and reject the nasty. But then we must have some independent criterion for deciding which are the moral bits: a criterion which, wherever it comes from, cannot come from Scripture itself and is presumably available to all of us whether we are religious or not" [50, p. 243].

- b. **Christian Response.** In the denial of God, objective morality becomes an illusion. This idea of social cooperation "morality" that emerges is, in the end, whatever people want it to be. In a sense, it becomes whatever people's personal desires and preferences are. It is *completely relative*. But it gets worse. The material world itself cannot provide humanity with a basis for an ethic that transcends its own physical laws – transcendent ethics are just an illusion. Neither can the material world provide any basis for the intrinsic value of individual persons. Any special personal worth that is assumed or implied is also an illusion; we are, after all, simply molecules in motion. If our behavior is just a dance to the music of our DNA, as Dawkins claims – if it's merely an expression of the material world – then "morality" is worse than relative: it's deterministic. Arguments for how humans *should* behave dissolve into the mindless ocean of determinism. They are pointless and meaningless. "Morality", in the most brutally honest perspective of atheism, is merely a *description* of human behavior, *not a prescription for it*. *It is talk of how things are, not how they should be*. "Morality" in this sense is ultimately a long-winded and flowery extrapolation of how the basic laws of physics completely control human behavior. Therefore, no true praise or condemnation can be attributed to "personal" or "moral" agents, who in a world devoid of God are *nothing more than molecular machines*. Adolf Hitler didn't "*do anything bad*" and Mother Teresa didn't "*do anything good*". They were merely just dancing to their DNA.

Noticing the absurdity of the "ethics"-of-DNA, Dawkins also argued that we should rebel against our selfish genes; we should live according to a higher ethic. In doing so, he inadvertently admitted that humans alone have a special position in the universe, because our minds can control our behavior and thus our biological destiny. Out of this deterministic prison he paradoxically appealed to a transcendence which makes us quite different from the material world. We aren't prisoners to our biochemistry after all? In comparison, even the most complex computer ever designed cannot think for itself. Ironically, Dawkins offers no explanation for this assumed transcendent human quality and doesn't seem to think he needs one.

The tension of Dawkins' clashing positions on morality reveals what atheism really attempts to do: throw off God while attempting to retain the benefits of God's moral laws; throw off the law-giver but keep the law. This is like trying to get rid of the roots and trunk of a tree while keeping its branches alive. It's impossible. Mankind still holds on to theistic, objective morality (i.e. child abuse is objectively wrong, caring for a child is objectively right). This is one of the major tensions that atheists must live with in their desire to be their "own gods".

Now if biblical morality is relegated as inferior because we have to filter it, then neither can the “ethics” of atheism be deemed superior. That’s because it’s viewed as an extrapolation of behavior in the animal kingdom, and that too must be filtered. Animals – even our nearest biological relatives the chimpanzees – still engage in selfish and violent behavior. Thus, on the criterion of atheism, we’d still have to pick “the nice bits and reject the nasty” [50, p. 243].

So the real question becomes: “what is the source of this transcendent ethic with which we use to judge behavior both in the Bible and in the animal kingdom?” Dawkins rightly asserts that this moral criterion is available to us whether we are religious or not. He won’t admit that this is perfectly congruent with the idea that the Christian God is the source of human morality – *God gives humanity a moral compass, whether people believe in Him or not*. Morality flows out of the dynamic relationship of love among the three persons of the Triune God. He is the ultimate being who grants humanity a transcendent intrinsic worth and holds people accountable to His moral law. After all, “God created man in His own image” (Genesis 1:27). This means that people have personality and an innate moral compass. So while humanity resides within the physical world, humanity makes decisions according to the transcendent moral law of God. For more details, refer to the chapter “[Elements of the Moral Argument](#)”.

This position immediately obligates the Christian to go further in answering the objections raised against the actions and precepts of the God revealed in the Old Testament. That is a considerable undertaking on its own and is explored in another chapter. Suffice it to say that what seems repugnant to a twenty-first century Western mindset can indeed be explained quite well in terms of God’s character and what He desires for mankind. Understanding the ancient context is critically important. For more details, refer to the chapter “[Resolving Bible Difficulties: Reconciling the OT and NT God](#)”, which is a summary of Paul Copan’s book: “*Is God a Moral Monster?*”

Morality, as spread by Judeo-Christian doctrines has indelibly and *positively* shaped Western culture for many centuries. Allow for a philosopher with a worldview of atheism to explain: “For the normative self-understanding of modernity, Christianity has functioned as more than just a precursor or catalyst. Universalistic egalitarianism, from which sprang the ideals of freedom and a collective life in solidarity, the autonomous conduct of life and emancipation, the individual morality of conscience, human rights and democracy, is the direct legacy of the Judaic ethic of justice and the Christian ethic of love. This legacy, substantially unchanged, has been the object of a continual critical reappropriation and reinterpretation. Up to this very day there is no alternative to it. And in light of the current challenges of a post-national constellation, we must draw sustenance now, as in the past, from this substance. Everything else is idle postmodern talk” [119, pp. 150-1].

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19) When interacting with secular scientific ideas, the Christian church has left a history that reveals anti-scientific and anti-intellectual attitudes (such as creation in six literal days). If Christianity is against truth and technological progress, then it’s a weak belief system that should be eradicated.

- a. **Details.** The latest scientific explanations of the universe and life have shown that God is superfluous to our understanding of reality, even detrimental. God must be kept out of science. In fact, science shows that God does not exist. It’s irritating that Christians irrationally try to defend their turf against any scientific progress which seems to undermine their faith.
- b. **Christian Response.** It is true; many fundamentalist Christians have dogmatically opposed some findings of science primarily because these findings seemed to threaten their faith. The heliocentric theory (Earth revolves around the Sun) of Galileo is one example. In the early 1600s the church saw this as contradicting the prevailing biblical interpretation that Earth was the center of the universe.

This Christian defensiveness, especially within the last 200 years, is understandable when history reveals that the critics of Christianity have hastily and ineptly extrapolated many findings in

science into the philosophical realm to mount an attack on Christian beliefs. This is particularly noticeable with *macro*-evolutionary theory which was employed, only one year after Darwin's 1859 publication of "*The Origin of Species*", by popular anti-theist Thomas Henry Huxley to publicly denounce Christianity. Biologist Richard Dawkins now carries the torch with his 2006 publication of "*The God Delusion*". Again, Dawkins is a biologist, *not* a philosopher, nor anything that remotely approaches the skills of a theologian. Whatever he lacks in philosophical rigor and proficiency in biblical interpretation – which is obvious – he obscures with the fog of his passionate rhetoric. It wouldn't be such a problem if he wasn't so good at it, and if people weren't buying his books by the millions. Therefore, it's understandable that Christians want to defend their faith against such an onslaught, especially when there are so many holes and philosophical conundrums with *macro*-evolutionary theory.

One main problem today is that many fundamentalist Christians dogmatically oppose the idea of a ~13.75 billion-year-old universe and a ~4.5 billion-year-old Earth because these contradict a *strictly literal* biblical interpretation of creation in six 24-hour "*days*" (Genesis 1:1-2:4). This is closely tied with an *uninformed and largely dogmatic* opposition to *macro*-evolutionary theory, mainly because secularists employ the theory to contradict the Bible's claim that God created life. It's a fighting of fire with fire, so to speak. Of particular concern is the secularist's dispensing with God's role in creating human beings radically different from all other creatures – "in His own image" (Genesis 1:26-27). An old age for Earth bestows *macro*-evolutionary theorists with the hundreds of millions of years that they assume are completely indispensable for the most basic single-celled organisms to evolve into the diversity of life we see in modern times, a benefit that many fundamentalist Christians will go to great lengths to deprive them of.

It must be noted that Christian bias isn't solely to blame in some of these issues. Galileo's heliocentric theory also challenged the scientific establishment of his day because the scientists had long believed in geocentrism, an idea postulated many centuries earlier by Aristotle and others, that Earth was the center of the universe. The unheard part of the story is that the leading scientists had actually pressed the church to muzzle Galileo [14, p. 24]. If we fast forward 300 years to 1927, soon after Georges Lemaitre proposed what became known as the Big Bang theory, much of the reigning scientific establishment opposed it because of its assertion that the universe had a beginning. In a twist of irony, many scientists hated that it pointed to a *Beginner* – a *Creator* – because it gave Christians scientific support for their beliefs [118, p. 29]. *It's very interesting that the initial popularizers of these now mainstream scientific theories were both Christians.*

As shown in other responses to the arguments of atheism, the worldview is not itself a science, and a good case could be made that atheism itself is indeed the anti-scientific and anti-intellectual position. *However, to be effective, Christians should respond to any anti-theistic conclusions of science on both scientific and philosophical grounds, rather than from religious dogmatism.* Bishop Samuel Wilberforce lived that example in his 1860 Oxford debate with Huxley over *macro*-evolution (particularly, man's common descent). Even with limited training in science, he contested Huxley's position with good *scientific* assertions [14, pp. 26-7]. Not only was he a Christian, he had a keen scientific mind and was a very skilled public speaker. Even Darwin admitted that Wilberforce had good arguments.

It must be mentioned here that a proper and detailed interpretation of the Genesis creation account easily allows for a very old universe and a very old Earth. The six "*days*" of creation could indeed be long periods of time, or could be short periods with lengthy time spans in between them. This harmonizes nicely with modern scientific conclusions. A very limited form of *macro*-evolutionary theory, which could properly be described as *de-evolution*, also harmonizes with the biblical account. Full-scale *macro*-evolutionary theory does not harmonize, and when subjected to perceptive scrutiny, becomes exposed as philosophically defective. For more information on these topics, refer to the publications and debates of Christian scientists John Lennox and Hugh Ross, and to the chapters

“Resolving Bible Difficulties: Creation ‘Days’, Genealogies, and Noah’s Flood” and “Elements of the Intelligent Design Argument”.

Finally, it should be added that the enterprise of science in Western culture was built upon the founding principle of a rational God who created a rational universe. The universe is rationally intelligible and can be studied with the expectation that it operates according to rational physical laws. Most of the early famous scientists believed in God – Leonardo da Vinci, Nicholas Copernicus, Galileo Galilei, Johannes Kepler, Isaac Newton, Gottfried Leibnitz, Blaise Pascal, Robert Boyle, James Clerk Maxwell, Michael Faraday, Charles Babbage, Samuel Morse, James Joule, Gregor Mendel, Louis Pasteur, Lord Kelvin, etc. Even Richard Dawkins has said: “It has to be admitted that science grew out of a religious tradition” [17].

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20) Extraordinary claims, such as the resurrection of Jesus Christ, require extraordinary evidence to be believed.

- a. **Details.** Theories in scientific research may sometimes be extraordinary, but eventually the valid ones are explained in scientific terms. The scientific method produces solid evidence, and it can be believed. Reports of miraculous events are violations of natural law and can’t be studied scientifically. Though miracles are extraordinary, they’re not accompanied by extraordinary evidence. Therefore, they can’t be taken seriously.
- b. **Christian Response.** It is very true that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is an extraordinary claim. But if extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence, then why not push that same criteria onto grand-scale *macro*-evolutionary claims – specifically the origin of man – just as it has been pushed onto Christianity and its own miraculous claims? The perception of atheism is that it frees mankind, and Christianity imprisons. Nothing could be further from the truth; in reality the exact opposite is true. *Macro*-evolution, if it happened, *is as much a miracle, if not the greater miracle to explain life.* It asserts that irrationality begets rationality, random activities of particles produce information systems (DNA), mindless processes beget the mind, etc. It strips man of his super-nature and leads to an irrational, purposeless existence devoid of any lasting meaning. Without the supernatural, man is simply a robot trapped within the fate of the forces of nature. If particles become people without purpose, then men are nothing more than molecules in motion – machines mad of meat. That is the real imprisonment of taking on the full implications of *macro*-evolutionary theory.

On the other hand, the events of the resurrection of Jesus Christ are some of the best attested historical facts in all antiquity. Even skeptical and atheist scholars recognize the facts of the crucifixion, the burial, the empty tomb, the perceived post-mortem appearances, and the spread of Christianity out of a non-proselytizing Judaism [120, pp. 43-77]. Competing naturalistic explanations such as conspiracy theory, apparent death theory, and hallucination theory have been almost universally rejected by the majority of scholars [8, pp. loc. 3610-4417]. In fact, these theories require miraculous components of their own to be believed. It seems that a miracle cannot be done away with in any of the explanations; leaving an actual resurrection as the most plausible by far. For more details, refer to the chapter *“[The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ](#)”*.

Finally, if there are good arguments that the Christian God created the universe, then by comparison, bringing a dead body to life is relatively easy. It is the claims of the resurrection that resonate with ultimate reality: that the Christian God is personal and intimately involved in the lives of humanity. His resurrection into the “new creation” is the “firstfruits” of our desire to have our brokenness fixed – to consummate our desire for heaven (Revelation 21:1, 1 Corinthians 15:20). In contrast, *macro*-evolutionary theory claims that mindless matter brought itself to life – that it somehow brought a software code (DNA) into being which is “far more advanced than any software ever created” [68, p. 228]. This indeed seems like a miraculous and extraordinary claim, yet with no extraordinary evidence, no miraculous cause, and no purpose. That is simply unbelievable.

21) God is not an acceptable explanation for any gaps in scientific knowledge. This was common in the days of superstition, but in the scientific age there is no room for God. (This is the “God of the gaps” criticism).

- a. **Details.** The claim is that Christianity is antithetical to the scientific endeavor, because wherever there is a gap in scientific knowledge, it tends to plug God in as an explanation. This does not inspire scientific research – it brings it to a halt; it’s lazy and blind. Thousands of formerly unexplained phenomena (gaps), which have traditionally been attributed to special divine activity (god of the gaps), have eventually been explained in scientific terms (gap filled). The pattern that emerges shows that as scientific knowledge advances, God retreats into irrelevance. This trend is expected to continue into the future, where everything will finally be explained in scientific terms. God will have retreated into oblivion [50, pp. 125-6].
- b. **Christian Response.** The skeptic is right, Christianity and other worldviews have been guilty of this throughout the centuries. It is, however, antithetical to true Christian doctrine. If we’re to love God with all our minds (Luke 10:27), then we’re also to find God’s truth in His created order. Not only is God to be found in the bits of the universe we don’t understand, but also in the bits that we do. Rather than serving as a God of the gaps, He’s the author of the whole show [118, p. 31]. For example, when Newton discovered the elegant inverse square law of gravity ($F_g = G(m_1m_2/r^2)$), he didn’t say: “now that I understand the mechanism, I don’t need God”. Instead he wrote the *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, one of the most brilliant scientific texts ever written, and expressed the hope that it would persuade the thinking man to believe in God [118, p. 32]. As another example, consider both Henry Ford and the automobile engine. Henry Ford is the principle *agent* behind the automobile engine, while the engine itself is the *mechanism*. It is simply a mistake to claim that the laws of physics provide a full explanation for how the automobile works. Both the *agent* and the *mechanism* are complementary, together forming a full explanation of the automobile [14, p. 45].

There are indeed a few genuine gaps in scientific knowledge with an extremely interesting trend: as scientific research progresses, *the gap is actually getting larger*, not smaller. Two examples are the origin of the universe and the origin of DNA. Many philosophers and scientists suspect that these gaps will never be closed. Philosophically speaking, something cannot come from absolute nothing (space, time, matter, and energy did not exist “before” the universe began). And also philosophically speaking, information systems cannot be produced by information-less processes. These aren’t gaps scientific in knowledge, but gaps in knowledge that science does not have the authority to address. They are, strictly speaking, non-scientific questions. *The reason that the scientific knowledge gap is getting wider in these cases is exactly because science is trying to answer a question that it is not equipped to answer. Further research only serves to make this more conspicuous. And as the knowledge gaps concerning these areas increase, the plausibility of an intelligent agent increases accordingly.*

One thing that some atheist philosophers have been honest about is the irreconcilable gap between the physical laws of the universe and objective moral laws of human behavior. If everything is just physical, then human behavior itself must also be studied from a purely scientific perspective. But science cannot account for objective moral laws: it can’t close the gap. If a philosopher already assumes the perspective of atheism, this leads to the conclusion that objective morals don’t actually exist. Because the gap can’t be closed, they dismiss the idea of objective moral laws and get rid of the gap altogether. It’s very interesting that virtually all proponents of atheism in Western culture do not live consistently with this conclusion in their daily lives. They really do practice some form of objective morals, which is simply better than the worldview can argue for.

Finally, atheism has a very strong tendency to plug non-theistic (and evolutionary) explanations into gaps of scientific knowledge. This is aptly termed “*atheism of the gaps*”. Note what John Lennox had to say about it:

“[The] suggestion [of intelligent design] will be met by a chorus of protest that we are not talking about a detective story and that it is in any case anti-scientific and intellectually lazy to propose what is essentially an ‘intelligence of the gaps’, that is, a ‘God of the gaps’-type solution. Now although the charge must be taken seriously – it is, after all, possible for a theist to be intellectually lazy and say in effect ‘I can’t explain it, therefore God did it’ – it is important to say that sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. It is also very easy to say ‘evolution did it’ when one has not got the faintest idea how, or has simply cobbled up a speculative just-so story with no evidential basis. Indeed, as we have seen, a materialist has to say that natural processes were solely responsible, since, in his or her book, there is no admissible alternative. As a result, it is just as easy to end up with an ‘evolution of the gaps’ as with a ‘God of the gaps’. One might even say that it is easier to end up with an ‘evolution of the gaps’ than a ‘God of the gaps’ since the former suggestion is likely to attract far less criticism than the latter” [14, pp. 157-8]

Metaphorically speaking: atheism acts as a religion in some ways, with its faithful “worshipping” at the temple of science, paying homage to its savior, *macro-evolutionary theory*.

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22) If Christianity were true, we’d see God protecting His believers and improving their earthly lives. But on average, that doesn’t happen, so Christians are exercising a false hope.

- a. **Details.** Atheists in Western society are enabled and accustomed to working towards a more comfortable life, therefore it’s natural that they would expect a God to as well – to make life better for His believers here on earth. God should have their backs and protect them from harm and calamity, but He doesn’t seem to be doing that for Christians. Disease, accidents, murder, and all sorts of other injustices seem to afflict Christians just as much, if not more, than the rest of the world. The perspective of atheism in this context is that this world and this life is all that people have, and all of humanity’s efforts should be geared towards making this limited experience our utopia, our heaven. In short, the goal of secularism is to create a heaven on earth.
- b. **Christian Response.** Christianity knows that this world is broken. Since Adam and Eve rebelled against God, “the whole creation has been groaning together with labor pains until now” (Romans 8:22). With this in mind, Jesus went on to say “...You will have suffering in this world...” (John 16:33). But He immediately followed that with: “Be courageous! I have conquered the world”, meaning that He had conquered the power of sin, suffering, and death over mankind, which opened the door for a true utopia with God. This victory would come at the greatest cost to His earthly security and comfort; He allowed Himself to be crucified, and this was one of the most brutal forms of execution ever invented. In a moment of abandonment on that cross, He cried out “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46). The way God conquers is so often at odds with how the world expects Him to conquer.

Juxtaposing this life with the next, the Apostle Paul wrote: “If we have put our hope in Christ for this life only, we should be pitied more than anyone” (1 Corinthians 15:19). He further admonished believers to meditate on how Jesus had conquered sin and death, which was *not to bring security in this world, but to bestow believers with an eternal security*, which has the power to fill our inner being with peace regardless of the circumstances: “And the peace of God, which surpasses every thought, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7). All of this leads towards the true utopia that mankind has been destined for since the beginning of time. “...They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will no longer exist; grief, crying, and pain will exist no longer, because the previous things have passed away” (Revelation 21:2-4).

The ushering of mankind into heaven is the culmination of God's kingdom. As a statement of faith in that, it's the Christian's choice to usher in God's kingdom on this earth, following the example of Jesus Christ. It cost Him the highest price to bring God's love and healing to a broken world; and likewise, the Christian faces a high price. History is infused with the sacrificial acts of Christ-followers throughout the centuries who ushered in God's kingdom by showing sacrificial love towards their fellow man. If the vulnerable are protected and the lives of the destitute are improved by Christian charity, then this answers the atheist's question of God making people's lives better here on earth. *And all of it is only because of the source from which all goodness flows – God Himself.*

From another perspective, if God did make everyone's earthly life better, according to worldly standards, then what would be the attraction of Christianity to most people? The masses would swarm to this religion as they do towards anything that eases our earthly ailments. It would be something like a free self-help program, but devoid of the lasting personal heart change that God desires for us. He is not interested so much in our earthly comfort as He is interested in what lasts eternally: our relationship with Him, and transforming us, albeit by 'fire', into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. While humanity's focus tends toward this world, God's focus with us is squarely on the eternal, and whatever moves us towards that end with Him, He will do. This is our God: everything He does in this world, and in our lives individually, whether it directly causes us pain or not, He does with our best interest in mind.

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23) Christian experience, no matter how positive and personally tangible, is not valid evidence for the truth of Christianity or for the existence of the Christian God.

- a. **Details.** Atheism is based upon hard scientific evidence. Personal experience on the other hand is very subjective and prone to error. Religious "evidence" is full of personal experiences, so it can't be trusted.
- b. **Christian Response.** Personal experiences are valid to the one who experiences them. If the person who has the experience is trustworthy, then the recounting of the experience is most likely valid to those who know the person and/or consider them trustworthy. This is similar to how testimony given in a court of law is believed or disbelieved. Nevertheless, there's a limit to how much the experience can be used as an argument about the legitimacy of a belief system.

Negative experiences are often used by atheists to justify their faith – one that says God does *not* exist. Most often it's a moral objection against God, having something to do with the problem of evil and suffering. A person may have experienced some kind of suffering which they think and feel is incompatible with the Christian concept of a God who is good and powerful. All people of all beliefs systems have experienced this internal struggle. But since rejecting the idea of God removes any objective reference point for morality (both good and evil), then critics cannot arrogate themselves to a moral high ground upon which to pronounce judgement on God. The move towards atheism simply cannot be defended rationally. Atheism may criticize the personal experience argument, but it cuts both ways, as much of the rhetoric usually does. Atheists have experiences influencing belief, just like anybody else.

It is also common that the greater the negative emotional experience with God (or with a God who "should be a certain way but isn't"), the greater one's willingness to accept atheism and take on weaker and weaker arguments to support that position. So much for the hard evidence that is continually proclaimed. Notice that Christians are not automatically superior to the atheists in this regard. Therefore, Christians should be very careful to guard against the tendency to espouse weak arguments simply because they want to support their experience with God.

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24) Christians are brainwashed into believing their doctrine.

- a. **Details.** As stated many times, atheism depends upon scientific evidence for its beliefs. To maintain beliefs for other reasons is due to brainwashing by a family or religious cultural context.
- b. **Christian Response.** This is not an argument, but an Ad Hominem (personal attack). The instilling of belief by family or religious environment does not automatically constitute that belief as either valid or invalid. Could atheists also be brainwashed? Very much so. A family and cultural context of atheism can influence a person to affirm certain beliefs about the non-existence of God. Atheists such as Richard Dawkins know this very well. He supports Camp Quest, a children's summer camp in England, which began with branches all over the United States, that teaches young people about *macro*-evolutionary biology, secular ideas, and atheism. The claim of religious brainwashing is about as bogus as they come. It cuts both ways.

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25) Most religious people maintain their faith because of being born to religious parents within a religious culture. This does not show that a truth claim is valid, but instead shows how gullible people generally are. (This is the genetic fallacy).

- a. **Details.** Religious sociological context perpetuates religious belief from one generation to the next. Religious people maintain their faith because of inherited tradition rather than on valid truth claims. It shows the gullibility of humanity to believe lies.
- b. **Christian Response.** This is a near restatement of the brainwashing rhetoric. It is called the "genetic fallacy", which states that the validity of a belief system can be judged according to its origin, rather than according to its correspondence to reality. Atheists can also be influenced into their belief by their parents and a general culture of atheism. Again, the "argument", which is indeed a fallacy, clearly cuts both ways.

"We hear so much criticism from skeptics about what they often brand as 'secondhand faith.' It is implied that many people believe in God only because of the context of their birth or family or determined conditions. If the criticism is justified, and undoubtedly it sometimes is, *why do we not show the same distrust of secondhand doubt? If it is possible for a person's belief to be merely an echo of someone else's faith, are there not hypocrites in doubt also?*" [1, pp. 144-5].

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26) Christians maintain their faith because of their desire for a loving God – for a benevolent father figure who will take care of them. This says nothing about the actual existence of God, or not.

- a. **Details.** Desiring something is not a valid argument for actually believing in it.
- b. **Christian Response.** Throughout human history, it seems that the majority of mankind has desired some kind of benevolent transcendent figure in their lives. On the other hand, atheists may also desire *not* to have a father figure in their lives (or authority figure). Desire, while undeniable in either direction, is not the final arbiter of truth. What is needed is an examination of the truth claims of these objects of desire to see if they correspond to reality. It is the Christian position that the truth claims of Christianity best correspond to reality and thus corroborate humanity's deepest desires.

For more details, refer to the "argument from desire" in the chapter "[Arguments for the Existence of God](#)". C.S. Lewis and Catholic Philosopher Peter Kreeft and have skillfully expounded upon the argument.

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27) Religion is simply a coping mechanism for people who need outside help to make it through this life. Coping mechanisms are not true or false, only useful. People should wake up to what the great enterprise of science can tell us about the truth.

- a. **Details.** Humanity has invented religion as a survival tool. It serves evolutionary success, not objective truth. Science stands tall as the beacon of truth in a dark world. Atheist Karl Marx once

wrote: “Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions” [121].

- b. Christian Response.** First of all, people employ numerous methods of coping mechanisms to deal with the brokenness and pain of this world, whether to ignore it, numb it, or address it directly: workaholicism, alcohol, painkillers, drugs (legal or illegal), psychological codependency, sex, music, entertainment, fantasy novels, video games, philosophy, altruism, etc. If atheists such as Karl Marx crudely generalize religion as an “opium of the people”, then why couldn’t atheism also be considered an “opium of the people”? It is very ironic that within communist Russia, an atheist state which already had a centuries-long history of epidemic alcoholism, fermented drink continued its dominance under the twentieth century Marx-inspired government. Communism fostered its own “opium of the people”. This is more of a criticism than an argument, but the criticism can cut both ways; atheism itself could be a coping mechanism.

One could further ask: “If our minds are gullible enough to believe in the opium of religion, then where does this error stop?” In respect to human beings, *macro*-evolutionary theory is built upon the idea that the fittest humans are those who survive to get their genes propagated into the next generation, and not those humans who attempt to follow the truth, whether it be objective and/or religious truth. If *macro*-evolutionary theory alone explains how we got here, and it favors survival, not objective truth, then there is no basis for objective truth, let alone how it could possibly enter into the human psyche. Therefore, if employing the method of atheism’s objection to religion upon itself, anything that *macro*-evolutionary processes lead us to believe are not objectively true. Even atheism then, cannot escape its own charges leveled against the religious of the world – it’s not objectively true either. Atheist philosopher John Gray supports this conclusion, yet he goes even further: “Modern humanism is the faith that through science humankind can know the truth – and so be free. But if Darwin’s theory of natural selection is true this is impossible. The human mind serves evolutionary success, not truth. To think otherwise is to resurrect the pre-Darwinian error that humans are different from all other animals” [59, p. 26]. Ironically, atheism’s position is exactly the opposite of God’s intentions for mankind. To think that it’s an “error that humans are different from all other animals” is pretty much what the Bible calls sin, and was indeed integral to the first sin. Adam and Eve, who had been created *in God’s image*, had acted more so on their physical appetites than out of the image of God in their hearts and minds. In the aftermath, and in a satirical twist, God dressed them in animal skins, with the implication that in their sin, they had behaved like animals (however, it was also an act of God’s mercy to meet their need for a covering - Genesis 3:21).

As stated in the response to Dawkins’ “meme” argument, empirical studies indeed support the conclusion that atheism is unfit as a survival strategy. If considering birth rate alone, it’s being actively selected out of the meme pool as you read this. Heidelberg University (Germany) professor Dr. Michael Blume compiled studies from 82 countries, showing that those who attend religious services more than once a week reproduce at the rate of 2.5 children per family, while those who never attend religious services reproduce at the rate of only 1.67 children per family, a rate that would eventually ensure the demise of the irreligious population – if not for a compensatory high rate of recruiting out of the religious side [117].

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28) All religion is born out of fear.

- a. Details.** Atheist Bertrand Russell asserted that all religion is born out of fear [122, p. 22].

- b. Christian Response.** While Christianity is partly a response to God out of fear, it is different than the fear Russell had in mind. Proverbs 15:33 says “the fear of the Lord is what wisdom teaches, and humility comes before honor.” Biblical fear of God is a sober and reverential attitude towards Him, aware of who He is in all His majesty and love, and who humanity is as beings created in His own image (Genesis 1:26-27).

In another sense, God doesn’t desire to scare people into their devotion towards Him. A true worldview knows that the truth cannot be imposed by force or by fear. True faith, as exercised by a believer, is a choice that flows from the heart, not by external coercion [118, p. 68]. So when God revealed Himself in the person of Jesus Christ, He veiled his glory because He didn’t want to frighten people into believing in Him. *As a relational being, He desires true relationship based upon love, not a negative, coercive fear.* The apostle John, one of Jesus’ closest disciples, expressed this beautifully in his first epistle: “God is love, and the one who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him. In this, love is perfected with us so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment... There is no fear in love; instead, perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment...” (1 John 4:16-18).

In a twist of the argument, the worldview of atheism may actually be born out of the fear that Russell had in mind. It could be fear that God’s authority undermines one’s quest for lordship over one’s own life, which was evident in the arguments that atheist Christopher Hitchens used in his debates. This fear is possibly mingled with its opposite: a fearlessness that flippantly rejects the divine.

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29) The Bible is full of stories of God advocating violence and immoral practices.

- a. Details.** Morality cannot be taken wholesale from the Bible, specifically the Old Testament. It has a violent and repugnant nature, particularly in its justification of genocide, violent capital punishment, misogyny, slavery, and racism. Since Christians take the whole of the Bible as true, then from the perspective of atheism, the whole of Christianity should be stamped out.
- b. Christian Response.** Neither can morality be taken wholesale from any supposed evolutionary ancestors, since their “benevolence” is also interspersed with violence. Wholesale survival-of-the-fittest ideology doesn’t leave any room for a transcendent objective morality. From where does atheism – whose “morality” is a subjective, *macro*-evolutionary-based, deterministic, DNA dance-of-the-self – get the authority to judge a morality that flows from a transcendent moral law-giver?

The apparent violence and social inequalities of the Old Testament are very misunderstood when viewed through the lens of twenty-first century Western culture. It makes a lot more sense after one has done a detailed study of the cultural context of ancient Near East societies. Then it can be seen how God works through human culture – itself a systemized product of this broken world. God’s law is perfect, and His work is perfect, but that does not mean that fallen humanity can rise to that perfection by the law. Rather, the law serves as a moral guide and reveals our need for salvation. It shows that we cannot save ourselves; instead we need a savior (Romans 7:7, 24-25). In God perfection, He meets humanity where it is, within its own brokenness, and administers laws that take into account their stubbornness and hardness of hearts (Exodus 32:9, Matthew 19:8, Mark 10:5). These laws end up partially colored by the world’s brokenness, but more significantly they reflect God’s love to eventually bring people out of that brokenness, towards His perfection. Complete perfection for each of us is finally realized only through God’s sacrificial and atoning act in Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection. It is there that He personally suffered under the violent and immoral practices of the world, and imparted to us His moral perfection.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to address the topics of Old Testament genocide, violent capital punishment, misogyny, slavery, and racism comprehensively. Even the terms themselves are pregnant with cultural misunderstanding and prejudice. For specific details, refer to the chapter

[“Resolving Bible Difficulties: Reconciling the OT and NT God”](#), which is a summary of Paul Copan’s book: *“Is God a Moral Monster?”* Nevertheless, some specifics are still worth mentioning here. The Israelites were significantly far ahead of their contemporaries concerning human rights. They were the first to legislate personal rights for slaves, women, and prisoners of war. In contrast to the code of King Hammurabi of ancient Babylon (~1750 BC, using “middle chronology”), a favorite comparison for historians critical of the Law of Moses, punishments for Israelite crimes were much milder, and no exceptions were made for those of high social rank. Furthermore, the Israelites did not earn their right to conquer the people of Canaan (Deuteronomy 9:5-6). Instead, God employed them in keeping His promises to Abraham, and in punishing the people of Canaan for their abominable sins, a people who had not only tried to annihilate Israel, but had also engaged in detestable practices such as sacrificing their children to Molech by burning them alive.

Moving on to the era of Jesus, the apostle “Paul is actually the New Testament’s ultimate democrat... the first person in history to exclude consciously all social grades, isms, and biases from his thinking, believing that nothing – not birth, nor ethnicity, nor religion, nor economic status, nor gender – makes anyone better than anyone else...” [123, pp. 141-2].

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30) The Bible is full of errors and contradictions.

- a. **Details.** Skeptics object to biblical “immorality”, clashes with science, internal contradictions, reports of miracles, and archaeological findings which seem to completely undermine its authority. If Christianity’s sacred text cannot be trusted, then neither can the whole of Christianity.
- b. **Christian Response.** The breadth of the skeptic’s objection to problems in the Bible is so widespread and can take on so much detail that entire books (thick books) have been written on small portions of it, both in support and in criticism of it. It must be admitted that, on first glance, many passages of the Bible are very problematic. *It is within this first glance that many skeptics are content to hastily criticize it without further inquiry. It is within this first glance that Christians must not be content – they must be willing to dig deeper.* In twenty-first century Western culture, we are so far removed from the linguistic and cultural context of the Bible that popular misinterpretations are commonplace and abundant, often leading to very negative perceptions of its content.

Upon very in-depth investigation, the Bible largely reveals: (1) a God who is consistent with morality as we know it, (2) harmonization with science, (3) seemingly contradictory passages that can be harmonized, (4) miracles that serve as evidence of God’s involvement with humanity (the creation of the universe and life itself is miraculous), and (5) that more archaeological findings are revealed every year which support its integrity. There is no way around a deeper understanding of the Bible; the hard work must be done. The trend is that the more one understands the Bible within its original context, the more the problematic passages dissolve in the wake of a deeper and more harmonious understanding of who God is, and who humanity is in light of Him. For more details, begin with the chapter: [“Resolving Bible Difficulties: Introduction”](#), which is followed by several other relevant chapters on the subject.

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31) The Bible’s teachings are outdated and do not apply to modern culture.

- a. **Details.** Rituals of worship, sacrifice, cleanliness, economics, social contracts, etc., are outdated. The “harsh” morality of the Old Testament is especially outdated.
- b. **Christian Response.** True, much of it is outdated when trying to shoehorn it into our modern culture. But on the other hand Jesus said “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 2:29) and “I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must also love one another” (John 13:34). These are *moral laws* that no one rejects as outdated.

To gain the best understanding of this issue, the Bible should be read through the eyes of the original reader, as any ancient text should be. The contextual understanding of what it meant to the ancients is how it should be understood today. Now according to a proper understanding of the Bible itself, much of the Old Testament law is “outdated” anyway, or better said, it’s fulfilled and completed. In His life and sacrificial death, Jesus Christ fulfilled all of it: the ceremonial law, the sacrificial law, and the moral law. He was reported to have said this to both critics and disciples: “Don’t assume that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17). The moral law still applies, of course, but since the ceremonial and sacrificial laws were pointers to the moral law, Christ’s fulfillment rendered them no longer necessary. The word “outdated” could be used, as the critics do, but the much more appropriate description would be “fulfilled”.

Notice that some significant scientific theories of the past have also become outdated as science has progressed. Geocentrism gave way to heliocentrism, and Newtonian Mechanics gave way to General Relativity. This does not in the least undermine the benefits of a scientific understanding of the universe, and any scientist, atheist or not, would be justified in making the point.

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32) Religion evolves. Because it’s constantly changing, it cannot be trusted as a source of objective, unchanging truths.

- a. **Details.** Christians believe in the Old Testament, but today they don’t stone people for adultery, own slaves, or perform animal sacrifices. There are so many practices that have been abandoned, and it seems the discontinuity is the result of Christians picking and choosing what they want to follow. Therefore, the Bible doesn’t contain timeless truths.
- b. **Christian Response.** Atheism and science evolve as well, which has nothing directly to say about the trustworthiness of timeless truths. The scientific move from geocentrism to heliocentrism, from Newtonian mechanics to general relativity, and from a steady-state universe to a Big Bang beginning all show the evolution of science. And when Darwin introduced *macro*-evolutionary theory, atheism “evolved” in gleeful adaptation to it. But if we are the result of a process of ever-evolving matter – hydrogen to heavier elements, then to biology, and then to humans – then what unchanging reference point of reality is there anyway? The theory of evolution depends upon continual change, so how can our mental faculties that are based upon it come up with any truths that are independently and timelessly trustworthy?

Christianity, which won’t speak for other religions, is characterized by *increasing revelation*, as demonstrated by the long spread of time over which the Bible was written. The source of this continuing revelation is the timeless, unchanging truth of God Himself. Islam, Mormonism, and Jehovah’s Witnesses stick to a doctrine of abrogation, which maintains that later prophecies and teachings can *override* previous ones. Contrast that with the Christian doctrine of *fulfillment*, where Jesus Christ claimed that He did not come to abolish the law, but to *fulfill* it – both morally and prophetically (Matthew 5:17-18). Many Old Testament practices were meant for their time, yet are no longer in use today because of Christ’s fulfillment (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

In the end, there can be only one ultimate criteria for interpreting life and the universe we live in. It’s either the ever-evolving ideas of science, along with the ever-evolving constructs of our brains, or the unchanging God of the universe from whom all truth flows.

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33) Religion, through its systems of control and indoctrination, restricts personal freedom and thought. Atheism has escaped this prison, it alone fosters free thinking.

- a. **Details.** The implication is that atheism allows *free thinking*, whereas the thinking of the religious faithful is held prisoner to spiritual indoctrination. Atheism criticizes the rules of religion as stifling

scientific inquiry and personal autonomy, and endorsing misogyny along with a sentiment of in-group morality/out-group hostility.

- b. Christian Response.** If an atheist insists that they are “free” because they’re unencumbered by spiritual “shackles”, then what is he or she actually free to do? Theistic arguments given elsewhere strongly point to a lack of rationality, morality, and meaning if there is no benevolent God. Atheism pushes Christianity to take religious faith to its logical conclusions, hoping it will see the error of its ways and abandon them in an embrace of godlessness. However, there seems to be a keen lack of motivation for those in the fold of atheism to apply this challenge to their own beliefs – this may be due to a fear of being wrong, and/or an unsubstantiated optimism in being right. However, the “freedom” of atheism is an illusion, and this is inescapable. A godless existence, if it is “true”, ends in the trappings of a mindless grave. Jean-Paul Sartre, the famous French existential atheist of the 1950s and 60s, wrote a play entitled *No Exit*. He described life without God as being trapped in a kind of hell-like existence because it’s an “eternity” in the presence of other people who likewise have the same “moral” shackles [124]. If shrugging off moral accountability is the real freedom of atheism, then the atheist despot is the ultimate culmination of that perspective; Josef Stalin and Mao Zedong were morally accountable to no one. The weaker people within their regimes, which was pretty much everyone else, remained imprisoned by the despot’s unencumbered exercise of their own personal “ultimate freedom”.

The argument against true a freedom within atheism goes further with the oft repeated words of Richard Dawkins: “In a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won’t find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference... DNA neither knows nor cares. DNA just is. And we dance to its music” [74, pp. 132-3]. What true free-thinking do we have if our thoughts and behavior are determined by our genetic makeup, and more fundamentally by the random movements of the molecules within our brains?

To be *truly free*, both physical laws and objective moral laws are necessary. For example, if we are floating in outer space “unencumbered” by the force of gravity, we are not free to move anywhere; there is nothing to push off of. If we are free to move the goalposts of a soccer game anywhere we like, we are not free to play a real game of soccer game [80, p. 238]. We are simply not free to run red lights without disastrous consequences. We are simply not free to dispose with the rules of grammar without a loss of meaningful communication. *Freedom does not come for free*. It flourishes within the confines of set rules and boundaries. Christianity defines true freedom from a spiritual standpoint. It begins with the Trinitarian concept of God: three persons, one in being, who through distinctions and perfect morality enjoy perfect freedom towards a perfect relationship with each other. Mankind, who was created in God’s image, but had become ensnared in sin (immorality), is in need of the atoning work of Jesus Christ for the attainment of true freedom (Romans 6:20-21, John 8:34-36). In other words, true bondage is humanity’s enslavement to sin. It *separates the human race from God, which ironically, from an atheist perspective, is exactly the desired result*. True freedom is liberation from our sin so that we may be reunited in relationship with the reason for our existence, God Himself, the locus of true freedom.

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34) Great crimes have been committed in the name of Christianity throughout history, therefore it’s not a valid belief system. In fact, it’s dangerous and needs to be eradicated.

- a. Details.** Great evil has been done in the name of Christianity (and other religions), and is therefore an immoral belief system that should be eradicated. Since atheism is “not a belief system”, it is innocent of the crimes of the twentieth century, because no one commits crimes for not believing in

a god. Who would go to war for lack of belief in Zeus or Thor? Who would commit crimes for not believing in pink unicorns, orbiting back teapots, and flying spaghetti monsters?

- b. **Christian Response.** Christianity is a religion of peace *as defined by its doctrine and the person of Jesus Christ*. Those who commit violence in its name are actually *disobeying* Jesus Christ. Ironically, He was put on trial for inciting rebellion (terrorism) against the Roman Empire [118, p. 66]. It must be emphasized that He was publicly exonerated by the Roman authorities. “I find no grounds for charging this man” (Pontius Pilate – Luke 23:4, John 18:38, John 19:4). When it comes to evils done in the name of Christ, mankind is truly the problem, not Christianity. Mankind has generally not allowed the words of Christ to influence its identity and subsequent behavior, but instead has manipulated Christianity into an instrument of evil. Thus there is no real basis for eradicating Christian belief here. As John Lennox has said: “Getting rid of religion to rid the world of evil would be like getting rid of technology to rid the world of pollution, or getting rid of money to abolish greed”, and he’s repeated the sentiment in his writings [118, p. 118].

Furthermore, to compare the Christian God to created gods or fantastical, comical figures is an extremely crude caricature. *By definition*, God is a perfect being – eternally existent, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, omnibenevolent. There are none like Him.

Admittedly, people don’t really go to war or commit crimes in the *name of atheism*. *What really happens is that atheism eliminates ultimate moral accountability, which allows the evils of the human heart to lash out unchecked, so those with the most power are especially free to do whatever their evil hearts desire*. When despots commit evil, they are not disobeying a higher moral power, nor violating any objective moral law. Examples: Josef Stalin, Mao Zedong, Pol Pot (as influenced by Jean-Paul Sartre’s atheist philosophy), and Adolf Hitler as influenced by the atheist Nietzsche (politicized religion morphed into godlessness for war). The result was catastrophic economic collapses and well over 100 million people killed because of godlessness and its accompanying systems of communism and fascism [125, p. Stat. 2317]. It has been the costliest existential experiment in human history. Remember that from the perspective of atheism, these despots were dancing to their DNA, as Dawkins was forced to admit [74, pp. 132-3], and therefore in their *determinism* they could not be condemned for something they had no true decision in. And finally, from another perspective, evil done “in the name of religion” cannot be condemned, because without God there is no objective basis for a moral law, and therefore no reference point for objectively defining what “evil” is.

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35) The problem of evil and suffering in the world contradicts the Christian doctrine of a good and powerful God.

- a. **Details.** The concept of a loving and powerful God is incompatible with the deplorable moral state of the world. A good and powerful God would be both motivated and capable of ridding the world of evil and suffering, *and He would do something about it*. But everywhere we look, evil and suffering abound. Because of this contradiction, God does not exist.
- b. **Christian Response.** This is the thorniest and most potent objection to Christianity. However, all worldviews are faced with this weightiest of existential questions. The most concise Christian answer is that in His great love for humanity, God became one of us, and suffered all the evil and suffering this world had to offer. He did all of it to save the world out of its own evil and suffering, and into another world of complete joy. *So this present world may not be the best one, but it may very well be the best way to the best world* [126, p. 73]. It’s in this world that we make our moral decisions of where we want to spend eternity. Our focus therefore should not be on this world but in bringing the next world to this one. In other words, bring heaven to earth, just as Jesus did. This shows where we desire our eternal dwelling to be. And it is there that final justice will be administered by the perfect and impartial judge. All tears of this world He will wipe away (Revelation 21:1-5).

Within the perspective of atheism, the problem of “evil” and suffering doesn’t find any resolution. In fact, it gets much worse. Most people in this life will never get the justice their hearts desire. But it begs the question: “what exactly is the problem of evil and suffering if our behavior is determined?” To quote Richard Dawkins yet again: “some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won’t find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice... DNA neither knows nor cares, DNA just is, and we dance to its music” [74, pp. 132-3]. Determinism reduces our notions of morality, *and evil, and suffering*, to descriptions of the interactions of matter and energy – to the phenomena of the material universe, and nothing more. There are no prescriptions for human behavior; there’s no decisions we *ought* to make and things we *should* or *shouldn’t* do. Therefore, Mother Theresa didn’t do anything objectively good and Adolf Hitler didn’t do anything objectively bad. They had no choice.

Finally, science has determined that the universe is on a path towards inevitable heat death. This is understood from the second law of thermodynamics, from which we can conclude that the entire universe will eventually fall into a thermodynamic equilibrium [8, pp. loc. 1508-24]. Everything will be at the same extreme sub-zero temperature, and all energy will be in an unusable state. This definitely means that all life will be impossible. On atheism, there is no everlasting hope or future for the human race. There will be no ultimate justice because *all* ends in death, *everything will die*. It’s a complete cessation of consciousness, a return to cold, mindless matter. From that perspective, life in this short, temporal state is ultimately rendered meaningless.

For an in-depth look at the problem of evil and suffering from a Christian perspective, refer to the chapter “[God’s Answer to the Problem of Evil and Suffering](#)”.

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36) The God Delusion.

After reading and understanding the above arguments, get a copy of Richard Dawkins’ book *The God Delusion* to see how the arguments interact further.

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