

**APOLOGETICS II**  
The Content of Apologetics

[equipping]  
C E N T E R  
winter06

Host: Reid Monaghan  
Dates: January 16 - February 27  
(6 weeks, we will be off on Jan 30)



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## WELCOME

This class will serve as part two of an introduction to the theological discipline of Apologetics, the defense of the Christian faith. In Part I we looked at a way of life which integrates apologetics with communicating the gospel with those around us. In this class you need not be an expert philosopher or theologian to follow along, but we will all be challenged to think deeply, to care for others and to Love God with our minds. We will simply be asking God to stretch us and take us deeper in our understanding of His truth so that we might give it away generously with gentleness and respect.

This class has intentionally been segmented into two parts. The first class gave us a method of engaging with others, a framework for putting to use knowledge gained in the discipline of Apologetics. This class will give us the reasons and arguments for our faith that can be put to good use because we spent time building a framework in Apologetics I.

There will be recommended reading associated with some sessions that, well, we recommend you read. I have also included a glossary of terms to assist you with some of the lingo we may traverse together.

The Book *To Everyone an Answer* is a resource to help you grow in your effectiveness as an Ambassador for the gospel. We will not be using it directly as a text book, though I will make reference to it and assign readings from it from time to time.

Most importantly, I ask you to offer your heart and mind to our Lord Jesus Christ, that he may equip us for useful service in His Kingdom. The defense and articulation of our faith in our world is a task we do not undertake without His help, so I pray you beg of Him to lead us.

As in all of life, I ask you to pray that Christ might grant us power to bring glory to God as we mature in the faith and are equipped to give our lives away.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Reid S. Monaghan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Reid S. Monaghan  
January 16<sup>th</sup> 2006

## CLASS INTRODUCTION

Apologetics is properly defined as the defense of the faith against its detractors in the marketplace of ideas. As such it usually becomes a very broad interdisciplinary effort of engagement in the public sphere. It is primarily a discipline of theology, so it must necessarily grasp the core of the Christian faith. It must interact with other ideologies and worldviews so it must touch on philosophy, comparative religion, and the popular ideas in any given culture. In the West, apologetics must interact with secularism, scientism, and a consumerist culture of pride and possessions. In the East it must confront syncretism and pantheism. And in today's global culture, Apologetics may deal with just about anything and everything. Yet the goal in every context remains the same.

Broadly, Apologetics should be intimately connected with and subservient to presenting the beauty and truth of the Lord Jesus to those who desperately need Him. It involves commending the living Christ to others, helping them to see his cross in a way that is unencumbered by false perceptions, half-truths, deceptions, and misunderstandings. As Ravi Zacharias has noted, Apologetics can be understood as "clearing the bushes" so that a person might look at the cross of Christ. Apologetics should assist us in sharing the gospel of grace so that others have the opportunity to respond. The discipline of Apologetics should never merely be an intellectually tit for tat between a believer and an unbeliever. I should never be an unending argument going round and round on a carousel of pride. The desire of the apologist should be to connect with others. This will involve, listening, love and patience - so that she might communicate clearly (Colossians 4:2-6) the good news of God reconciling the world to Christ (2 Corinthians 5).

In this class I want to call us as believers to be apologists for the faith. This will require something of us. To be an apologist today's world requires a follower of Christ to possess at least three characteristics. He must be compassionate, he must be curious, and he must be a compelled. You can read more on these on Power of Change blog at:

<http://www.powerofchange.org/pocblog/2005/10/apologetics-in-contemporary-culture.html>

As we walk together in through this course, I want to pray that we would be humble people who are, compassionate, curious, and compelled by the love of God demonstrated in Christ.

This class will touch apologetics by first looking at reasons for belief in the pillars of the Christian worldview. The indispensable pillars are the Scriptures as revelation from God, the existence of the God of the Bible, and the uniqueness and deity of the person of Jesus Christ. The second half of the course will look at some major competitors to the Christian view in our day. In this course material you will find both class notes and supplemental readings. I have chosen to provide you most of my notes so that your time can be spent interacting with the class material rather than filling in blanks or scribbling down an outline.

Before we begin I want to offer the following prayer for all of us.

### AN APOLOGIST'S PRAYER

Father in Heaven, thank you for revealing yourself to us and demonstrating your love for us in Christ. As we study your truth keep me from becoming puffed up in knowledge. Guide our hands that we would love others with grace as we share with them the reason for the hope that we have. May others see Jesus and his cross as the result of our study in Apologetics. May it never be that we become full of pride and arrogance because of our studies, but ever humble us and give us compassion for those in great need of grace and mercy found abundantly at your cross.

## SESSION I – TRUTH AND REVELATION

### TRUTH IS ESSENTIAL

Over the next few weeks we will be walking together looking in the way of Apologetics, the defense of the Christian faith. In Apologetics I, we defined Apologetics as *defending the core of the Christian faith*.

At the core of our faith is a person, the person of God, who needs no defense. Yet this God has defined and disclosed himself to us and we are to believe the truth of who he is, what he has done for people, and his plans for the Universe. So in Apologetics, truth is of utmost importance.

In every age, people have lifted up arguments against the knowledge of God. Many times these arguments and beliefs hinder people from hearing the gospel. So the task of the Apologist is to discern the arguments set against the essential truths of the gospel (the core) and provide counter arguments. As we begin let me ask you a question in three ways.

#### Three Very Similar Questions

- What do you think of when you hear the word truth?
- What does the word truth mean?
- What do we mean when we say something is true?

### WHAT TRUTH IS NOT

The following are all tests for “falsehood” yet are incomplete as views of truth

**Coherentism** – Truth is what is coherent within a system of beliefs

Statements like “I can’t write a word in English” are incoherent and should be regarded as false. Yet the simple fact that something is coherent does not make something true.

Example: **Star Wars**

*A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, the evil Galactic Empire was secretly planning to build a Death Star.*

So if you lived within the Star Wars movies, this would be true. It does not contradict other beliefs you know and is coherent. There is only one problem. We do not live within the Star Wars movies and the statement is only true IF:

*A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, the evil Galactic Empire **WAS** secretly planning to build a Death Star.*

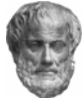
**Pragmatism** – Truth is what is socially useful. Truth is what works

Problem: To really determine what works one needs a very wide frame of reference and an infinite amount of time. One may say that witchcraft works. Or certain lifestyles “work” for people. But in time and in the light of reality, even ultimate reality, we do not know whether something really works without knowing if the belief is true.

### WHAT TRUTH IS

**Truth is Correspondence – what corresponds to reality**

**Correspondence Theory of Truth:** Most natural and widely held view of propositional truth, which holds that a proposition is true if it corresponds to or agrees with reality. The core of the correspondence theory of truth is the commonsense notion that the truth or falsity of a proposition is determined by an independent reality. Thus this view of truth is linked to metaphysical realism.<sup>1</sup>



To say of what is not that it is or of what is that it is not - **IS FALSE**. To say of what is that it is or what is not that it is not - **IS TRUE**.

*Aristotle*

### **A SHORT DEFINITION**

Truth is stating things as they are – it is the actual way the world is, where something is believed that **corresponds to reality**. Truth is telling it like it is...Truth is God's Nature...who tells it like it is.<sup>2</sup>

## **A CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF TRUTH – REVELATION FROM GOD**

We believe that all truth is derivative from God and his nature. We believe that truth is available to all because God has revealed it to us and given us the faculties to understand it. Christian theology holds that Truth is revealed to us in two ways.

### **NATURAL REVELATION**

*In the Created World*

- Psalm 19:1-6, Romans 1:18-32, Acts 14:16-18

*In Conscience*

- Romans 2:14-15 – the law written on the heart

### **SPECIAL REVELATION**

Although we know something of God through nature and conscience, we do not know God through these means. God has taken the initiative to speak truth to us in very unique ways. It is through special revelation that we understand who God is and what his plans are for this world. When Christians say “Special Revelation” we mean two things: the incarnate Word and the Written Word; Jesus Christ and the Holy Bible.

We will focus on Jesus in another session, so today we will focus on the Bible. The Bible claims to be divinely inspired and gives evidence of this that we can see.

## **WHY WE BELIEVE THE BIBLE TO BE THE WORD OF GOD**

God has spoken to us in the Scriptures which record God's dealings with mankind and God's plans for the world he created. The Bible contains truth about God, his guidance and practical wisdom, as well as a rebuke and correction for our lives. In the Bible we encounter the living God and his Word to us. (Hebrews 4:12)

Yet the question arises. How do we *know* that the Bible is the Word of God? What makes it different from other holy books and contenders to be a word from God?

We will approach the subject in three ways. First, what does the Bible claim for itself? Second, do the Scriptures show themselves to live up to its claims? Finally, we will look at the existential and spiritual impact of the Bible upon our lives.

## 1 – THE INTERNAL TESTIMONY OF THE BIBLE

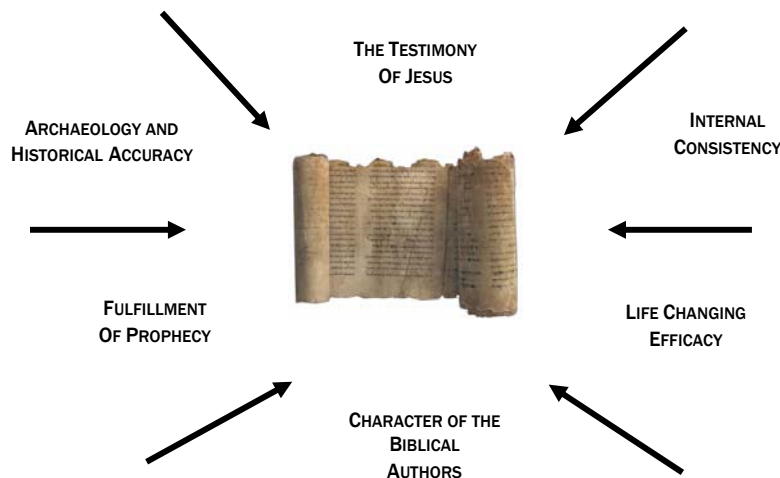
**The Old Testament** – Exodus 24:1-4 and Jeremiah 30:1, 2

What is written down by Moses and Jeremiah? The very words of God are written down by these two prophets.

**The New Testament** – Read 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:20,21

The Bible is “*Theopneustos*” or God Breathed...inspired by God. That it is not simply a human book, but a book which came forth from the Holy Spirit. In 2 Peter the word “*Phero*” means to be moved along or picked up and carried by the Holy Spirit – the Prophets of God were moved inwardly, prompted by the Holy Spirit to write what they did. The evangelical view of inspiration is not a robotic, controlled dictation, but God working through the lives, writing styles etc, of men he used to bring forth his Word.

## 2 – THE EXTERNAL CORROBORATION OF THE BIBLE



- Internal Consistency – Truth is not Contradictory
- Historical Accuracy – Truth Is What Really Happened (What was Said and Done)

The life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus is accurately recorded in the New Testament

- The New Testament Records Eyewitness Accounts – Read Luke 1:1-4 and 2 Peter 1:12-19
- The Author’s of the New Testament had a high standard for truth and integrity and intended to record accurately. Look at a few of the things these people believed
  - Old Testament—Exodus 20:16, Psalm 15:2
  - New Testament—Ephesians 4:25, Revelation 22:15
- The New Testament was written very close to actual events; too close for legendary development
  - Acts/Luke dating of the gospel tradition
- We have what was written

Table 1 - New Testament Manuscript Evidence<sup>3</sup>

| Author and Work         | Date Written | Earliest Copy | Time Span | Copies/Fragments |
|-------------------------|--------------|---------------|-----------|------------------|
| Caesar (The Galic Wars) | 100-44 BC    | AD 900        | 1,000yrs  | 10               |
| Plato (Tetralogies)     | 427-347 BC   | AD 900        | 1,200yrs  | 7                |
| Thucydides (Historian)  | 460-400 BC   | AD 900        | 1300yrs   | 8                |
| Tacitus (Annals)        | AD 100       | AD 1100       | 1000yrs   | 20               |
| Homer (Iliad)           | 900BC        | 400 BC        | 500yrs    | 643              |
| New Testament           | AD 40-100    | AD 125        | 25-50yrs  | over 24,000      |

### 3 – EXISTENTIAL TESTIMONY TO THE WORD OF GOD

#### SELF ATTESTING NATURE

##### Two confessions of faith

*The Scriptures manifest themselves to be the Word of God, by their majesty and purity; by the consent of all the parts, and the scope of the whole, which is to give all glory to God; by their light and power to convince and convert sinners, to comfort and build up believers unto salvation: but the Spirit of God bearing witness by and with the Scriptures in the heart of man, is alone able fully to persuade it that they are the very Word of God.<sup>4</sup>*

*The Bible evidences itself to be God's Word by the heavenliness of its doctrine, the unity of its parts, and its power to convert sinners and to edify saints. But only the Spirit of God can make us willing to agree and submit to the Bible as the Word of God.<sup>5</sup>*

#### THE WORD TRANSFORMS LIVES

Throughout all ages one thing has been constant. As people read and study the Bible, they report of the God written about therein speaking to them and transforming their lives. Wherever the Bible has gone, literacy, medicine, humanitarian aid, and wide spread education have followed. The influence of God's Word on this world has been astounding. The author attests that God has changed his life, through this life giving Word.

##### Psalm 19:7-11 and 2 Timothy 3:14-17

The Word of God provides wisdom for life, joy to the heart, and light to the eyes – teaching, reproof/rebuke, correction, and training in righteousness.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Evans, C. Stephen. Pocket Dictionary of Apologetics & Philosophy of Religion, Page 28. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> For two good introductions on the correspondence theory of truth and evaluations of *coherentism*, *pragmatism*, *utility*, see Norman L. Geisler, "Why I Believe Truth is Real and Knowable" in Norman L. Geisler and Paul K. Hoffman, *Why I am a Christian* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001) and Douglas Groothuis, "Truth Defined and Defended" in Millard J. Erickson, Paul Kjoss Helseth, Justin Taylor, *Reclaiming the Center – Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times*, (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> McDowell, Josh and Wilson, Bill A Ready Defense, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993. Adapted from table on page 45.

<sup>4</sup> The Westminster Larger Catechism, Answer Question 4

<sup>5</sup> A Baptist Catechism, Available online from Desiring God Ministries - [http://www.desiringgod.org/library/what\\_we\\_believe/catechism.html](http://www.desiringgod.org/library/what_we_believe/catechism.html)



## SESSION II – THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

### INTRODUCTION...

#### Video – Does God Exist?

#### GOD IS KNOWN...



**Truly there is a God**, although the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. AND so, Lord, do thou, who dost give understanding to faith, give me, so far as thou knowest it to be profitable, to understand that thou art as we believe; and that thou art that which we believe.<sup>1</sup>

*Knowledge of God belongs to us already; these arguments are not its source, but only responses to objections.*<sup>2</sup>

#### A SENSE OF THE DIVINE

##### *Imago Dei and the Sensus divinitatis*

*We recognize immediately that nature requires an explanation beyond itself, that the things in nature are designed, that design requires personal agency...Not only has he designed us to know about Him, but He has designed us to long for Him, to reverence Him, and to adore Him...The best explanation for the **sensus divinitatis** is that we were designed by Divinity to have it.*<sup>3</sup>

#### SIN'S SUPPRESSION OF TRUTH

The fool **says in his heart**, "There is no God." They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good.

*Psalms 14:1*

*The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men **who suppress the truth by their wickedness**, since what may be known about God is **plain to them**, because God has **made it plain to them**. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*

*Romans 1:18-20*

#### THE ROLE OF CONFIRMING EVIDENCES

Some have an aversion to the word "prove" when talking about the existence of God. Therefore we will use the term "confirming" evidences when giving reasons for belief in the existence of God.

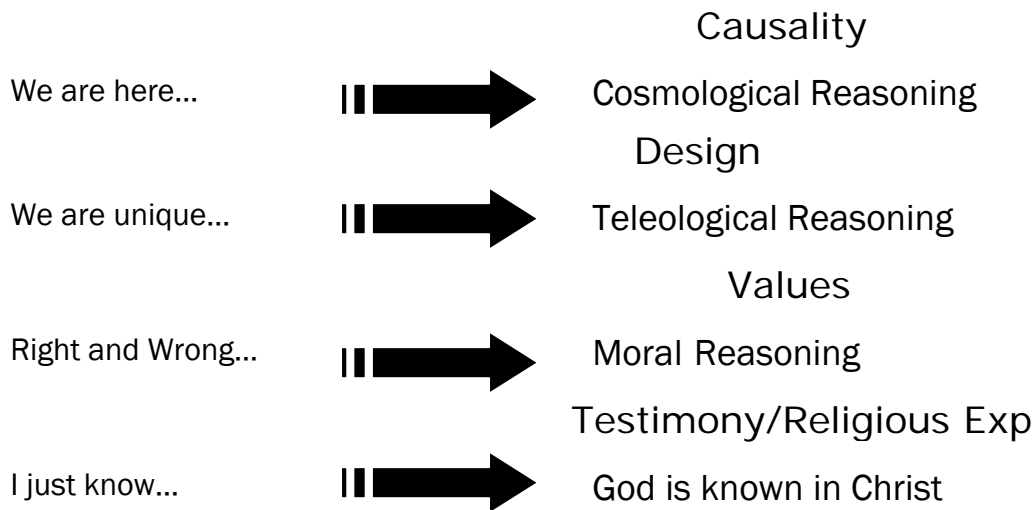
**Prove:** to **establish** the existence, truth, or validity of (as by evidence or logic) <prove a theorem> <the charges were never *proved* in court>



We do not **establish** God's existence, we only exist because He exists...we do however seek to rationally demonstrate this truth to others.

**Confirm:** to give new **assurance** of the validity of: remove doubt about by authoritative act or indisputable fact.<sup>4</sup>

## WHY DO YOU BELIEVE GOD IS REAL?



## COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS

- Reasoning from observable effects to their proper **cause**
- Comes in Several **Flavors**
- A Common Format
  - Everything of type X has a **cause**.
  - There is **something** of type X.
  - For some reason (namely, Y), the series of causes of an X must terminate in a **first cause**.
  - This first cause can be identified with **God**.<sup>5</sup>

### TWO MAIN FORMS OF COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS

- Horizontal Cosmological Argument
  - Seeks the Cause for the Beginning
  - The **Originating Cause**
  - How the Universe **Came to Be**
- Vertical Cosmological Argument
  - Reasons from the **Being of the Universe** as it is now
  - The **Sustaining Cause**
  - How the Universe **Continues to Be**

### A HORIZONTAL ARGUMENT – FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE UNIVERSE

The **Kalam** (Arabic: “eternal”) argument is a horizontal (linear) form of the cosmological argument. The universe is not eternal, so it must have had a Cause. That Cause must be considered God. This argument has a long and venerable history among such Islamic philosophers as Alfarabi , Al Ghazli, and Avicenna . Some scholastic philosophers also used it, especially Bonaventure.<sup>6</sup>

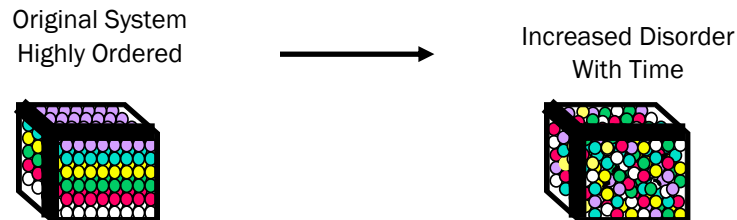
The Kalam Argument

1. If anything **begins** to exist, it must have a **cause**
2. The **Universe** began to Exist
  - a. Scientific Support
  - b. Philosophical Support
3. The **Universe** must have a **Cause**
  - a. This cause would itself be an uncaused, personal Creator who sans creation is without beginning, changeless, immaterial, timeless, spaceless, and enormously powerful and intelligent.

#### Scientific Support for the Beginning of the Universe

- Second Law of Thermodynamics – The Universe is running out of usable energy.

The second law of thermodynamics is a whole other story. It can be stated: “In a closed, isolated system, the amount of usable energy in the universe is decreasing.” It is being changed, the *dynamics* part of *thermodynamics*, into unusable heat energy, the *thermo* part. Notice that this law does not infringe on the First Law; it amplifies on it. If energy is constant, why do we keep needing more electricity? The answer is that *entropy* happens. The second law states that “overall, things left to themselves tend to disorder.” Overall, the amount of disorder is increasing. The entropy—that is, the disorder—of an isolated system can never decrease. When an isolated system achieves maximum entropy, it can no longer undergo change: It has reached equilibrium. We would say it has “run down.”<sup>7</sup>



- The Universe is Expanding

#### Philosophical Support for the Beginning of the Universe

- Actual Infinities are **Nonexistent**
  - Infinities in the real world?
    - Library Illustration
    - Rotation of the Sun and Moon – St. Bonaventure
- It is **impossible** to traverse an actual infinite by successive addition
  - Like jumping out of a bottomless pit?
    - Ready, Set, Count to Infinity!
    - Traversing an actual infinite of events in time.

If the universe had a beginning, then it must have a cause. The evidence leaves us with the following two options.

- i. No one created something out of nothing
  - Atheistic View – Sometimes the terms mater accretion or spontaneous **generation** are used
- ii. Someone created something out of nothing
  - Theistic View – God created the Universe

#### STRENGTH AND WEAKNESSES OF KALAM ARGUMENT

- Strengths
  - Establishes Creator and many attributes of the Biblical God.
  - Two distinct lines of evidence is support of minor premise.
- Weaknesses
  - It does not exclude Deism – i.e. that God is not active in sustaining the world. Usually this would have to come from other forms of the cosmological argument.

#### A GOOD DOUBLE TEAM

*There is an interdependency between the cosmological argument (the argument to a first cause) and the design argument (the argument to a cosmic designer/creator). The two arguments are much stronger in tandem than they are when taken individually.*

*...a common and serious objection to the design argument is the threat of an infinite regress. The world is highly organized, so we infer a designer. But, every intelligent designer we know (i.e., human beings) are themselves highly organized systems. So, it seems that we need to infer a designer of the designer, and so on to infinity.*

*Secondly, the results of the cosmological and design arguments are complementary. As we shall see, the cosmological argument gives us good reason to infer that the first cause has such characteristics as eternity, infinity, unity and necessity. It gives us much weaker reasons, if any, for thinking that the first cause is personal, intelligent or purposeful. In contrast, the design argument gives us good reason to attribute intelligence and purpose to the creator, but it gives us little reason for assuming that the creator is eternal or infinite. Each argument tends to make up the deficiencies of the other.<sup>8</sup>*

#### THE RESURGENT DESIGN ARGUMENT

*“In crossing a heath, suppose I pitched my foot against a stone and was asked how the stone came to be there, I might possibly answer that for anything I knew to the contrary it had lain there forever . . .” But “suppose I had found a watch upon the ground, and it should be inquired how the watch happened to be in that place, I should hardly think of the answer which I had given before, that for anything I knew the watch might have always been there.” He asks, “why is it not as admissible in the second case as in the first? For this reason, and for no other, namely, that when we come to inspect the watch, we perceive—what we could not discover in the stone—that its several parts are framed and put together for a purpose.”<sup>9</sup>*



#### A SIMPLE DESIGN ARGUMENT

1. If something is designed it has a designer.
2. Irreducible Complexity and Specified Complexity are Evidence of Intelligent Design.
3. Life exhibits both irreducible complexity and specified complexity.

4. Life therefore shows evidence of design.
5. Therefore Life requires a designer.

#### CONTEMPORARY INTELLIGENT DESIGN MOVEMENT

#### AN ARGUMENT FROM THE MORAL LAW

1. If God does not exist, objective moral values do not exist
2. Objective Moral Values Do Exist
3. Therefore God Exists

**Note:** If P = God does not exist and Q = Objective Moral Values do not Exist, the preceding takes the form of a valid Modus Tollens argument.

$P \rightarrow Q$   
 $\neg Q$   
 $\therefore \neg P$

\*\* The conclusion of the argument is NOT (God does not exist) = God exists. <sup>10</sup>

#### PREMISE 1 – MORAL REALISM AND GOD

- Most will quickly agree that without God moral values are relative.
  - Most would say they are **culturally** relative, not **person** relative. Do not create a **straw man** here.
- If one is attempting an **atheistic objectivism**, we lay the following task at her feet:
  - Show how moral values “just exist” in matter – How is matter “good” or “just” ...
  - Show how moral values “just exist” independent of human brains (opinions in people’s minds).
  - Even if this could be possible the atheist is unable to explain the **prescriptive** nature of morality or that of moral **duty**. There are some things one **ought** to do and **ought** not to do.

#### PREMISE 2 – THE EXISTENCE OF OBJECTIVE MORAL VALUES

##### Important Definition

*By objective moral values we mean things that are right or wrong whether anyone believes them to be or not. A good illustration would be that the Holocaust was wrong even if the Nazis had won the Second World War and brainwashed everyone to believe that it was right. These values exist apart from human belief or agreement.*

- How do you know who is right and who is wrong?



- CS Lewis on the Moral Law

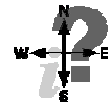
*{As an atheist} my argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea*



of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust?

The moment you say that one set of moral ideas can be better than another, you are, in fact, measuring them both by a standard, saying that one of them conforms to that standard more nearly than the other. But the standard that measures two things is something different from either.<sup>11</sup>

- Relativism's Fatal Flaws
  - Relativists cannot **accuse others of being wrong**
  - Relativists cannot **complain about the problem of evil**
  - Relativists cannot **accept praise or assign blame**
  - Relativists cannot **make charges of unfairness or injustice**
  - Relativists cannot **improve morally**
  - Relativists cannot **hold meaningful moral discussions**
  - Relativists cannot **promote the obligation of tolerance**<sup>12</sup>
  
- Not Objectively Wrong?
  - The Holocaust?
  - Western Slavery of Africans?
  - Wilberforce, King et al –  
 appealed to the moral law in abolishing  
 slavery and advocating civil rights
  - Oppression of Women OK for some cultures?



#### CONCLUSION – GOD IS THE SOURCE OF THE MORAL LAW

- If there is such a thing as evil it assumes there is such a thing as good.
- If there is good and evil one must assume you may adjudicate between them.
- This assumes a moral law by which one can differentiate between good and evil.
- All law has a law-giver.
- God is the giver of the moral law.

#### GOD IS EXPERIENCED DIRECTLY

- God can and does **Reveal** Himself
  - **Jesus** claimed to be God
  - God can be known personally and directly through Jesus Christ
    - Your Personal **Testimony** – Ask someone to “explain away” your testimony – they will usually pull out some Freudian nonsense to do so – very uncharitable.
  
- Belief in God Properly Basic? If you are into Epistemology...see the works by Alvin Plantinga

#### FINDING GOD IN YOUR QUESTIONS

- **Injustice**, Evil?
- Why do mean people Suck?
- **Longing** for a **better** world?
- Nobody is **Perfect**
  - How do you know?
  - I don't even live up to my own standards – why is that bad? Why is there guilt self-condemnation?
- **Loneliness** is a Bad Place to Live – Am I made in my very essence for relationship?

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> From St. Anselm of Canterbury, The Proslogium

<sup>2</sup> J. Budziszewski, *What We Can't Not Know – A Guide*, (Dallas: TX, Spence Publishing, 2003) 84

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 84, 85.

<sup>4</sup> Definitions from Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary copyright © 2002 by Merriam-Webster, Incorporated

<sup>5</sup> Robert Koons, Class Lecture, Western Theism - Introduction to the Cosmological Argument – available online at

<http://www.leaderu.com/offices/koons/docs/lec2.html>

<sup>6</sup> Geisler, N. L. *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*. Baker reference library. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1999. Page 399.

<sup>7</sup> Geisler, N. L. *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*. Baker reference library. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1999) 724.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>9</sup> William Paley, *Natural Theology*

<sup>10</sup> William Lane Craig has developed this argument in several places – see *Why I am a Christian—Leading Thinkers Explain Why They Believe* edited by Norman Geisler and Paul Hoffman. Chapter 4 Why I Believe God Exists

<sup>11</sup> C.S. Lewis *Mere Christianity*, 25.

<sup>12</sup> This list is taken from *Relativism: Feet Firmly Planted in Mid-Air* by Francis Beckwith and Gregory Koukl.

## SESSION III – JESUS, THE SON OF GOD

### INTRODUCTION

More than anything else the Christian faith orbits the enormous reality of one person; the person of Jesus Christ. Knowing who he is, what he has done, and what he teaches us are the central issues of our Faith. The entire Bible is centered on this person. If we get Jesus wrong, we will have no hope to offer others and we ourselves will be hopelessly lost.

When God desired to reveal himself to human beings, he could have done so in an unimaginable number of ways. But God, in his mercy and grace, revealed himself to us in the most understandable way — he became a man so that we could see what God is really like. Jesus was given the name, Immanuel, which means God with us. God did not send an interactive CD-ROM, call a press conference, or launch a podcast in order to make himself known; He came in such a way that we would see his beauty, goodness, power, holiness, justice and love. He walked among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the one and only sent from the Father full of grace and truth.

Jonathan Edwards once remarked that Jesus was *an admirable conjunction of diverse excellences*;<sup>1</sup> there indeed has never been a person so unique both loved and hated throughout history. So now as once remarked from the Samaritan woman of old we will accept the invitation to “Come see a man.”

In our apologetic, we desire to establish that the witness of the New Testament to the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus is reliable. At the very minimum we desire to invite a friend to give the New Testament testimony to Jesus a fair hearing. From this point we look directly at what the scripture says about Jesus.

### JESUS WAS UNIQUELY GOD AND MAN

Orthodox Christianity, from the council of Chalcedon (AD 451) onward, has clearly taught both the full humanity and full deity of Jesus Christ. He is unique as the only god-man to ever live.

#### HIS HUMANITY

- The Bible teaches that Jesus was born of a **woman** who was a **virgin** – Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:35; Galatians 4:4
- He “**grew in wisdom and stature...**” – Luke 2:40, 52
- He possessed a soul – Matthew 26:38
- He **grew thirsty and tired** – John 4:6-7 and 19:28
- He has joined himself to human nature **forever** – Acts 1:11 and Philippians 3:21

#### HIS DEITY

- His **deity** (Godhood) is clearly taught in John 1:1, John 8:58, 10:30, and 14:9; Philippians 2:6
- He is called “**God**” – Titus 2:13, Romans 9:5 and 2 Peter 1:1
- He has divine titles: “**Lord**” (Philippians 2:9-11); “**Holy One**” (Acts 3:14); “**First and Last**” (Revelation 22:13)
- Divine **attributes** are seen in Him...Matthew 18:20, Mark 2:1-7, John 17:5
- He was **without sin** – John 8:46; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15, 7:26-27
- He received **worship**: – John 20:28; 5:23; Rev 5:11-14 “**My Lord and my God!**”

### THE TITLES OF JESUS

#### SON OF GOD

The title of Jesus — **Son of God** — indicates his divinity — only Jesus fully reveals the Father, is the exact representation of his being, and was with the Father before the foundation of the world.



Son of a dog, is a dog, son of an ape an ape, son of God, is God — Jews were Monotheistic, only one God—Son of God is the divine title of Jesus and everyone at his time understood this title to mean just that.<sup>2</sup>

## SON OF MAN

**Son of Man** indicates his humanity, that God has **taken on** a human nature in the Christ...the incarnate Son of God. God did not **become a human**, as God does not, and cannot change, but Jesus the Son of God, **took on** a human nature along with his divine nature.

### Example – Pristine New Jeep

Additionally, Son of Man is also a reference to Jesus as the Divine Son of Man referred to in Daniel Chapter 7. This title represents the perfection of humanity in the person of Jesus in contrast to the sinful nature of humanity in Adam.<sup>3</sup> This title is used 13 times in Mark's gospel alone.

The important thing to note is that Jesus' own self-understanding was that he was one with the Father and claimed clearly to be the Son of God.

## IMPLICATIONS OF HIS CLAIMS

*I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon and you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.<sup>4</sup>*

C.S. Lewis' argument is appropriately applied here. Jesus gives us three and only three options:<sup>5</sup>

1. Jesus claimed to be God and knew it to be false → Liar
2. Jesus claimed to be God, believed it, but his claims were false → Lunatic
3. Jesus claimed to be God, believed it, and it was true → Lord

## THE RESURRECTION OF THE SON OF GOD – A VINDICATION IN HISTORY

Perhaps nothing else vindicates the truth of Jesus' identity than his own resurrection from the dead. Prophets teach and gurus enlighten yet only one person has lived to escape the grip of death and return from the grave.

### DISCUSSING THE RESURRECTION WITH OUR FRIENDS

#### The Resurrection is Central to the Christian Gospel

<sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. <sup>6</sup> Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup> Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. <sup>8</sup> Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

1 Corinthians 15:3-8

<sup>14</sup> And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. <sup>15</sup> We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. <sup>16</sup> For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. <sup>17</sup> And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

1 Corinthians 15:14-17

## The Death and Burial of the Son of God

*Motive – What Got Jesus Killed?*

Some would say that Jesus was a “good teacher” and just an overall swell guy. Yet there is one King Kong sized fact that contradicts the “Jesus the nice guy” theory; Christ was hated, despised and brutally executed. In all cases dealing with killing, we need to determine **motive**.

What could have been the motive to kill a simple, peaceful Galilean peasant?

- There was Jewish motive – fear of losing allegiance of the people
- There was Roman political motive – keeping the peace by removing the problem.

Paul Maier, historian who wrote *The First Easter*, notes that many uprisings prior to Christ had already been subdued by force and another rebellion under Jesus would have possibly led to direct occupation by Roman Legions.

Motive firmly established → Christ’s following brought the threat of eventual revolution, and both the Jewish religious authorities and the Roman political authorities feared an uprising.

*Death by Crucifixion*

*“Among the torturous penalties noted in the literature of antiquity, crucifixion was particularly heinous. The act itself damaged no vital organs, nor did it result in excessive bleeding. Hence, death came slowly, sometimes after several days, through shock or a painful process of asphyxiation as the muscles used in breathing suffered increasing fatigue. Often, as a further disgrace, the person was denied burial and the body was left on the cross to serve as carrion for the birds or to rot.*

*Crucifixion was quintessentially a public affair. Naked and affixed to a stake, cross or tree, the victim was subjected to savage ridicule by frequent passers-by, while the general populace was given a grim reminder of the fate of those who assert themselves against the authority of the state.”<sup>6</sup>*

The victim was placed on a beam with spikes driven into his wrists and ankles, beam lifted up and dropped into a hole, usually dislocating the shoulders – forced to push up from legs to keep from suffocating (why legs were often broken) and eventually the lungs would collapse and the person would die of asphyxiation.

## The Burial of the Son of God

*In all four Gospels the man who steps forth to bury Jesus’ body is Joseph of Arimathea. As a member of the Sanhedrin, Joseph was undoubtedly a resident of Jerusalem at this time, but he was born and had lived previously in the Judean village of Arimathea.*

*Joseph is described in both Mk. 15:43 and Lk. 23:50f as being a member of the Sanhedrin, although he did not consent to their plot and action against Jesus. He was a rich man (Mt. 27:57) with good social standing (Mk. 15:43). His wealth is shown by the fact that he possessed a new*

tomb freshly cut out of stone. This undoubtedly indicates that he had made a permanent move from Arimathea to Jerusalem and expected to use this new tomb for his family burial plot in his new city. All four Gospels agree that Joseph became a disciple of Jesus, although John emphasizes that this was done secretly (Jn. 19:38). John seems to indicate that there were many such disciples (12:42). Mk. 15:43 and Lk. 23:51 disclose that he was “expecting the kingdom of God,” thus indicating that he expected the Kingdom to come through Jesus. In addition, Luke stresses that he was a good and just man (Lk. 23:50). His desire to bury the dead despite personal risk shows that he was a pious Jew.<sup>7</sup>

## The New Testament Accounts of the Resurrection

Table 1 – The Order of the Twelve Appearances of Christ<sup>8</sup>

|  | PERSONS                                      | SAW | HEARD | TOUCHED | OTHER                     |
|--|--|-----|-------|---------|---------------------------|
| 1.   | Mary (John 20:10-18)                         | X   | X     | X       | Empty tomb                |
| 2.   | Mary & Woman (Mt. 28:1-10)                   | X   | X     | X       | Empty tomb                |
| 3.   | Peter (1 Cor. 15:5) & John (John, 20:1-10)   | X   | X     |         | Empty tomb, Grave clothes |
| 4.   | Two Disciples (Luke 24:13-35)                | X   | X     |         | Ate with him              |
| 5.   | Ten Apostles (Luke, 24:36-49; John 20:19-23) | X   | X     | X*      | Saw wounds, Ate food      |
| 6.   | Eleven Apostles (John 20:24-31)              | X   | X     | X*      | Saw wounds                |
| 7.   | Seven Apostles (John 21)                     | X   | X     |         | Ate food                  |
| 8.   | All Apostles (Mt. 28:16-20; Mk 16:14-18)     | X   | X     |         |                           |
| 9.   | 500 Brethren (1 Cor. 15:6)                   | X   | X**   |         |                           |
| 10.  | James (1 Cor. 15:7)                          | X   | X**   |         |                           |
| 11.  | All Apostles (Acts 1:4-8)                    | X   | X     |         | Ate with Him              |
| 12.  | Paul (Acts 9:1-9; 1 Cor. 15:8)               | X   | X     |         |                           |
| *Offered himself to be touched<br>** implied from text |  |     |       |         |                           |

## A Summary of What is Known about the Circumstances Surrounding the Death of Jesus

1. Jesus *died* due to the rigors of Roman crucifixion.
2. Jesus was *buried* in a tomb by Joseph of Arimathea.
3. His disciples *doubted* and *despaired* because Jesus' death challenged their hopes.
4. The tomb in which Jesus had been buried was discovered to be empty by *some of his woman followers* just a few days later.
5. The disciples had real experiences that *they believed* were actual appearances of the risen Jesus.
6. The disciples were *transformed* and were even *willing to die* for the truth of these events.
7. This gospel message was at the *very center of Christian preaching* in the early church.
8. The gospel and the resurrection were even *proclaimed in Jerusalem*, the same city where Jesus had died.
9. The *Christian church* was established by these disciples.
10. The primary day of worship was changed from Saturday (the 7<sup>th</sup> day) to *Sunday* (the first day of the week) the day Jesus was reported to have risen.
11. James, a skeptical brother of Jesus, was converted when he believed he saw the resurrected Jesus.
12. Paul, who was a leader in persecuting Christians, was radically changed by an experience which he firmly believed to be the risen Jesus.

## INFERENCE TO THE BEST EXPLANATION

In light of the knowledge we have of the events surrounding the person of Christ, his death and the events that followed, we must ask ourselves what would adequately explain all the relevant information. We will hold that the best explanation is that “God raised Jesus from the Dead.” Before we get to this, let us look at the competing explanations that have been offered over the course of time.

### Swoon Theory

Jesus did not actually die on the cross, he just fainted or swooned, was later revived and appeared to the disciples.

- Flogged within a breath of His life
- Spikes driven through His hands and feet
- Spear thrust into His side
- Remained perfectly still w/o breathing while being prepared for burial and handled for over two hours
- Wrapped in yards of linen clothe with over 100 pounds of cement between the layers.
- Placed in a solid rock tomb for two days w/o food or water.

Even after all this, he regains consciousness, sits up, burst out of his burial clothes, bumps a 2 ton rock out of the way w/o disturbing the Roman soldiers and comes claims **victory over death** to His followers.

It takes much more faith to believe this than the resurrection!

### Delusions and Hallucination

Jesus' follows had high psychological expectations and perhaps hallucinated in seeing visions of the risen Christ.

- 100's had the same hallucination at the same time
- Can you touch hallucinations, do they have scars, do they eat?
- What happened to Jesus' body?
- Where did Jesus get His new spiritual body?
- The later appearance to Paul?
- The long (40 days) and numerous (12) appearances of Christ.
- How He could appear to those aware of His death. (When not being aware is the key of this psychological condition)

### Stolen Body

This is the story recorded in the New Testament and still maintained by orthodox Jewish believers to this day.

- It is contrary to their known character
- It is contrary to their willingness to die for their belief in the resurrection.
- It is contrary to their belief that this was the center of their faith.
- It is contrary to the fact that no one ever recanted in spite of the fact that they would have been prime candidates, given their persecution.
- It is contrary to the conversions of James and Paul, who would never have been convinced to defect to Christianity on such a basis

## Legendary Fabrication

Jesus' followers invented the story in order to create and propagate their new religion.

- Women – not a good story to tell in the ancient world
- Sunday Gathering – Sabbath tradition – old and consistent for religious Jewish people – a switch was made instantly in the early church.

## God raised Jesus from the Dead

- In the context of the existence of God, the claims of Jesus for himself, the events surrounding his death, burial and the relevant post death historical data, we think this is the best explanation.

## WHAT THE RESURRECTION MEANS

20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23

1. The centrality of the resurrection of Jesus to the gospel message – our justification vindicated
2. The significance of Jesus' resurrection in relation to our own – we too shall rise
3. The nature of the resurrection body – in bodies incorruptible
4. The eschatological hope of the resurrection – we have an eternal hope
5. The triumph and ultimate defeat of death is demonstrated by the resurrection – Amen!

*O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"*

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Edwards, "The Excellency of Christ" in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh; The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), p. 680.

<sup>2</sup> For a defense of the doctrine that Jesus is the Son of God see Geisler and Hoffman *Why I am a Christian*, Part 5, Chapter 13—Peter Kreeft *Why I believe Jesus is the Son of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001) 222-234.

<sup>3</sup> See Ben Witherington III, "The Christology of Jesus Revisited" in Francis Beckwith, William Lane Craig, JP Moreland, *To Everyone an Answer – The Case for the Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2004) 155.

<sup>4</sup> CS Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Book 2, Ch 3.

<sup>5</sup> It is noted that Lord, Liar, Lunatic is not exhaustive. The gospel accounts could be "Legendary" – if one has this objection we should continue in biblical apologetics to help our friend to understand the time frame between the actual events and the writing of the New Testament does not provide time for legendary developments.

<sup>6</sup> "The Death of Jesus – Crucifixion in the Ancient World" Green, Joel B., Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall. *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992) 147.

<sup>7</sup> Bromiley, Geoffrey W. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised*, Vol. 2, Page 1131, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988; 2002.

<sup>8</sup> A version of a table compiled by Norman L. Geisler, available on CD from Impact Apologetics at <http://www.impactapologetics.com/catalog/details.asp?ItemID=PP02&CategoryID=27>

## SESSION IV – RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

### INTRODUCTION

We have taken some time to talk about the truth of the Christian Faith, building a case for the Scriptures, God's existence displayed to all, and the utter wonder of the Incarnate Son who was raised from the dead. These are essential to our faith and it is important to build a case for these wonderful truths.

However, the gospel is not preached in a vacuum and there are competing vantage points which must be addressed. In the session we will look briefly at two common worldviews in our culture today and then move to an extended discussion of the religion of Islam. We are spending significant time on Islam due to current geopolitical realities and to be able to engage in a thoughtful way around this major and growing world religion.

### NATURALISM AND SECULARISM

#### NATURALISM

*Naturalism as a guiding philosophy can help create a better world by illuminating more precisely the **conditions** under which individuals and societies flourish, and by providing a tangible, real basis for connection and community. It holds that doctrines and policies which assume the existence of a freely willing agent, and which therefore ignore the **actual causes** of behavior, are unfounded and counter-productive. To the extent to which we suppose persons act out of their uncaused free will, to that extent will we be blind to those **factors which produce** criminality and other social pathologies, or, on the positive side, the factors which make for well-adjusted, productive individuals and societies.*

*By holding that human behavior arises entirely within a causal context, naturalism also affects fundamental attitudes about ourselves and **others**. Naturalism undercuts retributive, punitive, and fawning attitudes based on the belief that human agents are first causes, as well other responses amplified by the supposition of free will, such as excessive pride, shame, and guilt. Since individuals **are not**, on a naturalistic understanding, **the ultimate originators of their faults and virtues**, they are not deserving, in the traditional metaphysical sense, of praise and blame. Although we will continue to feel gratitude and regret for the good and bad consequences of actions, understanding the full causal picture behind behavior shifts the focus of our emotional, reactive responses from the individual to the wider context. This change in attitudes lends support for social policies based on a fully causal view of human behavior.<sup>1</sup>*

#### SECULARISM

##### Our Culture's Current Cardinal Virtues

- A Religious Pluralism and a Religiously "Neutral" Public Square
- An Intolerant Tolerance

### NEW AGE STEWS AND HODGEPODGE SPIRITUALITY

#### BASICS OF NEW AGE THINKING

- The Deification of Humanity
- Merging of Eastern Mysticism and Religious Practice (Yoga, Meditation, Belief in Karma and Reincarnation) with traditional theistic belief in God
- Syncretism

Book Recommendation – James Sire, The Universe Next Door

## THE MIGHTY RELIGION OF ISLAM



Table 1 – Religious Demographics<sup>2</sup>

| RELIGION      | % POPULATION | ADHERENTS (MIL) | ANN GR        |
|---------------|--------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Christianity  | 32.54        | 1,973           | +1.43%        |
| <b>Islam</b>  | <b>21.09</b> | <b>1,279</b>    | <b>+2.17%</b> |
| Non-Religious | 15.46        | 938             | +0.97%        |
| Hindu         | 13.52        | 820             | +1.44%        |
| Buddhist      | 6.60         | 400             | +1.21%        |
| Chinese       | 6.31         | 383             | -1.28%        |
| Traditional   | 2.90         | 176             | +1.72%        |
| Sikh          | 0.34         | 20.5            | +1.70%        |
| Jewish        | 0.24         | 14.2            | +0.63%        |
| Other         | 1.00         | 60.8            | 1.53          |

### GROWTH OF ISLAM

- From **12.3% in 1900 to 21.1% in 2000** – Growth is through higher birth rates and expansion/migration
- Before World War II, there were very few Muslims in Western Europe. Today France has an estimated 2,704,800; Germany, 1,975,200; and the United Kingdom, 1,241,100. The Muslim population of Western Europe is somewhat equal to the Muslim immigrant population in North America. This rapidly expanding new religious reality in Europe and North America offers huge challenges for the dwindling churches of Europe and the self-serving churches of North America, as well as for Islam making a new home for itself on these continents.
- So far there are few Europeans, British, Canadians, or Americans (other than **African-Americans**) who have converted to Islam. Leading the way are women who marry Muslims and then become Muslims themselves. But, a strong infrastructure is being built, including the building of **expensive mosques in major cities** and near many **college campuses**.
- Besides a strong and steady emigration out of troubled Muslim lands (Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Bosnia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Libya, Pakistan, Palestine, and Somalia), **Muslim families tend to have more children than do Christian families**. These factors together give an impression of rapid growth and generate the idea that Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world. Pray that Christians in the West would receive the Muslims with **love** rather than fear.<sup>3</sup>

#### SUMMARY – THE GROWTH OF ISLAM

- **1.2 Billion** Muslims in the world
- 1/5 the world's population
- Second largest Religion in the world
- Fastest growing religion
- Anywhere from 2.8 to 6 million in the USA<sup>4</sup>
- If certain trends continue, within a generation or so, **fifty-one percent** of all African Americans will be Muslim

## BASIC BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF ISLAM

- Islamic Beliefs
  - Islamic Doctrine of God
  - The Prophet Muhammad
  - The Prophet? Jesus
  - Sources of Authority
    - Original “Uncorrupted” Scriptures
    - The Qur’an (Koran)
    - Hadiths
- Islamic Practice – Five Pillars of Islam

## ALLAH – THE GOD OF ISLAM

*“In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Say: He is God, the One and Only; God, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; and there is not like unto Him.”*

*Qur’an Sura 112*

- Allah
  - The Prominent Place of Unity

“In fact, Islam, like other religions before it in their original clarity and purity, is nothing other than the declaration of the Unity of God, and its message is a call to testify to that unity.”<sup>5</sup>
  - 13 attributes – Existence, Eternity, Perpetuity, Dissimilarity, Self-Sustenance, Unity, Might, Will, Knowledge, Life, Hearing, Sight and Speech
  - The Ninety-Nine Names of Allah<sup>6</sup>

## PROPHET MUHAMMAD

- Born in AD 570 in Mecca
- His father died before his birth, his mother when he was six and his grandfather when he was eight and he came under the care of his uncle, Abu Talib
- At 25 he married a rich widow, Khadija
- Due to persecution in 622 Muhammad and his disciples migrated to Medina
- In Medina he raised successful armies, and in 630 he conquered Mecca and destroyed its idols
- He died in Medina in 632 in the arms of his youngest wife Ayesha. He had one wife, Khadija until she died in 619. He then had at least nine wives
- In Islamic belief Muhammad is the last and greatest of prophets
  - Muslims believe that God sent his messengers and prophets to all people beginning with Adam and including Noah, Abraham, Lot, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Moses, Aaron, David, Solomon, Elias, Jonah, John the Baptist, and Jesus

## THE PROPHET JESUS? THE ISLAMIC JESUS

- A High View of Jesus
  - They consider him one of the greatest of God's prophets and messengers to humankind
  - Jesus from the Qur’an
    - His **virgin birth** "Truly the likeness of Jesus with God is as the likeness of Adam. He created him of dust and then said to him, 'Be!' and he was." Qur'an 3:47, 59
    - Performed **Miracles** – Qur'an 3:49
    - Called Anointed (Masih or **Messiah**) Qur'an 3:45



- The Prophet Muhammad's Testimony:

*"Whoever believes that there is none worthy of worship but God, alone without partner, that Muhammad is His messenger, that Jesus is the servant and messenger of God, His word which He bestowed on Mary and a spirit proceeding from Him, and that Paradise and Hell are true, shall be received by God into Heaven."*

A Hadith from the collections of al Bukhari

## SOURCES OF AUTHORITY

- Original "Uncorrupted" Scriptures
  - The Torah
  - The Injil or Gospel
    - These however have been "corrupted" and now are superseded by the Qur'an
- The Qur'an (Koran)
- The Hadith – Writings of the Prophet



## THE QUR'AN – RECITE!

- The Qur'an is the foundation of Islam. It holds prominence over all other scriptures. Muslims claim it was given directly to Muhammad from Allah and then written down as he orally communicated to his followers.
- Muslims typically argue for the divine origin of the Qur'an in the following manner<sup>7</sup>
  - Textual Integrity (today's text is exactly the same as recited by Muhammad)
  - Logical Consistency (no contradictions within the Qur'an).
  - Miraculous Features
    - Supernatural **Eloquence**
    - **Scientific** Statements far ahead of its time
    - **Numerical** Miracles
    - **Prophecies**
- Qur'an is only in **Arabic** – Copy of Eternal Original in Heaven
  - Common tactic in debate with Westerners – you have not read Qur'an so you cannot see its miracle. Problem?

## HADITHS – SAYINGS OF THE PROPHET

- Hadith pl. ahadith – A report of a saying or deed.
- As time passed, in order to establish the authority of shar'ia (Islamic Law) practices, only hadith reports that are supposed to originate from Muhammad became important.
- **Sahih (true)** hadiths: those accepted to be the most authentic. Qudsi Hadiths: hadiths that record what Allah said.
- Hadiths consist of two parts: chain of narrators (isnad) and the text (matn).
  - The earliest collection of hadiths dates from 1.5 to 2 centuries after Muhammad's death. al-bukhari collected over 600,000 reports, but kept only 7,397 as true.
  - Of the six important Muslim collections of hadiths, Bukhari and Muslim are accepted as the most reliable. Their collections are called **Sahih Bukhari** and **Sahih Muslim** respectively.<sup>8</sup>

## ISLAMIC SECTS<sup>9</sup>

- **Shittes** – The major Islamic sect that believes, in contrast to the Sunnis, that Muhammad’s son-in-law, Ali, was the true successor to Muhammad in the leadership of the Islamic community. They have their own secret books of the interpretation of the Qur’an. Found mostly in **Iran, Iraq and Lebanon**.
- **Sunnis** – The main body of Islam that comprise **80 percent** of all Muslims who, in contrast to the Shiites, believe that the true line of succession from Muhammad is found in the four Caliphs: Abu Bakr, Omar, Uthman, and Ali.
- **Sufis** – The mystical wing of Islam. Sufisim is the popular branch of Islamic belief and practice in which Muslims seek after a direct personal experience of God and his divine love.

Al-Ghazzali, Ibn Rushd (Averroes), IbnSina (Avicenna), al Kindi, and al-Farabi were Sufis

Table 2 – Summary of the Two Major Muslim Sects

| SUNNI  | SHI’ITE  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 80% of Muslims</li> <li>▪ Elect Muhammad’s successor</li> <li>▪ Emphasize authority of other written traditions: the Sunnah (conduct) and Hadith (sayings)</li> <li>▪ Believe in separation of religious and civil authorities</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Less than 20% of Muslims</li> <li>▪ Muhammad’s successor was his cousin, Ali</li> <li>▪ Emphasize authority of Imam (similar to the Catholic Pope)</li> <li>▪ Believe religious authorities should be in political power</li> </ul> |

## ISLAMIC PRACTICE – FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

### 1. Iman or Faith

- "There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His messenger"
  - Recite the shahadah. This means to “bear witness,” which is done by reciting the creed above. Saying this sincerely is all that is necessary to become a Muslim.<sup>10</sup>

### 2. Salat or Prayers

- Muslims are required to say seventeen complete prayers each day. They many pray individually or collectively. On Friday at noon Muslims are required to gather at the mosque to pray. Following the prescription in the Qur’an, Muslims are called to prayer five times a day. This is practiced more widely in Muslim countries.<sup>11</sup>

### 3. Saum or Fasting

- Every year during the month of Ramadan (ninth lunar month), Muslims fast from dawn until sundown - abstaining from food, drink, and sexual relations with their spouses.

*"O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed to those before you that you may learn self-restraint."* Qur'an 2:183

### 4. Zakat, To Give Alms

- Muslims are obligated to contribute 1/40th (2.5 percent) of their income. This is given primarily to the poor and needy.<sup>12</sup>

### 5. Hajj or Pilgrimage

- It is the duty of every Muslim to make a trip to Mecca (in Arabia) at least once in his lifetime, provided he or she is physically and financially able. Each pilgrim must wear a white garment called ihram, which is to eliminate all distinctions of class or status during the hajj. The trip usually takes a week or more, sometimes even a month, since it involves visiting several sacred sites. After the pilgrimage, a person is entitled to be called a hajji.<sup>13</sup>

## BASIC AGREEMENTS BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

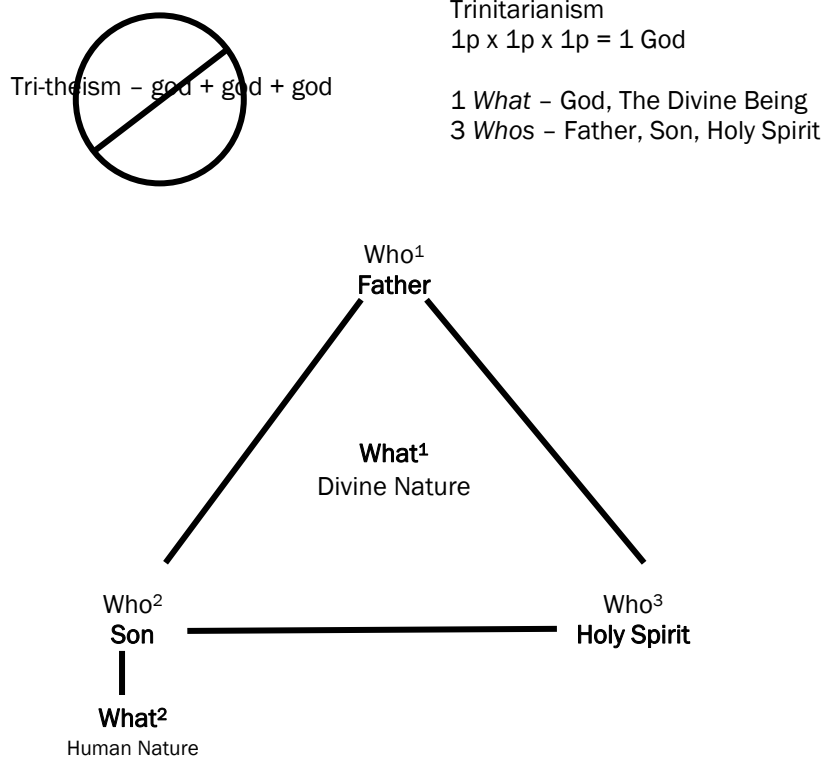
- One God
- Creation
- Revelation
- Prophets
- Miracles
- Morals
- Immortality

## MAJOR DIFFERENCES ON MAJOR ISSUES

God, Humanity, Jesus, the Bible and Salvation

### ISLAMIC MISCONCEPTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY

- Worship of **Three** Gods – Doctrine of the **Trinity**
  - **John 1:1, 14:16 and Colossians 1:15-19, 2:9**
  - **Athanasian Creed** – fifth century



- The Word Became **Flesh** – Doctrine of the **Incarnation**
  - **John 1:14, Philipians 2:6, Hebrews 1:3**
  - **Chalcedonian Creed** – fifth century (AD 451)
- Jesus resulted from a **sexual** union between God and Mary
- Jesus is God's **physical** son (walad vs. ibn)

## PROBLEMS WITH ISLAM

- God’s Revelation is in Arabic only?
  - A Prophet to the whole world?
  - God actually speaks Arabic?
- The Overruling of Absolutes
  - Jesus of Nazereth
  - Prophet Muhammed
  - Joseph Smith
- The Person of Jesus Christ
  - Did not die on the Cross – denies multiple attestations
  - Never claimed to be God
- Islam and Warfare

## ISLAM AND WARFARE

**Jihad** – Sacred struggle in life, with word or sword in the cause of Allah; a holy war.

### From the Qur’an

- Surah 2:216 - Fighting is prescribed upon you, and ye dislike it. But it is possible That ye dislike a thing which is good for you, and that ye love a thing which is bad for you. But Allah knoweth and ye know not.
- Surah 4:74,75 – Let those fight in the cause of Allah, Who sell the life of this world for the Hereafter, To him who fighteth in the cause of Allah—whether he is slain or gets victory—soon shall we give him a reward of great (value)
- Surah 8:12 Remember your Lord inspired the angels with the message: "I am with you: give firmness to the Believers: I will instill terror into the hearts of the Unbelievers: you smite them above their necks and smite all their finger-tips off them."
- Surah 47:4 – Therefore, when you meet the Unbelievers in fight, smite at their necks; at length, when you have thoroughly subdued them, bind a bond firmly on them... He lets you fight in order to test you, some with others. But those who are slain in the way of Allah, - He will never let their deeds be lost.
- Surah 59:2 It is He Who got out the Unbelievers among the People of the Book from their homes at the first gathering of the forces. Little did you think that they would get out: and they thought that their fortresses would defend them from Allah! But the wrath of Allah came to them from quarters from which they had little expected it, and cast terror into their hearts, so that they destroyed their own dwellings by their own hands and the hands of the Believers.

Table 3 – Use of the Sword<sup>14</sup>

| JIHAD  | THE CRUSADES   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consistent with Teachings of the Qur’an (Sura 9:5)</li> <li>▪ Consistent with Example of Muhammad</li> <li>▪ Logical Outworking of Islam</li> <li>▪ Islam grew by use of the sword on others</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Contrary to Teachings of the New Testament (Mt. 26:52)</li> <li>▪ Contrary to Example of Jesus Christ</li> <li>▪ Illogical Outworking of Christianity</li> <li>▪ Christianity grew by use of the sword on it</li> </ul> |

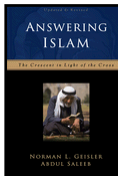
Table 4 – Commands to Kill?<sup>15</sup>

| QUR'AN  | OLD TESTAMENT   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ On innocent</li> <li>▪ For beliefs</li> <li>▪ As a first resort</li> <li>▪ On any unbelievers</li> <li>▪ At any time</li> <li>▪ For redeeming no one</li> <li>▪ An act of man</li> <li>▪ Not Confirmed by God</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ On guilty</li> <li>▪ For evil actions</li> <li>▪ As a last resort</li> <li>▪ On some unbelievers</li> <li>▪ At a specific time</li> <li>▪ For the sake of redeeming everyone</li> <li>▪ An act of God</li> <li>▪ Confirmed by God</li> </ul> |

## WITNESSING TO MUSLIMS

- **Love** them and don't **argue**
  - **Understand** what they believe – the individual
  - Do not speak **poorly** of Mohammad or the Qur'an
  
  - Focus of **Jesus of Nazareth**
    - His life and teaching
    - Quote their authority – the Qur'an
      - Agreements with the Gospels – Virgin birth, miracles, messiah
      - Differences
        - Muhammad's version of Jesus – 7th century
          - They will claim his revelation was from Allah, don't go there at this point – stay focused on how we would know about the historical Jesus.
        - Disciple's version of Jesus
          - **Lived** with Jesus, **Talked** with Jesus, **Ate** with Jesus, etc.
- 
- Share the **Personal** Nature of God and the Doctrines of **Grace**

## ISLAMIC APOLOGETIC RESOURCES



Norman Geisler and Abdul Saleeb, *Answering Islam, The Crescent in Light of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: MI, Baker Books, 1993)

*Updated 2nd Edition*

## Internet Resources

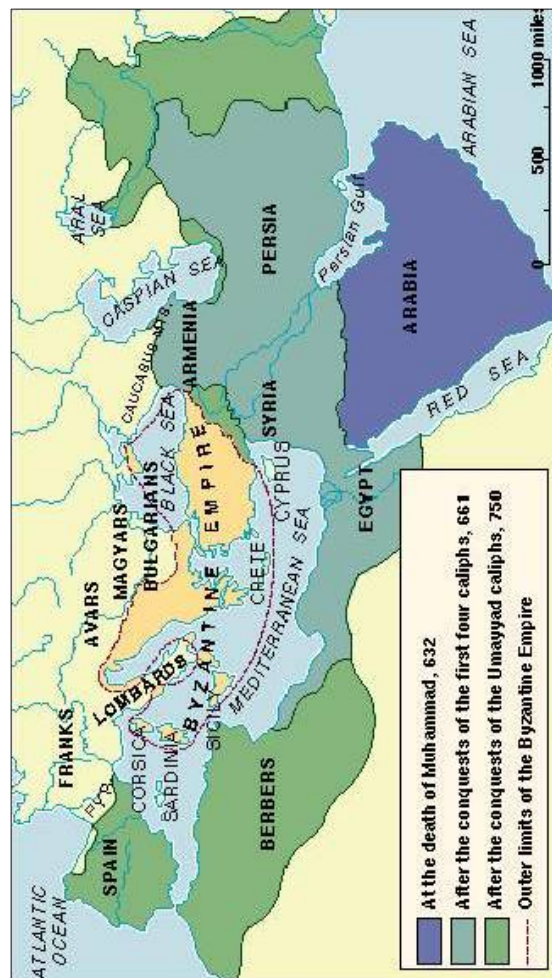
*Answering Islam, a Christian- Muslim Dialogue and Apologetic* [www.answering-islam.org](http://www.answering-islam.org)

**The Christian Muslim Debate Web Site** – This site is owned by the Hyde Park Christian fellowship - an informal network of Christian researchers in the UK, whose primary interest is the academic study of all issues relevant to Islam and Christianity – [www.debate.org.uk](http://www.debate.org.uk). The site has not been recently updated, but still has some relevant information and links.

Figure 1 - Arabia - The Birthplace of Islam



Figure 2 -The Spread of Islam



## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Naturalism as defined by The Center for Naturalism, [http://www.naturalism.org/center\\_for\\_naturalism.htm](http://www.naturalism.org/center_for_naturalism.htm) accessed April 10th 2005. Emphasis Added.

<sup>2</sup> Johnstone and Mandryk Operation World, 21st Century Addition (US Center for World Mission, 2001) 2. Additionally we should note that the fastest growing is Pentecostalism at about 7%

<sup>3</sup> World of Islam – Overhead Transparency Map Set By James P. Dretke, Zwemer Institute of Muslim Studies available for order on CD-ROM – *The World of Islam* - <http://www.gmi.org/products/islamcd4.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Statistics vary depending on the source cited. Several views of the American Islamic population may be found here: <http://www.answers.com/topic/islam-in-the-united-states>. Accessed January 4<sup>th</sup> 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Abdel Haleem Mahmud, *The Creed of Islam* (World of Islam Festival Trust, 1978), 20

<sup>6</sup> Norman Geisler and Abdul Saleeb, *Answering Islam* (Grand Rapids: MI, Baker Books, 1993) 20

<sup>7</sup> Outline from the web site [www.answering-islam.org/Ouran/index.html](http://www.answering-islam.org/Ouran/index.html)

<sup>8</sup> From Comparative Index to Islam [www.answering-islam.org/Index/index.html](http://www.answering-islam.org/Index/index.html)

<sup>9</sup> Definitions from – Geisler and Saleeb, Appendix 1

<sup>10</sup> Geisler and Saleeb, 293.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 293.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 294.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> A version of a table compiled by Norman L. Geisler, available on CD from Impact Apologetics at <http://www.impactapologetics.com>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

## SESSION V – SCIENCE AND FAITH

### INTRODUCTION

There is a common mythology today fostered among popular opinion that “science” and “faith” operate at best in two separate fields of reality and at worst antithetical enemies in the struggle of ideas. Neither of these is true.

The scientific worldview grew out of a culture which had certain convictions, certain presuppositions, and certain beliefs which made such inquiry a possibility. It is not a coincidental matter that science arose out of western culture which had a distinctly theistic, yes even Christian, worldview.<sup>1</sup>

Over the years, enlightenment rationalism, and secular thinkers have attempted to put forth an image in the public consciousness that faith and religion were at war with science seeking the demise of free inquiry.<sup>2</sup> Such could not be further from the truth. In reality, a large group of the pioneers in scientific enterprise were firm believers in God.<sup>3</sup>

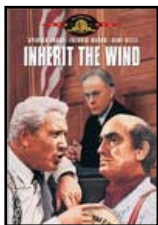
#### A FEW SCIENTIFIC GREATS WHO BELIEVED IN GOD<sup>4</sup>

- Copernicus (1473-1543) Laid the foundation of modern astronomy with heliocentric theory of planetary motion
- Johannes Kepler (1571 –1630) was a Lutheran mathematician and astronomer. He is best known for his laws of planetary motion.
- Blaise Pascal (1623-62) French mathematical prodigy, founded modern probability theory, advanced differential calculus and modern hydraulics, and invented one of the first mechanical calculators.
- Isaac Newton – (1643 – 1727) was an English physicist, mathematician, astronomer, alchemist, and natural philosopher. Although not orthodox in theology, Newton was a firm believer in a rational God.
- Carolus Linnaeus (1707-78) founder of the modern scientific classification of plants and animals
- George Cuvier (1769-1832)–Great French naturalist who founded comparative anatomy
- Michael Faraday (1791-1867)–Discovered electromagnetic induction and developed the first dynamo
- Gregor Mendel (1822-84)–Established the foundational tenets of modern genetics. Mendel was an ordained priest and an Augustinian monk.

Through the works of people like Stanley Jaki, JP Moreland the enlightenment myth of faith warring against science is being alleviated. Yet there are tensions which remain.

### DARWINISM AND EVOLUTION

The popular imagination was greatly influenced by the Scopes Trial of 1925 which took place in Tennessee. The trial pitted the religious worldview against the lone science teacher desiring the freedom to teach Darwin’s theory of evolution. This trial has been used to accent the war between religion and free thinking evolutionists.



Dramatic productions of the trial such as the 1960 film *Inherit the Wind* have done much to promulgate this stereotype. Yet today, the shoe is on the other foot. In this era we have the hegemony of Darwinism scratching and defending a closed minded view against other scientific views such as the Intelligent Design Movement.



## INTELLIGENT DESIGN – A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO ITS CONCEPTS

### Irreducible Complexity



Something is irreducibly complex if it's composed of several parts and each part is absolutely necessary for the structure to function. The implication is that such irreducibly complex structures or machines cannot be built by natural selection because in natural selection, each component **must be useful to the organism as the molecular machine is built.**<sup>5</sup>

*"No one at Harvard University, no one at the National Institutes of Health, no member of the National Academy of Sciences, no Nobel prize winner—no one at all can give a detailed account of how the cilium, or vision, or blood clotting, or any complex biochemical process might have developed in a Darwinian fashion."*

*"Other examples of irreducible complexity abound, including aspects of DNA reduplication, electron transport, telomere synthesis, photosynthesis, transcription regulation, and more."<sup>6</sup>*

### Specified Complexity



A single letter of the alphabet is specified without being complex (i.e., it conforms to an independently given pattern but is simple). A long sequence of random letters is complex without being specified (i.e., it requires a complicated instruction-set to characterize but conforms to no independently given pattern). A Shakespearean sonnet is both complex and specified.<sup>7</sup>

## COSMOLOGICAL DESIGN

### THE ANTHROPIC PRINCIPLE

The Anthropic Principle is a theory in cosmology (the study of the universe) which holds that the Universe appears to be designed with precisely fine tuned physical constants so that intelligent life would develop and exist.<sup>8</sup>

This Universe and our planet seem to be designed very precisely for our existence within it. The theistic overtones should be apparent.

### OUR PRIVILEGED PLANET

- The Earth in a perfect distance from our Star – **Goldi Locks Zone Not too hot, not too cold**
- Tilted on an axis which creates seasons which help grow food, rest the land at certain times
- It is located in a part of the Universe that has large massive planets towards the outside which protected by getting Smashed By Big Rocks and Comets
- We are located at the perfect spot, in a perfect galaxy, on a planet with a transparent atmosphere, in order to be **able to observe...to see.**<sup>9</sup>

God has given us a window seat to observe the universe from our planet. It seems someone wanted us to see this glorious Universe. Perhaps the only thing that is capable of even scratching the surface of displaying to us the glory of God is the vast universe itself. See Psalm 19.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix D for some additional reading on this subject from Nancy Pearcey and Charles B. Thaxton. *The Soul of Science : Christian Faith and Natural Philosophy*. Turning point Christian worldview series. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> The two most seminal works from this point of view would be John William Draper's *History of the Conflict Between Science and Religion* and Andrew Dickson White's *A History of the Warfare of Science and Theology*.

<sup>3</sup> Pearcey and Thaxton write "Paracelsus, Boyle, and Newton wrote extensively on theology as well as on science. Others—Kepler and van Helmont—filled their scientific notebooks with prayers, praise, and theological musings" Pearcey and Thaxton, 41.

<sup>4</sup> For a large listing of Christians in science see - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Christians\\_in\\_science](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Christians_in_science)

<sup>5</sup> Definition from Dr. Ray Bohlin of Probe Ministries – Article entitled, Darwin's Black Box, available at – [www.probe.org](http://www.probe.org)

<sup>6</sup> Michael Behe, Darwin's Black Box

<sup>7</sup> William Dempski, *Explaining Specified Complexity*, [www.leaderu.com/offices/dempski/menus/articles.html](http://www.leaderu.com/offices/dempski/menus/articles.html)

<sup>8</sup> For some detailed data on the fine tuning of our universe's physical constants, please see Hugh Ross, *Design and the Anthropic Principle* available online at <http://www.reasons.org/resources/apologetics/design.shtml>. Accessed January 5<sup>th</sup> 2006.

<sup>9</sup> For more information on the amazing fine tuning and configuration of our planet see Guillermo Gonzalez and Jay Wesley Richards, *The Privileged Planet : How Our Place in the Cosmos Is Designed for Discovery* (Washington, DCLanham, MD: Regnery Pub. ; Distributed to the trade by National Book Network, 2004). Also available is a fine documentary of the same title available in DVD/VHS from Illustra Media – <http://www.illustramedia.com/tppinfo.htm>

## SESSION VI – THE MATTER OF SUFFERING

### INTRODUCTION

On September 13<sup>th</sup> 2001 I sat in Ancient Greek Philosophy class at Virginia Tech. Instead of the usual discussion of Socratic skepticism, or Akrasia, or the Ethics of Aristotle the class took a rather interesting turn. The professor felt that the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> demanded quite another lesson that the one planned. As the chalk entered his hand and moved to the board, he laid out three premises:

1. God is good
2. God is all-powerful
3. Evil exists in the world

What followed these statements was not an answer, but a lingering question. Are these statements contradictory...is there a problem with one or all?

What was stated that day was a powerful illustration of one of the key objections to the existence of the Christian God – what was stated was the problem of Evil...actually two problems of evil.

### MANY PROBLEMS

#### The Existential/Personal Problem of Evil

This is the reality that encroaches on us all – the problem of pain and suffering in our lives and the lives of those around us. We all **experience** pain and suffering in various degrees

#### The Deductive Problem of Evil

Some claim that the problem of evil makes theism incoherent, that the existence of evil is **incompatible** if an all loving, all powerful God exists.

#### The Evidential Problem of Evil

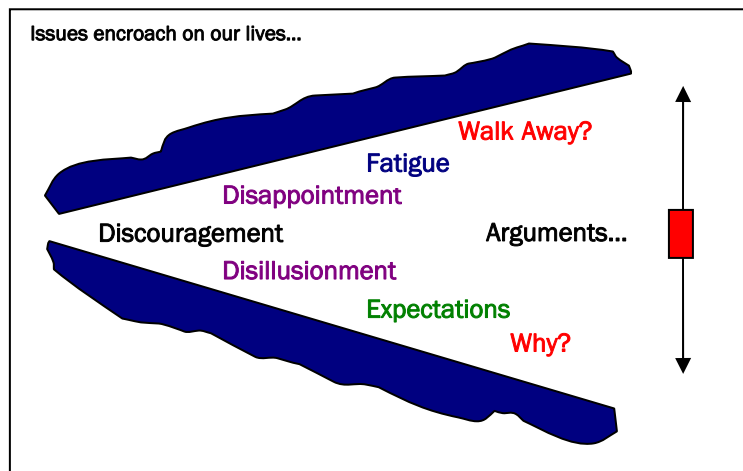
Even if the problem of evil can logically be solved, the amount of evil and the types of evil serve as good **evidence** against the existence of God.

#### The Religious Problem of Evil

The question at this level is “Where is God?” or sometimes it is simply “Why?”

There is pain in the world, there is suffering in the world, yes, even evil. The problem of pain and suffering faces us all and comes to us in various forms.

Figure 1 – The Encroaching Problem of Evil<sup>1</sup>



## ANSWERS GIVEN

Every worldview must give an account and respond to suffering.

- Deny **God** – **Atheism**, evil exists, there is no answer, suck it up.
- Deny **Evil** – **Pantheism** – evil is *maya*, or illusion...or perhaps your fault in a previous life.
- Await the **Final Answer** – The **Christian Gospel**

## THE DEDUCTIVE PROBLEM

### The Problem Stated

1. If God is **all-good**, he would desire to **eliminate** all evil and suffering.
2. If God is **all-powerful** he has the **power** to eliminate all evil and suffering.
3. Evil and suffering **exist**.
4. Therefore an all-good, all-powerful God **does not exist**.

### Basic Principles in Building a Theodicy<sup>2</sup>

- First, for the theist divine omnipotence means that God has power to do all things **logically possible** for a being with his attributes.
- Second, the theist appeals to a commonly held moral principle: No one can be held morally accountable for failing to do what they couldn't do or for doing what they couldn't fail to do. That is, moral praise or blame can be correctly assessed only to someone who acts freely. **In God's case, if he can't do something, he can't be held morally culpable for failing to do it.**
- Third, the theist offers an explanation as to why God can't (isn't free to) **both remove moral evil and accomplish some other valuable goal in our world**. In other words, when contemplating which world to create, God could have chosen either a world with no moral evil or a world with some other value.

### Clarifying the Categories

- Premise 1 – Clarifying God's Desire and Omnibenevolence
  - There may be **good reasons** for a good being to allow evil
  - An Example from **Parenting**
- Premise 2 – Clarifying Omnipotence
  - Can God do **Anything**?
    - Can he make round squares?
    - Can God make rocks so big he cannot move them?



*...divine omnipotence means that God has power to do all things logically possible for a being with his attributes.*  
Feinberg in Why I am a Christian 239.

- God Does Not Perform **Contradictions** or Make Things which are no things at all.

### Restating the Problem in Our Terms

1. A God who is **all-good**, would desire to **eliminate** all evil and suffering unless he had a **good reason** to allow it.
2. A God who is **all-powerful** has the power to eliminate all evil and suffering as far as it is not **contradictory** to God's other purposes.

3. Evils Exists.
4. Therefore all-good, all-powerful God has **a good reason** to allow evil.

So in our wrestle with this question, we will ask “what good reason” God has for allowing evil.

### Answering the Deductive Problem

- It should be noted that evil cannot originate in the **being** of God.
  - God is **Sovereign** Over Evil

#### Bruce Ware’s Distinction:

*God exerts direct causative control of good and indirect permissive control of evil<sup>3</sup>*

- Yet Evil is a **Privation** of a Good that Ought to Be

### What Good Reason? – The Free Will Defense<sup>4</sup>

- The Nature of Freedom demands God to Allow the Existence of Evil
  - i. **Free Moral Agents** are able to choose between moral alternatives without being determined to choose one or the other
  - ii. If God creates free moral agents, they must be able, by definition, **to choose evil** as well as good.
  - iii. **Forced** Freedom (libertarian freedom) is a Contradiction.
- Why should God create Free Moral Agents and risk evil?
  - i. **Moral** Responsibility
  - ii. Personal **Projects** and **Accomplishment**
  - iii. **Relationships** and **Love**

**What Good Reason?** An ordered world with created things (water, trees, animals, birds, etc) in which human beings can act intentionally and responsibly.

**What Good Reason?** The building of human souls is a higher goal of God than their comfort

**What Good Reason?** To magnify and display his own glory and goodness The Contrast of Evil in the World with the Goodness of God

## THE EVIDENTIAL PROBLEM

### The Problem Stated

- It **seems to me** that there is no good reason that God would have for certain types of evil we observe:
  - Starving and Dying Children
  - Natural Disasters
  - Murder, Rape, and Wars
  - Diseases
  - “Gratuitous” Evils
- My Reply...

### The Question properly belongs in the Theistic Universe...

- Ganssle – Flipping the Coin
    - Remember, this is a **moral** objection – How can you say anything is objectively evil without God?
    - How does a **random** universe produce so much **goodness**? How are **atoms** good?
- “Unless we presuppose a good God at the back of the universe, the question ‘Why suffering?’ is on par with the question ‘Why cabbages?’”<sup>5</sup>

Is there meaning in suffering? This is the question which emerges

### Share our Story

## THE RELIGIOUS PROBLEM

- Our Story is of God **Triumphing** Over Evil!
- **But** it still Hurts
  - We are **impatient**
  - We long for an **answer**
  - We need to know God’s **love**

**We are impatient** – Habakkuk 1:1-5

**We Hurt and Long for an Answer** – Job 38:1-4

An Audience with God – this is what Job needed – to Know God was Sovereign

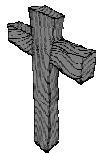
**We Hurt and We Long to Know God Cares**

- Mark 4:35-41 – Lord Don’t You Care?
- Matthew 13:24-30 – The Parable of the Weeds
- John 11:1-44 – Jesus and Lazarus
  - Jesus **Waits**, He Lets the Pain Come
  - Jesus **Weeps**, He Cares
  - Jesus **Wins!**, the Real **Solution** to the Real **Problem**

“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

## WE NEED A KINGDOM MINDSET

Inauguration



Continuation



Consummation



- **Inauguration** – The First Coming of Christ
- **Continuation** – We are living in the Not Yet
- **Consummation** – The Second Coming of Christ. Glory Awaits in our Redemption, God will Judge all Evil and Eliminate it Forever!

The **Cross** – God conquered through suffering not in spite of it. The cross is God’s declaration of

victory over the problem of evil.

- Sin is cursed and condemned and God took care of it
- Patience, Love, and Grace for **YOUR EVIL**
- Resurrection!!! – Jesus Wins!!!
- Evil, Death and Hell are Vanquished!

**Worship or Curse** – this is the opportunity in suffering

- The Scriptures endorse **Lamentation, Mourning and Tears** as we cry out for our redemption in a sin sick world.
  - Habakkuk 1, Lamentations, Psalms, **Romans 8:18-25**
- The Scriptures **encourage** us to never forfeit **hope**, hope does not disappoint and there is an eternal weight of glory that is coming!!!
  - **1 Peter 1:3-9**, 1 Thessalonians 4:18, Revelation 22:20

You will be faced with this problem...Worship and Curse Not – Sing together the song “Blessed Be Your Name”

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Diagram from Greg Ganssle Rivendell Institute for Christian Thought and Learning – Yale University

<sup>2</sup> John S. Feinberg, *Why I Believe in God in Spite of Evil and Suffering* in Geisler, N. L., & P. K. Hoffman. *Why I Am a Christian: Leading Thinkers Explain Why They Believe* (Grand Rapids.: Baker Books, 2001) 239.

<sup>3</sup> For an excellent treatment of God’s providential control of all things see Bruce Ware, *God’s Greater Glory – The Exalted God of Scripture and the Christian Faith* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2004)

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from Greg Ganssle’s paper *The Problem of Evil* Rivendell Institute of Christian Thought and Learning available online at [http://www.gradresources.org/worldview\\_articles/problem\\_evil.shtml](http://www.gradresources.org/worldview_articles/problem_evil.shtml) - accessed January 5th 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Harry Blamires quoted in Greg Ganssle, *The Problem of Evil*

## APPENDIX A – THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

*Written by Patrick Zukeran*

There are many books today that claim to be the Word of God. The Koran, the *Bhagavad Gita*, The Book of Mormon, and other religious works all claim to be divinely inspired. The Bible claims to be the only book that is divinely inspired and that all other claims of inspiration from other works should be ruled out. Does the Bible confirm its exclusive claim to be the Word of God? The totality of evidences presents a strong case for the divine inspiration of the Bible.

The strongest argument for the divine inspiration of the Bible is the testimony of Jesus. Jesus claimed to be the divine Son of God and confirmed His claims through His sinless, miraculous life and resurrection. The events of His life have been recorded in the four Gospels, which have proven to be historically accurate and written by first century eyewitnesses.<sup>[1]</sup> Since Jesus is God incarnate, whatever He taught is true, and anything opposed to His teaching is false.

Jesus directly affirmed the authority of the Old Testament and indirectly affirmed the New Testament. In Luke 11:51, Jesus identified the prophets and the canon of the Old Testament. He names Abel as the first prophet from Genesis, and Zechariah the last prophet mentioned in 2 Chronicles, the last book in the Jewish Old Testament (which contains the same books we have today although placed in a different order). In Mark 7:8-9, Jesus refers to the Old Testament as the “commands of God.” In Matthew 5:17, Jesus states that the “Law and the Prophets” referring to the Old Testament is authoritative and imperishable. Throughout His ministry, Jesus made clear His teachings, corrections, and actions were consistent with the Old Testament. He also judged others’ teachings and traditions by the Old Testament. He thus demonstrated His affirmation of the Old Testament to be the Word of God.

Jesus even specifically affirmed as historical several disputed stories of the Old Testament. He affirms as true the accounts of Adam and Eve (Matthew 19:4-5), Noah and the flood (Matthew 24:39), Jonah and the whale (Matthew 12:40), Sodom and Gomorrah (Matthew 10:15), and more.

Jesus confirmed the Old Testament and promised that the Holy Spirit would inspire the apostles in the continuation of His teaching and in the writing of what would become the New Testament (John 14:25-26 and John 16:12-13). The apostles demonstrated that they came with the authority of God through the miracles they performed as Jesus and the Prophets did before them. The book of Acts, which records the miracles of the apostles, has also proven to be a historically accurate record written by a first century eyewitness.

### **Prophecy**

Many religious books claim to be divinely inspired, but only the Bible has evidence of supernatural confirmation. We have seen that Jesus, being God incarnate, affirms the inspiration of the Bible. Another evidence of supernatural confirmation is the testimony of prophecy. The biblical authors made hundreds of specific prophecies of future events that have come to pass in the manner they were predicted. No book in history can compare to the Bible when it comes to the fulfillment of prophecy.

Here are some examples. Ezekiel 26, which was written in 587 B.C., predicted the destruction of Tyre, a city made up of two parts: a mainland port city, and an island city half a mile off shore. Ezekiel prophesied that Nebuchadnezzar would destroy the city, many nations would fight against her, the debris of the city would be thrown into the ocean, the city would never be found again, and fishermen would come there to lay their nets.

In 573 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the mainland city of Tyre. Many of the refugees of the city sailed to the island, and the island city of Tyre remained a powerful city. In 333 B.C., however, Alexander the Great laid siege to Tyre. Using the rubble of mainland Tyre, he built a causeway to the island city of Tyre. He then captured and completely destroyed the city.

Today, Tyre is a small fishing town where fishing boats come to rest and fisherman spread their nets. The great ancient city of Tyre to this day lies buried in ruins exactly as prophesied. If we were to calculate the odds of this



event happening by chance, the figures would be astronomical. No, it was not by coincidence.<sup>[2]</sup>

Here's another example. There are nearly one hundred prophecies made about Jesus in the Old Testament, prophecies such as His place of birth, how he would die, His rejection by the nation of Israel, and so on. All these prophecies were made hundreds of years before Jesus ever came to earth. Because of the accuracy of the prophecies, many skeptics have believed that they must have been written after A.D. 70—after the birth and death of Jesus and the destruction of Jerusalem. They have thereby tried to deny that they are even prophecies.

However, in 1947 the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. These scrolls contained the book of Isaiah and other prophetic books. When dated, they were found to be written from 120 to 100 B.C.,<sup>[3]</sup> well before Jesus was born. It would have been an incredible accomplishment for Jesus to have fulfilled the numerous prophecies. Some say these prophecies were fulfilled by chance, but the odds against this would be exceptionally large. It would take more a greater leap of faith to believe in that chance happening than in the fact that Jesus is God and these prophecies are divinely inspired.

The record of prophecy is thus evidence for the unique and supernatural origin of the Bible.

## Unity

The Bible is the only book with supernatural confirmation to support its claim of divine inspiration. The testimony of Christ and the legacy of prophecy are two proofs for inspiration. A third line of evidence is the unity of the Bible.

The Bible covers hundreds of topics, yet it does not contradict itself. It remains united in its theme. “Well, what's so amazing about that?” you may ask. Consider these facts. First, the Bible was written over a span of fifteen hundred years. Second, it was written by more than forty men from every walk of life. For example, Moses was educated in Egypt, Peter was a fisherman, Solomon was a king, Luke was a doctor, Amos was a shepherd, and Matthew was a tax collector. All the writers were of vastly different occupations and backgrounds.

Third, it was written in many different places. The Bible was written on three different continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe. Moses wrote in the desert of Sinai, Paul wrote in a prison in Rome, Daniel wrote in exile in Babylon, and Ezra wrote in the ruined city of Jerusalem.

Fourth, it was written under many different circumstances. David wrote during a time of war, Jeremiah wrote at the sorrowful time of Israel's downfall, Peter wrote while Israel was under Roman domination, and Joshua wrote while invading the land of Canaan.

Fifth, the writers had different purposes for writing. Isaiah wrote to warn Israel of God's coming judgment on their sin; Matthew wrote to prove to the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah; Zechariah wrote to encourage a disheartened Israel who had returned from Babylonian exile; and Paul wrote addressing problems in different Asian and European churches.

If we put all these factors together—the Bible was written over fifteen hundred years by forty different authors at different places, under various circumstances, and addressing a multitude of issues—how amazing that with such diversity, the Bible proclaims a unified message! That unity is organized around one theme: God's redemption of man and all of creation. The writers address numerous controversial subjects yet contradictions never appear. The Bible is an incredible document.

Let me offer you a good illustration. Suppose ten medical students graduating in the same year from medical school wrote position papers on four controversial subjects. Would they all agree on each point? No, we would have disagreements from one author to another. Now look at the authorship of the Bible. All these authors, from a span of fifteen hundred years, wrote on many controversial subjects, yet they do not contradict one another.

It seems one author guided these writers through the whole process: the Holy Spirit. 1 Peter 2:21 states, “No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” The unity of the Bible is just one more amazing proof of the divine inspiration and authority of the Bible.

## Archaeology

We’ve studied the testimony of Jesus, prophecy, and the unity of the Bible as providing supernatural confirmation of the divine inspiration of the Bible. Another line of evidence is archaeology. Archaeology does not directly prove the Bible’s inspiration, but it does prove its historical reliability.

Middle Eastern archaeological investigations have proven the Bible to be true and unerringly accurate in its historical descriptions. Nelson Glueck, a renowned Jewish archaeologist, states, “No archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference.”<sup>[4]</sup> Dr. William Albright, who was probably the foremost authority in Middle East archaeology in his time, said this about the Bible: “There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of the Old Testament.”<sup>[5]</sup> At this time, the number of archaeological discoveries that relate to the Bible number in the hundreds of thousands.<sup>[6]</sup>

Archaeology has verified numerous ancient sites, civilizations, and biblical characters whose existence was questioned by the academic world and often dismissed as myths. Biblical archaeology has silenced many critics as new discoveries supported the facts of the Bible.

Here are a few examples of the historical accuracy of the Bible. The Bible records that the Hittites were a powerful force in the Middle East from 1750 B.C. until 1200 B.C. (Genesis 15:20, 2 Samuel 11, and 1 Kings 10:29). Prior to the late nineteenth century, nothing was known of the Hittites outside the Bible, and many critics alleged that they were an invention of the biblical authors.

However, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, archaeologists in Turkey discovered a city which proved to be the capital of the Hittite empire. In the city they discovered a massive library of thousands of tablets. These tablets showed that the Hittite language was an early relative of the Indo-European languages.

Another example is the story of Jericho recorded in the book of Joshua. For years, skeptics thought the story of the falling walls of Jericho was a myth. However, recent archaeological discoveries have led several prominent scholars to conclude that the biblical description of the fall of Jericho is consistent with the discoveries they have made. One of the leading archaeologists on Jericho presently is Dr. Bryant Wood. His research has shown that the archaeological evidence matches perfectly with the biblical record.<sup>[7]</sup>

Archaeology has also demonstrated the accuracy of the New Testament. One of the most well attested to New Testament authors is Luke. Scholars have found him to be a very accurate historian, even in many of his details. In the Gospel of Luke and Acts, “Luke names thirty-two countries, fifty-four cities, and nine islands without error.”<sup>[8]</sup> A. N. Sherwin-White states, “For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming. . . . Any attempt to reject its basic historicity must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted.”<sup>[9]</sup>

There is no other ancient book that has so much archaeological evidence to support its accounts. Since God is a God of truth, we should expect His revelation to present what is historically true. Archaeology presents tangible proof of the historical accuracy of the Bible.

## The Bible Alone Is God’s Word

We have given several proofs for the divine inspiration of the Bible. These include the testimony of Jesus the divine Son of God, prophecy, unity, and archaeology. Accepting the divine inspiration of the Bible leads to the conclusion that all other works cannot be divinely inspired. This does not mean other works do not contain truth. All people are created in the image of God and can articulate principles that are true. However, only the Bible proves to be divinely inspired by God and therefore, other claims of divine inspiration should be ruled out for several reasons.

The Bible is the only book that gives supernatural confirmation to support its claim of divine inspiration. Other scriptures which contradict it cannot, therefore, be true.

The law of non-contradiction states that two contradictory statements cannot be true at the same time. If one proposition is known to be true, its opposite must be false. If it is true that I am presently alive, it cannot also be true to say that I am presently not alive. This is a universal law which is practiced daily in every part of the world. Even if you claim, "the law of non-contradiction is false," you are asserting this statement is true and its opposite is false. In other words you end up appealing to the law you are trying to deny thus making a self-defeating argument.

Since we have good reason to believe the Bible is the inspired word of God, any teaching that contradicts the Bible must be false. The Bible makes exclusive claims regarding God, truth and salvation that would exclude other scriptures. The Bible teaches that any deity other than the God of the Bible is a false deity (Exodus 20). Jesus declared that he is the divine Son of God, the source of truth, and the only way to eternal life (John 1 & 14:6).

A look at a few works from other religions illustrates this point. The Hindu scriptures include the Vedas and the Upanishads. These books present views of God that are contrary to the Bible. The Vedas are polytheistic, and the Upanishads present a pantheistic worldview of an impersonal divine essence called Brahma, not a personal God.

The Koran, the holy book of Islam, denies the deity of Christ, the triune nature of God, and the atoning work of Christ on the cross (Sura 4:116, 168). These are foundational truths taught in the Bible. The Pali Canon, the holy scriptures of Southern Buddhism, teach a naturalistic worldview (or pantheistic, as some schools interpret it). It also teaches salvation by works and the doctrine of reincarnation. The worldview of the Pali Canon and its view of salvation contradict biblical teachings. Since these works contradict biblical teaching, we reject their claim to divine inspiration.

The Bible alone proves to be divinely inspired and its exclusive claims rule out the claims of other books.

## Notes

1. For more information refer to the articles "The Historical Reliability of the Gospels" ([www.probe.org/content/view/678/77/](http://www.probe.org/content/view/678/77/)) and "The Uniqueness of Jesus" ([www.probe.org/content/view/918/146/](http://www.probe.org/content/view/918/146/)).
2. Ralph H. Alexander, "Ezekiel," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 869.
3. Norman Geisler and William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, (Chicago, IL.: Moody Press, 1986), 364-367.
4. Nelson Glueck, *Rivers in the Desert: A History of the Negev* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Cudahy, 1959), 31.
5. William F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1953), 176.
6. Randall Price, *The Stones Cry Out* (Eugene, OR.: Harvest House Publishers, 1997), 25.
7. *Ibid.*, 152-53.
8. Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), s.v., Archaeology, New Testament."
9. Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (San Bernardino: Here's Life Publishers, 1999), 66.

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## APPENDIX B – REVELATION

Article from Alexander, T. Desmond, and Brian S. Rosner. *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. electronic ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001.

Revelation is the disclosure by God of truths at which people could not arrive without divine initiative and enabling. The ubiquity and centrality of revelation are considerably more impressive than statistical study alone implies (though the NIV has nearly a hundred occurrences of the word or its cognates), and analysis of revelation in the Bible must extend beyond the use of the word. The Bible does not so much discuss or reflect on revelation as assume, embody, and convey it. The phenomenon and concept as presented in Scripture can be discussed under the following headings: 1. types of revelation; 2. the means of revelation; 3. the stages of revelation; 4. the authority of revelation; and 5. the goals of revelation.

### Types of Revelation

In one sense God's disclosure of himself is as universal as creation itself: 'The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands' (Ps. 19:1, NIV). Merely by observation of the natural world, Job should have known better than to call God's ways into question (Job 38, 40). The things God has created, as people live in symbiotic dependence on them, reveal God's being and even aspects of his nature: 'Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse' (Rom. 1:20). Jesus reasoned from the natural order to truth about God: 'See how the lilies of the field grow ... If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?' (Matt. 6:28, 30). Theologians give the name 'natural revelation' to knowledge of God that in theory all people everywhere are capable of inferring from the phenomena of nature and human experience.

Yet the same biblical writers who posit a natural or universal revelation of God point also to a special or particular revelation. The psalmist who lauds creation's light speaks in still more glowing terms of God's law: 'The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul' (Ps. 19:7). Nature alone, or unaided human apprehension of it, may point to God, but they do not mediate what the soul requires for salvation: saving knowledge of God. Job's culpable ignorance was removed only when hearsay was superseded by direct, divinely disclosed, and personally appropriated knowledge (Job 42:5). Paul implies that while natural knowledge of God, the kind of knowledge common to world religions generally, is sufficient to prompt humans to affirm God's being and to seek him and to sense their guilt before him, that knowledge is insufficient to bring about reconciliation with him (Rom. 1–3). Jesus speaks in prayer of God's revealing heavenly truths to his followers, who presumably would have otherwise remained ignorant of them (Matt. 11:25, 27). He explicitly attributes Peter's recognition of his Messiahship to God's revelatory activity and not to Peter's reasoning alone (Matt. 16:17).

It is special revelation, divine disclosure of verities leading to saving knowledge of God (or, if such knowledge is spurned, to particularly harsh judgment by God [Ps. 7:12–16; Luke 10:13–14; 12:47; Heb. 4:2–3]), that is the main focus of the Bible. This revelation is made known by various means.

### The Means of Revelation

The writer to the Hebrews declares, 'In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways' (1:1). God's saving self-disclosure has taken various forms. These may be divided into two types: word and deed. A subset of the latter is denoted by the word 'theophany'. A theophany occurs when God's presence is made visible and recognizable as a divine self-disclosure. It is not an appearance of God the Father in his essential being, whom no one can see this side of heaven (John 1:18; 1 Tim. 6:16), but it is a manifestation so fully revelatory of God that it bears his own authority and name. The Bible records appearances of the theophanic Angel of the Lord to Hagar (Gen. 16:7), to Abraham (Gen. 18; 22:11–12), to Jacob (Gen. 32:29–30), to Moses (Exod. 3:2–6), to Joshua (Josh. 5:14–15), to Gideon (Judg. 6:11–14) and to David (1 Chr. 21:16, 18, 27) among others. This figure exercises divine functions such as predicting the future (Gen. 16:10–12), forgiving sin (Exod. 23:21) and receiving worship (Exod. 3:5; Judg. 13:9–20), yet is clearly distinguished from God. In the history of interpretation some have understood these appearances as not merely God-disclosures but specifically Christ-disclosures, or Christophanies, pre-incarnate manifestations of the Son of God. Other instances of theophanic revelation include God's presence in Eden (Gen. 3:8), his presence with his people during the Exodus (Exod. 13:21–22; 14:19, 24, etc.) and at Sinai (Exod. 24:15–18;

34:5), and his Shekinah glory in the tabernacle (Exod. 40:34–35) and later in the Jerusalem temple at the time of Solomon (1 Kgs. 8:11; 2 Chr. 5:13–14).

A second means of divine revelation in deed is miracle. It is revelation not primarily as ‘wonder’, evoking awe, but as a sign calling people to acknowledge and draw near to God. Both OT and NT record miracles, though neither lapses into a sensationalist preoccupation with them; God and his saving purposes remain the principal concern. The NT mentions nearly forty miracles performed by Christ alone, such as healings, exorcisms, acts of power over atmospheric disturbances, and resuscitations of the dead, and records Jesus’ own resurrection. The Gospels may omit more miracles than they relate in detail (John 20:30; 21:25). On relatively rare occasions miracles are also part of early church life as recorded in Acts and the epistles.

Revelation occurs in the Bible also through dreams. Here God’s deed, in granting the dream, and his word, in speaking through it, are combined. God guided Joseph and Mary through dreams before and during Jesus’ infancy (Matt. 1:20; 2:12–13, 19, 22), and perhaps also touched the heart of Pontius Pilate’s wife (Matt. 27:19). There are numerous OT instances of revelatory dreams: God appears to Abimelech (Gen. 20:3); Jacob (Gen. 28:12); Laban (Gen. 31:24); Joseph (Gen. 37:5, 9); Pharaoh (Gen. 41:1, cf. 41:32); Gideon (Judg. 7:13–15); Solomon (1 Kgs. 3:5); and Daniel (Dan. 7:1). The OT writers also speak of false dreaming, which is claimed by recipients to be revelatory but which is in fact deceptive and destructive of God’s purposes (\*e.g. Is. 56:10; Jer. 23:25, 28).

Scripture also speaks of visions which, like dreams (\*cf. Num. 12:6), combine God’s deed and word. Some visions are mere delusion (Is. 28:7; Jer. 14:14; 23:16; Ezek. 13:6; Zech. 10:2), but others are the means of major insight into God’s workings and expectations for his people (\*e.g. Ezek. 1:1; 40:2). OT prophets also received ‘oracles’ (or ‘burdens’, *maššā*) from God, usually warnings of disaster calling for immediate repentance (\*e.g. Is. 13:1; 14:28; 15:1; Nah. 1:1; Hab. 1:1; Zech. 9:1; Mal. 1:1). In the NT, visions are granted to Zechariah (Luke 1:22), Ananias (Acts 9:10), Paul (Acts 9:12; 16:9; 18:9), Cornelius (Acts 10:3), Peter (Acts 10:9–17) and John (Rev. 9:17).

Basil Mitchell has noted that ‘behaviour unaccompanied by speech remains inherently ambiguous’ (\**The Making and Remaking of Revelation*, p. 182). God’s revelatory acts in Scripture are important, but they need to be accompanied by revelatory words. While the exact processes by which God’s words to Adam, Noah, Abraham, and many other OT figures were discerned, recorded and transmitted are not always clear, the overall claim of the OT writings to be mediating faithfully the very words and spoken will of God is undeniable. Even when David in the Psalms speaks *about* or *to* God (rather than using the formulaic ‘thus says the Lord’), or when Solomon and others in Proverbs set forth wisdom rather than apodictic law or prophecy in the most direct sense, the revelatory status of their writings may be affirmed by virtue of God’s approval of the writers and of the substance of their utterances. The fact that the Son of God treats Scripture as revelation is not insignificant (J. Wenham, *Christ and the Bible*). When Paul refers to ‘the oracles of God’ (Rom. 3:2), and when Jesus and Peter refer to David’s writings as coming through the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David (Matt. 22:43; Acts 1:25, 30), they express the well-grounded conviction of God’s people across many centuries that by God’s direct act ‘men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit’ (2 Pet. 1:21), and that the Bible is the result.

Both Peter’s statement above and Paul’s reference to Scripture’s God-breathed character (2 Tim. 3:16) refer most directly to the OT. But what are today called NT writings were viewed as divinely given, on a par with the OT oracles, at least as early as the AD 60s (2 Pet. 3:16). H. Ridderbos (*Redemptive History and the New Testament Scriptures*) has argued that the creation and recognition of NT writings by Jesus’ disciples was one aim of his ministry and teaching. It is clear that from the time of 1 Clement (\*c. AD 95) and Papias (\*c. AD 95–110) at least some of the Gospels, 1 Corinthians, Hebrews, 1 Peter, and 1 John were in circulation, and that they were ranked alongside the OT writings well before the end of the 1st century. The appropriateness of this is supported by Paul’s own high assessment of the God-given nature of his message (1 Thess. 2:13), the four Gospels’ implicit and explicit claims to be recounting faithfully the truth of God’s bodily and verbal self-disclosure in Jesus Christ, and the tone and content of the NT writings generally, all of which reflect an authorial consciousness of apostolic authority, even when their authors may not be apostles in the most thoroughgoing sense (Mark, Luke, the author of Hebrews, James, Jude).

The means of God’s revelation are more complex and vast than we can comprehend (much less reconstruct in detail). They encompass a history and involve people of which we know only some parts. Yet

evidence points to the Scriptures of Old and New Testament as very nearly congruent with 'revelation' in the sense of the revealed divine actions and words of God.

## The Stages of Revelation

While it would be possible to attempt to draw fine distinctions between various eras in God's self-disclosure, from a NT point of view the decisive periods are simply BC and AD: 'In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways ... but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son' (Heb. 1:1-2). Despite the objections of modern writers like James Barr to the idea of 'revelation in history' (in *IDB*, pp. 746-749), it remains a defensible and necessary category for articulating the truths espoused by the biblical writers.

The foundational importance and abiding significance of OT revelation must not be minimized. Hundreds of NT quotations and thousands of allusions demonstrate the nature of what C. H. Dodd termed the OT substructure of NT belief. God's progressive self-disclosure in the time of Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, Daniel, and Ezra (to mention just a few prominent figures) came to comprise an enscripturated treasure, a monument to God's steadfastness in the past and a slowly accumulating record of his nearness to his people in the present. Even the writer to the Hebrews, who stresses Christ's supremacy over OT institutions, relies on (and assumes the truthfulness of) the accounts of God's OT dealings with the children of Abraham to make his case. Yet the OT ends with the promise of future deliverance: 'the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings' (Mal. 4:2). Far from being a tacked-on appendix to OT revelation, Malachi's prophecy is related to other predictions of messianic deliverance which stretch back to the earliest times (see e.g. Gen. 3:15; 12:1-3; 49:10; Deut. 18:15; 2 Sam. 7; Pss. 2, 22, 110; Isa. 7:14; 9:1-7; 11; 53; Dan. 7:2-14; etc.).

God's personal self-disclosure to his people, largely though temporarily suspended after the completion of Malachi's ministry (see B. D. Sommers, in *JBL* 115, pp. 31-47), and renewed with the rebirth of prophecy in John the Baptist (Luke 3:2), reaches a climax in Jesus' own pronouncements, teachings, and presence. His use of 'amen' ('truly') (104 times in the Gospels, 50 of these in John where the 'amen' is always doubled) indicates that what follows is a transcendent word with unique authority. John's Gospel presents Jesus as speaking not his own words but the words of the one who sent him (12:49). Not only his words but his very being are divine in ultimate origin (John 16:30). All this implies a season of renewed divine revelation appropriate to the generation chosen to witness the onset of the fullness of the times (Gal. 4:4).

Revelation is an integrating component of the whole NT era. At the announcement of Jesus' birth in Luke's nativity narrative (1:26, 32, 35), John the Baptist says that he came 'that [Jesus] might be revealed to Israel' (John 1:31). Jesus is aware of the role of revelation in his followers' apprehension of his messianic and divine identity, sometimes actually using the word (Matt. 11:25, 27; 16:17) and at other times speaking of revelation parabolically, as in the parable of the sower: 'The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you' (Mark 4:11). Jesus summarizes his ministry with the observation that he 'revealed' the Father to those whom the Father gave him (John 17:6). Apart from revelation the power of the gospel history and its canonical recounting is inexplicable.

In Paul revelation is fundamental to the disclosure of the gospel, in which 'a righteousness from God is revealed' (Rom. 1:17). His wrath (see Anger) also is revealed (Rom. 1:18; 2 Thess. 1:7), and lends urgency to Paul's mission. Paul's whole gospel ministry, far from being based on his persuasiveness or power or on an historical accident, owes its effectiveness to revelation (Rom. 16:25-26; 1 Cor. 2:10). The 'mystery' (formerly hidden but now fully disclosed truth) that Paul proclaims 'was made known to [him] by revelation', and not to Paul only but 'to God's holy apostles and prophets' in general (Eph. 3:3, 5). Among these is Peter, who speaks of revelation primarily as future (1 Pet. 1:7, 13; 4:13). Yet revelation was involved in the disclosure of Christ to the prophets (1 Pet. 1:12), which is the foundation of both Jesus' ministry and the apostolic ministry. And revelation is for Peter an ongoing present fact: Jesus Christ 'was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake' (1 Pet. 1:20). This past-and-yet-future understanding of revelation undergirds the book of Revelation, given to John to make known the things to come, yet predicated on the conviction that Christ's future visible cosmic enthronement (see Exaltation) will take place precisely because the 'righteous acts' of 'the Lord God Almighty ... have been revealed' (Rev. 1:1; 15:2-4).

Most evangelical theologians agree that revelation in the fullest sense of the term is now complete. Because of the finished nature of Christ's saving work and the uniqueness of the apostles and their

associates, the possibility of further revelatory disclosure resulting in additions to Scripture is excluded. Yet the NT does not portray a dominical and apostolic age flooded with revelatory light, to be followed by a church age given over to darkness or dim memories of past glories. There remains a future element in Christ's revelation to be apprehended at his return 'on the day the Son of Man is revealed' (Luke 17:30; cf. Rom. 2:5). The darkness of the present world, which Scripture frankly acknowledges (Eph. 6:12), is offset by the first rays of the dawning future age (Rom. 13:11–12). Furthermore, the announcement of redemption by God's incarnate revelation in NT times is echoed in the preached word, baptism, and the Lord's table (see Sacred meals) 'until he comes' again (1 Cor. 11:26). While with the flowering and fading of earliest Christianity's witness the foundational voice of revelatory truth passed into history, the society it generated, like the truth it comprises, were not and cannot be silenced. Like revelation itself, the authority of revelation abides.

## The Authority of Revelation

From the standpoint of biblical theology, revelation is not merely an interesting fact or even a major theological category. Far less is it an object of academic or political discussion, for example, between conservatives who see it as valid and unchanging and more liberal thinkers who recommend its ongoing revision in keeping with developing social or scientific standards of truth and relevance. It is rather a truth closely intertwined with several biblical convictions, all related to the authority of revelation, which give it its central place in the biblical writers' thinking. Without knowledge of these convictions the nature and importance of revelation as espoused in Scripture can be easily overlooked.

Revelation is authoritative because it is rooted in the very nature of God. Speaking of revelation Basil Mitchell has noted, 'Oxford colleagues may find it natural to think of a divine-human dialogue as a sort of never-ending tutorial in which a God of liberal sensibilities releases the truth in instalments with anxious care for the autonomy of the recipients, but this has little in common with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob' (in *Making and Remaking*, p. 185). The God of the biblical tradition is sovereign (see Providence), in firm command of heaven and earth (Is. 40:12–26; 66:1). He is holy (Lev. 11:45; Ps. 99:3, 5, 9; John 17:11; Rev. 4:8), and distinct from and unlike humans (Num. 23:19; Job 9:32; 10:4–5; 33:12; Ps. 50:21; Hos. 11:9), though he has deigned to commune with them, and they bear his image. He is partially distinct in character, as he is perfect in all his ways (Deut. 32:4; Ps. 18:30) and just in all his dealings (Ps. 99:4; 111:7), unlike humans, all of whom have broken God's law (Rom. 3:23) and must face the consequences (Heb. 10:27). And he is faithful (Deut. 7:9; Ps. 33:4; 1 Cor. 10:13). What he promises to do, he does (Ps. 146:6; 1 Cor. 1:9; 1 Thess. 5:24; 2 Thess. 3:3; Heb. 10:23). He has promised to forgive and bless those who call upon him truly (Is. 55:7; Rom. 10:11–13), and to repay without mercy those who ultimately reject him (Luke 12:5; Heb. 10:28–29).

God's sovereignty, his holiness, and his faithfulness comprise an urgent *apologia* for the revelation by which a saving personal relationship with him is established. Because it is the revelation of *this* God, it is very important as the means of entrance into God's eternal kingdom for the peoples of humankind to whom it is addressed.

Revelation is authoritative because it is true. Of course it is perennially questioned and even cast aside; this is not new (Gen. 3:1; Ps. 2:2; Jer. 36:23; Matt. 28:17b; Jude 4). It is true because God, who cannot lie (Heb. 6:18), is its ultimate author. Further, its writers and chief figures repeatedly assert that their enscripturated claims are true and may be tested. Moses sets forth a truth criterion for OT prophets and prophecy (Deut. 13:1–3; 18:20–22; Num. 16:28–30; cf. 2 Chr. 18:27; Jer. 28:9). This criterion applies also to the NT writers to the extent that they are analogous to prophets in OT times. The implicit claim to be telling the truth is sometimes made explicit (Rom. 9:1; Gal. 1:20; 1 Tim. 2:7). Jesus appealed to the truthfulness of what he revealed (John 5:31–36). John swore to eyewitness experience of the Christ whose doctrine he propounded (1 John 1:1–3; cf. appeal to eyewitnesses in Luke 1:1–4). John pronounces a curse on any who might tamper with 'the words of the prophecy of this book', whether to add or to subtract (Rev. 22:18–19). NT writers are deeply impressed by the correlation of OT prophecy and NT fulfilment (\*e.g. Matt. 1:23; 3:3; 4:14–16; 27:9–10; Rom. 1:2; 11:8–10). Only God can foretell the future (Is. 44:8, 26; 45:21; cf. Ezek. 37:14), and in the fulfilment of OT Scripture by NT phenomena both Testaments bear witness to God's predictive truthfulness, much as Jesus assured his disciples of the truth of his utterances by exhibiting his foreknowledge of certain events, both in the immediate (Matt. 26:31; John 13:19; 16:4) and more distant future (see e.g. Jesus' passion predictions and eschatological discourses).

Revelation is authoritative because of its agents. Attention has already been drawn to the place of God the Father and God the Son in the revelatory process and the dire implications of ignoring their counsel. The Holy Spirit, too, is active in revelation. He prepared Simeon to recognize the Christ-child (Luke 2:26). He was promised to the apostles to aid them in their recollection, interpretation, and dissemination of Jesus' teaching (John 14:26; 16:13). He divulged to Paul, and by extension to the wider church, abiding gospel truths (1 Cor. 2:9–13). He testifies to Christ (John 15:26) and reveals the saving meaning of Christ's death to those who seek God (Acts 5:32). Apart from regeneration by the Holy Spirit, revelation cannot be savingly apprehended (John 3:3–6); 'revelation, as true assertions about states of affairs, divine and human, is a gift of knowledge given to humans by the Holy Spirit' (G. Fackre, *The Doctrine of Revelation*, p. 221). The Holy Spirit's intimate involvement in revelation underlines the authority of that revelation. What the Spirit says or confirms must be heeded if God's favour is to be gained and his displeasure to be avoided. The book of Revelation's sombre, sevenfold 'hear what the Spirit says' (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22) emphasizes the authoritative nature of what he makes known.

## The Goals of Revelation

John the Baptist, a personal recipient and authorized bearer of revelation, shrank back in humility from the glory and wonder of what he proclaimed (John 3:30). Abraham was overcome by terror and darkness at God's revelatory presence (Gen. 15:12). Moses trembled (Deut. 9:19). Job was smitten with remorse (Job 42:6). Isaiah was terrified (Is. 6:5). Daniel was repeatedly mortified (Dan. 8:27; 10:8–9). The disciples fell to the ground in dismay (Matt. 17:6). Paul was struck blind (Acts 9:8). A major effect of revelation, and doubtless one of its primary goals, is to lead people to lower their innately high view of themselves and to give God due regard instead. No treatment of revelation should fail to point out the doxological imperative that biblical revelation conveys, at least as apprehended by its original recipients.

But bowing before God's fierce splendour is not necessarily a gesture of joyful worship, as even God's enemies will one day bend the knee (Is. 45:22–25; Phil. 2:10). In Scripture revelation's primary function is rather one of invitation to the delights of ever greater communion with the Lord (Is. 55; Rev. 22:17). The goal of the revelation of the truth of God is the expression of love for God. The informational, cognitive value of revelation (often denied since Kant; cf. e.g. Bultmann's reflections on revelation, *What Is Theology?*, pp. 131ff.) should not be minimized, for there can be no saving faith apart from knowledge sufficient to generate and sustain faith. Revelation is knowledge of God. Yet revelation extends beyond what mortal minds will ever fully grasp. Its goal is not only to mediate truth but also to effect relationship with God. Revelation is the means, because it is the informing ground, of sinners' reconciliation to God.

Salvation is not by revelation *per se*; it is rather by God's promise enacted in Christ's justifying death and resurrection. God's work in Christ saves, not revelation (*\*contra* Gnosticism). But revelation is essential to the mediation of God's redemptive work (Rom. 10:17). Since biblical theology's mandate is to analyse and synthesize what the biblical writers affirm, its assessment of revelation will continue to play a cardinal role in its hermeneutical orientation, theological convictions, and historical observations.

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R. W. YARBROUGH



## APPENDIX C – THE ROLE AND USE OF ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

by Reid S. Monaghan

*Truly there is a God, although the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. And so, Lord, do thou, who dost give understanding to faith, give me, so far as thou knowest it to be profitable, to understand that thou art as we believe; and that thou art that which we believe.*<sup>1</sup>

Such were the words of St. Anselm of Canterbury, the medieval monk, as he began his discourse (*Latin Proslogium*) on the existence of God. He begins his work with the statement “Truly there is a God” and such is reality. The human heart’s longing for the transcendent and to understand that for which he yearns is expressed well by this early scholastic thinker. Christians for millennia have used rational arguments, both *a priori* and *a posteriori*, to confirm the existence of the infinitely perfect being. In this paper I will discuss the use of reason to argue for the existence of God and the proper role and usage of such arguments (be they classical or contemporary) for the people of God. I will do this by beginning with a brief discussion of the knowledge of God and humanity’s sinful suppression of such knowledge. I will then move to consider a few objections to the use of the word “proof” by clarifying the range of meaning and offering a nuanced definition. Finally, I will present several benefits to the use of theistic arguments by Christians in the evangelistic environment, the defense of the historic Christian faith, and loving God with our minds.

### THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD BELONGS TO US

The knowledge of God is universal for all people. Such a statement perhaps on its face appears naïve in a world filled with unbelief and the worship of all manner of things other than the Almighty. Yet the book of Romans begins with an unequivocal statement of just this fact; all human beings not only *have access* to the knowledge of God, but in some sense they actually *possess* the knowledge of God (Rom 1:19-21). The apostle presents the existence of a God with certain attributes as clearly perceived through what has been made. Thinkers from various spheres of evangelical thought throughout history have acknowledged that on some level all people truly know God. John Calvin argued plainly for this truth in book one of his *Institutes*, “That there exists in the human minds and indeed by natural instinct, some sense of Deity, we hold to be beyond dispute, since God himself, to prevent any man from pretending ignorance, has endued all men with some idea of his Godhead, the memory of which he constantly renews and occasionally enlarges, that all to a man being aware that there is a God, and that he is their Maker, may be condemned by their own conscience when they neither worship him nor consecrate their lives to his service.”<sup>2</sup> Others in the reformed tradition, notably the Old Princeton divines<sup>3</sup>, followed Calvin in this view. In more recent literature, theologian John Frame echoes the same theme, “Because God is Lord, He is not only knowable but *known* to all (Rom 1:21).<sup>4</sup> Millard Erickson concurs in his treatment of the subject, “All persons have a knowledge of God. Although it may be suppressed to the extent of being unconscious or unrecognizable, it is nonetheless there, and there will be areas of sensitivity to which the message may be effectively directed as a starting point.”<sup>5</sup> Likewise, political philosopher J. Budziszewski, albeit from a different context<sup>6</sup>, conveys a similar idea:

“I have written this section in reverse. It is not by molecular machines and carbon-oxygen ratios that we know that God is real. Nor is it by criticizing abstruse speculations about extraterrestrials, about the age of the universe, or about universes other than our own. *The knowledge of God belongs to us already; these arguments are not its source, but only responses to objections.* We recognize immediately that nature requires an explanation beyond itself, that the things in nature are designed,

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<sup>1</sup> Anselm, *Proslogium; Monologium; an Appendix in Behalf of the Fool by Gaunilo and Cur Deus Homo*, trans. SIDNEY NORTON DEANE (Chicago, IL: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1926), Preamble to Chapter 2.

<sup>2</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Edinburgh :: Calvin Translation Society, 1845-1846).

<sup>3</sup> See Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (1872), Part I, Chapter 1 – The Knowledge of God is Innate.

<sup>4</sup> John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1987), 18. Emphasis in original

<sup>5</sup> Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, Second ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 198.

<sup>6</sup> J. Budziszewski, *What We Can't Not Know - a Guide* (Dallas: TX: Spence Publishing, 2003). This work is a discussion about Natural Law and the witness of God in nature. In his discussion of the witness of design in the universe, Budziszewski makes the claim that we do possess the knowledge of God independently from arguments.

that design requires personal agency. In short, we recognize immediately that we are created by the one true God.”<sup>7</sup>

There is a resounding evangelical consensus<sup>8</sup> from various traditions, that people actually in some sense *know God* from a revelation through nature. If this be the case, that people do know God, we must give an account for the persistence of unbelief in the world. Our thought must now be brought to bear on those who *know Him* yet neither acknowledge nor worship him. Or stated more precisely, we must investigate how the Scripture describes the present condition of those who deny the knowledge of God.

#### SIN’S SUPPRESSION OF THE TRUTH

Many people claim to be agnostics<sup>9</sup>, to not know whether there is or is not a God. This is not disputed; people claim to not know that which they know. The usual claim of the agnostic is that the knowledge of God is simply not available, that there is just not enough information to decide one way or another. However, if the aforementioned is true, if everyone in some sense truly knows God, the person making a claim to agnosticism (or atheism for that matter) is either not telling the truth or engaging in irrational self-deception. The Scriptures record that this is precisely the case. The Psalmist tells us that “the fool says in his heart, ‘*There is no God.*’ They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is not one who does good” (Ps 14:1 ESV). In other words, a person must engage in telling himself (saying in his heart) that he does not believe in God, when in fact he knows better. According to Frame, “the ‘agnostic’ who says that he does not know if God exists is deceiving himself and may be seeking to deceive others.”<sup>10</sup> For such self-deception the only appropriate word is *irrational*. In addition the book of Romans tells us that humanity will actually “suppress the truth by *their wickedness*” denying the knowledge of God which God “has made *plain* to them” (Rom 1:18-20 ESV). It is not simply that man is self-deceived; he will actually hold down or distort the truth in his *wickedness* further revealing the source of his agnosticism. So as we begin a discussion of the valid use of arguments for God’s existence we must acknowledge that the playing field is indeed somewhat less than level. Human beings whose minds are blinded (2 Cor 4:4), whose understanding is darkened by the hardness of their hearts (Eph 4:18) are in no way neutral or objective when reasoning from the clear evidence in the universe for God’s existence. If this be the case, some think it futile to attempt to persuade unbelievers about the existence of God using reasonable arguments and evidence. If man will only come to faith through the gospel, which comes through the testimony of Scripture<sup>11</sup>, the place for “theistic proofs” that do not actually prove anything to the unbelieving mind is brought into question. Before moving to a salvaging of the use of theistic proofs for the task of the church, a hurdle must be lowered in order for a proper place of theistic arguments to be achieved. That hurdle lies with the word *proof* itself.

#### ON PROVING GOD’S EXISTENCE TO THE UNBELIEVING MIND

Some have showed an aversion to the word “prove” when speaking of the existence of God. An argument can be made that the Scriptures simply assume God’s existence (see Gen 1:1) and so Christians should do likewise in *all* their thinking.<sup>12</sup> To this the author must simply agree. Others have objected that attempting to *prove* the existence of God to unbelievers is simply futile for the unregenerate simply cannot be

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 84 Emphasis added.

<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that Karl Barth and some who follow his understanding of natural theology would object to the unbeliever having any knowledge of God from nature alone. See a discussion of Barth’s view in Erickson 187-191.

<sup>9</sup> Bertrand Russell perhaps serves as a good example of an agnostic. “An atheist, like a Christian, holds that we can know whether or not there is a God; the atheist, that we can know there is not. *The agnostic suspends judgment, saying that there are not sufficient grounds either for affirmation or for denial.* . . . An Agnostic may hold that the existence of God, though not impossible, is very improbable” Quoted in Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999).

<sup>10</sup> Frame 18.

<sup>11</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 144.

<sup>12</sup> Those who argue for a transcendental approach to apologetics (Van Til, Clark, Frame) exhort believers not to assume an unbelievers presuppositions and worldview in order to *prove* the existence of God to them. The existence of God and the Biblical worldview should be assumed in our discussions with unbelievers. See Kenneth Boa and Robert Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons - an Integrative Approach to Defending Christianity* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2001), 249-277. I would add that we can only use the rationality we *all* have, that which is endowed to us by our Creator – be it regenerate in the case of the believer or fallen and unregenerate in the case of the unbeliever. In either case, we can only use the reason, language, and minds that we have as gifts from God.

persuaded without being converted by the Word (see above). Wayne Grudem makes a helpful clarification in his discussion of the classical proofs and the validity of them to the task they are assigned. Grudem writes:

“Because all of these arguments are based on facts about the creation that are indeed true facts, we may say that all of these proofs (when carefully constructed) are, in an objective sense, valid proofs. They are valid in that they correctly evaluate the evidence and correctly reason to a true conclusion – in fact the Universe *does* have God as its cause, and it *does* show evidence of a purposeful design, and God *does* exist as a being greater than which nothing can be imagined, and God *has* given us a sense of right and wrong and a sense that his judgment is coming someday. The *actual facts* referred to in these proofs, therefore, are *true* and in that sense the proofs are valid, even though not all people are persuaded by them. But in another sense, if ‘valid’ means ‘able to compel agreement even from those who begin with false assumptions,’ then of course none of the proofs are valid because not one of them is able to *compel agreement from everyone who considers them*. Yet this is because many unbelievers either begin with invalid assumptions or do not reason correctly from the evidence. It is not because the proofs are invalid in themselves.”<sup>13</sup>

So perhaps the word *proof* is problematic if narrowly defined as *convincing to all*. Which such a high definition of proof, the amount of things that are proved in this world would prove quite small. In fact there is a long tradition<sup>14</sup> arguing in favor of a skeptical viewpoint disbelieving that anything can be proved at all. In light of Grudem, I would like to provide a nuanced definition of *proof* in the following manner. Let us call the version of *proof* = *convincing to all*, *P-proof*. This version of *P-proof* sets the bar much too high as rational persuasion still may be convincing to *some* while not to *all*. Perhaps we may define a version of proof in just such a manner, as convincing to *some*. We may call this *p-proof*. Such *p-proofs* then may be a valid part of the work of persuasion in those who actually become convinced. This then could free theistic arguments from having to perform a feat they should not be meant to perform – to convert the mind apart from God’s Word. This will leave the conversion power with God the Holy Spirit, thereby freeing the arguments to simply be a part of the evangelistic environment.<sup>15</sup> Christian philosopher William Lane Craig acknowledges a similar idea in his treatment of faith and reason. Craig differentiates between the certain knowledge of the truth of the gospel which is the privilege of the believer and the task of rationally demonstrating the truth of the gospel to others. *Knowing* Christianity to be true, according to Craig, only comes by the inner witness and confirmation of the Holy Spirit. Such knowledge is true and certain and is properly available only to the regenerate soul. *Showing* Christianity to be true requires demonstrating its truths to others in a reasonable, comprehensible fashion with the intention to persuade.<sup>16</sup> This distinction of lowering the bar of *P-proof* combined with the Craig distinction of *knowing* and *showing*, frees the Christian to use theistic arguments in her evangelistic encounters without over estimating the actual purpose and power of such arguments. Additionally, the other value of theistic arguments – that of apologetics and helping the believer to love God with all his mind – may be joyfully affirmed. To each of these ends we now turn.

#### THE BENEFITS OF THEISTIC ARGUMENTS

Now that we have freed theistic proofs from having to do the entire work of convincing and converting, we can turn to the key question of their usefulness to the church. It will be first noted that theistic arguments, based on nature, conscience, providence, and the human constitution are very helpful in the evangelistic task. When the gospel is shared with others, we admit that we are sharing with individuals who have certain presuppositions, life experiences, relationships, intellectual background and perhaps professional training. This forms what we may call their *evangelistic environment*, or *historical situation* of their soul. Some of the environment of the unbeliever may prove to be fertile ground and open windows to the gospel while some may not be so useful soil. With Scripture and the scriptural viewpoint as his foundation, the witness may properly use theistic arguments when the situation calls for it. The discerning witness should be equipped with many tools at his disposals as he proclaims the gospel. One could easily see how an understanding of cosmology

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<sup>13</sup> Grudem 144.

<sup>14</sup>See the 5 modes of skepticism in Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Scepticism*, ed. Julia Annas and Jonathan Barnes, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 40-43. The rediscovery of Sextus in the 16<sup>th</sup> century gave impetus to Enlightenment skepticism which greatly affected the history of philosophy.

<sup>15</sup> The concept of evangelistic environment will be developed later in this paper.

<sup>16</sup> William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith, Christian Truth and Apologetics*, Revised Edition ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 31-50.

would be of use if proclaiming Christ with a person with scientific interests. Just as God may use a tragedy in one's life to bring them to a readiness to hear, it also seems quite plausible that God may use rational argument as well. If God wants to open a heart to hear his Word through pre-evangelistic engagement with theistic arguments, he may do so.<sup>17</sup> We will also find that some of the arguments are very convincing to certain people. Charles Hodge echoes this in his discussion of the usefulness of such arguments.

“The second objection to natural theology is that its arguments are inconclusive. This is a point which no man can decide for other men. Every one must judge for himself. An argument which is conclusive for one mind may be powerless for other minds. That the material universe began to be; that it has not the cause of its existence within itself, and therefore must have had an extramundane cause; and that the infinitely numerous manifestations of design which it exhibits show that that cause must be intelligent, are arguments for the being of God, *which have satisfied the minds of the great body of intelligent men in all ages of the world. They should not, therefore, be dismissed as unsatisfactory, because all men do not feel their force.* Besides, as just remarked, these arguments are only confirmatory of others more direct and powerful derived from our moral and religious nature.”<sup>18</sup>

It seems that the Christian who is mindful not to assume alien, unbelieving presuppositions as he speaks with unbelievers, but argues from within his Christian framework, is quite justified and even commended in using theistic arguments in the evangelistic environment of his hearers.

Secondly, an apologetic based on reasonable arguments and logical precision has an encouraging and emboldening effect on the witness of Christian believers. Such a use of apologetics must be commended broadly in the churches. Unbelieving worldviews can bring tension to the mind of believers who are not equipped with sound Christian thought and reasoning about the issues of our day. Theistic arguments and apologetics serve as a great response to the objections of the intellectual avant-garde of our day, with which the Christian must be equipped to do battle.<sup>19</sup> These efforts should be brought to bear with full force in the discipleship ministry of the church. This is especially important for high school and college students who are bombarded with sanctioned antithetical ideas during the tenure of their studies.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, apologetics can serve to *inoculate* students against hollow and deceptive philosophy by allowing the disciple to engage with small doses of unbelieving thought while refuting it with good arguments.<sup>21</sup> The author has personally observed the effect of apologetic training on the tactful boldness of the witness of young Christians. Those who are *prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in them*, (1 Peter 3:15 ESV) usually do so joyfully without relinquishing opportunities to commend to others the gospel of our Lord.

Finally, it must be said there is another purpose for which theistic arguments and sound reasoning about God should be commended in the church. This reason finds its source in none other than the great commandment of our Lord. “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with *all your mind* and with all your strength.” (Mark 12:30 ESV, emphasis added). In light of this commandment, the following words are appropriately spoken, “We need to admit the mind into Christian fellowship again. We need the mind disciplined in Christ, enlightened by faith, passionate for God and His Creation, to be let loose in the world.”<sup>22</sup> To think deeply about the nature of the universe, the revelation of the

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<sup>17</sup> The Apostle Paul's interactions with gentile farmers and philosophers in the book of Acts (Acts 14 and 17 respectively) seem to illustrate this as part of his practice when preaching the gospel.

<sup>18</sup>Hodge. *The Facts of Nature Reveal God*, emphasis added.

<sup>19</sup> Knowledge of God belongs to us already; these arguments are not its source, *but only responses to objections.* Budziszewski. 84. Emphasis added.

<sup>20</sup> Certainly the Darwinist onslaught endured in public education can be and is being refuted by theistic thinkers in the current intelligent design movement. *Michael J. Behe, Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1998), *William Dempski and John Wilson, Uncommon Dissent: Intellectuals Who Find Darwinism Unconvincing* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2004), and *Jonathan Wells and Jody F. Sjogren, Icons of Evolution: Science or Myth? Why Much of What We Teach About Evolution Is Wrong* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2002) come to mind.

<sup>21</sup> See William Dempski and Jay Wesley Richards, *Unapologetic Apologetics - Meeting the Challenge of Theological Studies* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2001) for a discussion of Apologetics as inoculation.

<sup>22</sup> David Hazard, *The Christian and the Well-Formed Mind* quoted in J.P. Moreland, *Love Your God with All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1997) 16.

Lord, to form a uniquely Christian theology of nature, and to present arguments towards this view, is a profound way to express love to God with the mind. The church should encourage her sons and daughters to think and to reflect both on the works and words of God. By doing so, a deep and often missing part of Christian worship, that of adoring contemplation, may once again be offered in humility before the throne of grace.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper I have argued that the use of theistic arguments should be encouraged in the life of the church for their evangelistic value, their apologetic value, and for the worship of God through the life of the mind. I did this by first defining the intellectual playing field as one that is quite uneven; an arena in which unbelievers indeed *know God*, yet irrationally and sinfully suppress this knowledge in themselves and with others. I then argued that although not all people will be convinced by theistic *P-roofs* due to obstinate irrationality, there may be a place for the use of *p-roofs* that will be convincing to some in the evangelistic environment. By placing theistic arguments under the Lordship of Christ, and the witness remaining submitted to biblical authority and truth,<sup>23</sup> there remains a great treasure for the church's evangelistic, apologetic, and intellectual labors. To these ends theistic arguments are submitted for the glory of God.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> John Frame, "Presuppositional Apologetics" in Steven B. Cowan, *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000) 220, 221. Frame who puts forth a sort of *Lordship Apologetics* contends "We can reach this transcendental conclusion by many kinds of specific arguments, *including many of the traditional ones*. The traditional cosmological argument, for example, argues the God must exist as the First Cause of all the causes in the world. That conclusion is biblical and true, and if it can be drawn from true premises and valid logic, it may contribute to the goal of a transcendental conclusion. Certainly if God is the author of all meaning, he is the author of causality. And if God is the author of causality, the cause of all causes, he is the cause of all meaning. Therefore, the causal argument yields a transcendental conclusion." Emphasis added.

<sup>24</sup> Alejandro Moreno Morrison, "The Role and Use of Evidence in Reformed Presuppositional Apologetics," *IJIM Magazine Online* 2, no. 37 (2000). Morrison's article is a great example of commending theistic evidences in their proper context to those who have been opposed to their use in recent times. The conclusion is noted here:

"Evidence as a direct, positive, demonstrative tool, not merely as a heuristic or complementary tool (as in "positive inductive apologetics"), has no room in vertical argumentation (from immanent to transcendent). The transcendent God has already worked his way down to make himself present. However, in the horizontal level, evidence is in its jurisdiction and, duly submitted to the Lordship of Yahweh, can militate in the holy war against unbelief, demonstrating the folly of these creaturely attacks against God. This holy war pits the City of God with the Word of God against the city of man and the word of man. It is now my desire to encourage my fellow Reformed presuppositional apologists to engage in offensive apologetics. I urge them to claim the use of evidence to the Lordship of our God, both developing it and taking advantage of the work already done by our fellow brothers in Christ, giving it the proper scriptural focus and use, and putting it to the service of the kingdom in order to fight the good fight, the holy war, until the King appears to consummate his victory."

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## APPENDIX D – CHRISTIANITY AND THE RISE OF SCIENCE

“AN INVENTED INSTITUTION: Christianity and the Scientific Revolution” Nancy Pearcey and Charles B. Thaxton. *The Soul of Science : Christian Faith and Natural Philosophy*. Turning point Christian worldview series. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1994.

The most curious aspect of the scientific world we live in, says science writer Loren Eiseley, is that it exists at all. Westerners often unconsciously assume a doctrine of Inexorable Progress, as though the mere passage of time leads inevitably to increased knowledge as surely as an acorn becomes an oak. “Yet the archaeologist would be forced to tell us,” says Eiseley, “that several great civilizations have arisen and vanished without the benefit of a scientific philosophy.” The type of thinking known today as scientific, with its emphasis upon experiment and mathematical formulation, arose in one culture—Western Europe—and in no other.

Science, Eiseley concludes, is not “natural” to mankind at all. Inquisitiveness about the world is indeed a natural attitude, but institutional science is more than that. “It has rules which have to be learned, and practices and techniques which have to be transmitted from generation to generation by the formal process of education,” Eiseley notes. In short, it is “an *invented* cultural institution, an institution not present in all societies, and not one that may be counted upon to arise from human instinct.” Science “demands some kind of unique soil in which to flourish.” Deprived of that soil, it is “as capable of decay and death as any other human activity, such as a religion or a system of government.”<sup>1</sup>

What is that unique soil? Eiseley identifies it, somewhat reluctantly, as the Christian faith. “In one of those strange permutations of which history yields occasional rare examples,” he says, “it is the Christian world which finally gave birth in a clear, articulate fashion to the experimental method of science itself.”<sup>2</sup>

Eiseley is not alone in observing that the Christian faith in many ways inspired the birth of modern science. Science historians have developed a renewed respect for the Middle Ages, including a renewed respect for the Christian worldview culturally and intellectually dominant during that period. Today a wide range of scholars recognize that Christianity provided both intellectual presuppositions and moral sanction for the development of modern science.

### REHABILITATION OF THE MIDDLE AGES

From the Enlightenment until the early twentieth century, scholars generally divided history into three stages—the ancient world, regarded as brilliant though limited in its scientific understanding; the medieval world, dismissed as a time of intellectual and cultural desolation (the “dark ages”); and the modern age, heralded as a time when reason and enlightenment arose to dispel the mists of medieval superstition. But in recent years that simple schema has been challenged, particularly its negative characterization of the medieval period.

The rehabilitation of the Middle Ages began with the work of French physicist and philosopher Pierre Duhem (1861–1916). Searching for historical examples to illustrate his philosophy of science, Duhem investigated the history of statics (a branch of mechanics dealing with masses or forces at rest). At the outset of his research, he adopted the common assumption that the Middle Ages had contributed nothing to science. He anticipated that his story would begin with the ancient Greeks (Archimedes) and proceed directly to Leonardo da Vinci, vaulting over all intervening history.

But digging into historical sources, Duhem uncovered the work of a thirteenth-century scientist named Jordanus de Nemore, who had anticipated Leonardo and Galileo in his work on the foundations of statics. Duhem then uncovered fourteenth-century scientists such as Albert of Saxon, Jean Buridan, and Nicole Oresme, who had likewise done important work in the field. He became convinced that the roots of modern science reached back to the work of these medieval scientists—and that far from being a period of stagnation, the Middle Ages actually laid the foundations for the flowering of science.

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<sup>1</sup> Loren Eiseley, “Francis Bacon,” in *The Horizon Book of Makers of Modern Thought*, intro. Bruce Mazlish (New York: American Heritage Publishing, 1972), pp. 95–96, emphasis in original.

<sup>2</sup> Loren Eiseley, *Darwin’s Century* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1958, Doubleday Anchor Books, 1961), p. 62.

Duhem was a Catholic, and some have dismissed his conclusions as an attempt to cast a more favorable light on the Middle Ages, dominated as it was by the Catholic church. But as historian David Lindberg argues, Duhem seems to have been genuinely surprised by the scientific fertility of the medieval mind.<sup>3</sup> This is not to say, however, that he was insensitive to the religious implications of his discoveries. Duhem was quick to see apologetical value in the fact that Christianized medieval Europe was not hostile to scientific learning after all—that, on the contrary, it was the womb that gave birth to the scientific enterprise.

### *Images of War*

Duhem's work inspired other historians to probe the various ways Christianity provided an intellectual environment conducive to scientific endeavor. That such questions are even entertained indicates a dramatic turnaround in thinking about the relation between science and Christian faith. The image most of us grew up with was one of conflict and hostility. Phrases such as “the war between science and religion” are so familiar many people don't even challenge them.

Yet this conception of warfare is actually a *misconception*, and one of recent lineage. Over some three centuries, the relationship between faith and science can best be described as an alliance. The scientist living between 1500 and the late 1800s inhabited a very different universe from that of the scientist living today. The earlier scientist was very likely to be a believer who did not think scientific inquiry and religious devotion incompatible. On the contrary, his motivation for studying the wonders of nature was a religious impulse to glorify the God who had created them. Indeed, though he studied the physical creation, he was unlikely to be a scientist *per se* (the term “scientist” was not coined until 1834) but a churchman. Especially in the English countryside, the parson-naturalist was a common figure.

As Colin Russell tells it in his book *Cross-Currents: Interactions Between Science and Faith*,<sup>4</sup> the idea of a war between science and religion is a relatively recent invention—one carefully nurtured by those who hope the victor in the conflict will be science. In late nineteenth-century England, several small groups of scientists and scholars organized under the leadership of Thomas H. Huxley to overthrow the cultural dominance of Christianity—particularly the intellectual dominance of the Anglican church. Their goal was to secularize society, replacing the Christian worldview with scientific naturalism, a worldview that recognizes the existence of nature alone. Though secularists, they understood very well that they were replacing one religion by another, for they described their goal as the establishment of the “church scientific.” Huxley even referred to his scientific lectures as “lay sermons.”

It was during this period that a whole new literature emerged purporting to reveal the hostility religion has shown toward science throughout history. The most virulent were works by John William Draper (1811–1882) and Andrew Dickson White (1832–1918)—works regarded by most historians today as severely distorted because of the authors' polemical purposes.

Draper's *History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science* portrayed the history of science as “a narrative of the conflict of two contending powers, the expansive force of the human intellect on one side, and the compression arising from traditional faith and human interests on the other.” The faith Draper has in mind is primarily that of the Catholic church, and he uses the language of “antagonism” and “struggle”—“a bitter, a mortal animosity.” He accuses the Catholic church of “ferociously suppressing by the stake and the sword every attempt at progress” and of having hands “steeped in blood!”<sup>5</sup>

Draper's dramatic scenario of a great battle between theologians and scientists attracted a wide readership, but its anti-Catholicism eventually dated the book. White's *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology* had a more lasting influence. As late as 1955, Harvard historian of science George Sarton was still praising White for writing “an instructive book.”<sup>6</sup> In 1965, in an abridged edition of White's book, historian

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<sup>3</sup> David C. Lindberg, “Conceptions of the Scientific Revolution,” in *Reappraisals of the Scientific Revolution*, ed. David C. Lindberg and Robert S. Westman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 14. Similarly, R. N. D. Martin says there is no evidence to show that Duhem's historical work was motivated by a desire to defend scholasticism. See *Pierre Duhem: Philosophy and History in the Work of a Believing Physicist* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> Colin Russell, *Cross-Currents: Interactions Between Science and Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), pp. 190–96.

<sup>5</sup> John William Draper, *History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science* (New York: D. Appleton, 1875), pp. vi, xi, 364, 365.

<sup>6</sup> The lesson of White's book, Sarton says, is that theologians who “were indiscreet enough to interfere” with science always ended up supporting the wrong theories. “I wonder,” Sarton muses, “whether they were not the victims of a sly devil who wanted to make fun of



Bruce Mazlish praised White for establishing his thesis “beyond any reasonable doubt.”<sup>7</sup> And in 1991, a well-known science writer, on hearing that we were composing a book on the history of science and Christian faith, took the time to write us and recommend White’s book as an important treatment of the subject.

White states his central thesis in these words:

In all modern history, interference with science in the supposed interest of religion, no matter how conscientious such interference may have been, has resulted in the direst evils both to religion and to science.<sup>8</sup>

Heaping up quotation upon quotation, laced with heavy sarcasm and irony, White purported to prove the pernicious effects of Christianity upon the advance of science. White’s themes were picked up by several lesser writers, all telling the same story, etching into Western consciousness a mythology of fierce combat between science and Christian faith.

Even as the warfare image spread, however, it began to be challenged. Scientists and historians such as Alfred North Whitehead and Michael B. Foster became convinced that, far from impeding the progress of science, Christianity had actually encouraged it—that the Christian culture within which science arose was not a menace but a midwife to science.

### ***The Nature of Nature***

It should not be terribly surprising that Christianity was an important ally of the scientific enterprise. After all, modern science arose within a culture saturated with Christian faith. That historical fact alone is suggestive. It was Christianized Europe that became the birthplace of modern science—there and nowhere else.

Through sheer practical know-how and rules-of-thumb, several cultures in antiquity—from the Chinese to the Arabs—produced a higher level of learning and technology than medieval Europe did. Yet it was Christianized Europe and not these more advanced cultures that gave birth to modern science as a systematic, self-correcting discipline. The historian is bound to ask why this should be so. Why did Christianity form the matrix within which this novel approach to the natural world developed?

Of course, many factors other than Christian faith contributed to making science possible—the growth of trade and commerce, technological advances, the founding of scientific institutions such as the Royal Society, increased circulation of journals, and so on. Yet these were not so much the sources of the scientific revolution as the avenues by which it spread. The source itself seems to have been a tacit attitude toward nature, a flowering forth of assumptions whose roots had been deepening and strengthening for centuries.<sup>9</sup>

Scientific investigation depends upon certain assumptions about the world—and science is impossible until those assumptions are in place. As Foster argues, Western thinkers had to ascribe to nature the character and attributes that made it a possible object of scientific study *in advance* of the actual establishment of

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them.” There’s no doubt that Sarton himself was making fun of them. He goes on to praise theologians who know better than to “tamper” with scientific controversies. George Sarton, “Introductory Essay,” in *Science, Religion, and Reality*, ed. Joseph Needham (New York: George Braziller, 1955), pp. 14–15.

<sup>7</sup> Bruce Mazlish, preface to Andrew Dickson White, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology*, abridged ed. (New York: Free Press, 1965), p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> Andrew Dickson White, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology*, 2 vols. (New York: Dover Publications, 1960, reprint of an 1896 edition), 1:viii.

<sup>9</sup> The term “scientific revolution” covers roughly the period between Copernicus and Newton. It became common usage after Butterfield’s lectures, published as *The Origins of Modern Science* (1948), and A. R. Hall’s book *The Scientific Revolution, 1500–1800* (1954).

Some historians object to the term “revolution” to describe the beginnings of modern science, since the process was neither sudden nor violent. We will use the term only in the sense that certain philosophical concepts (e.g., Aristotelian cosmology) were overthrown and replaced.

science.<sup>10</sup> As Whitehead puts it, “faith in the possibility of science” came *antecedently* to the development of actual scientific theory.

This faith, Whitehead explains, rested on certain habits of thought, such as the lawfulness of nature—which in turn, he maintains, came from the Christian doctrine of the world as a divine creation. Whitehead did not mean that everyone living in Europe at the time of the scientific revolution was a committed Christian. But even those who rejected orthodox Biblical doctrines continued to live and think within the intellectual framework of the Biblical worldview. “I am not talking of the explicit beliefs of a few individuals,” Whitehead says, but rather “the impress on the European mind arising from the unquestioned faith of centuries”—the “instinctive tone of thought and not a mere creed of words.”<sup>11</sup>

What is this “tone of thought”? Christian conceptions of reality are woven so extensively into the fabric of the Western mind that it takes an effort of the historical imagination to perceive their originality. Indeed, throughout much of Western history, Christian scholars have been so receptive to external philosophical ideas—so willing to formulate their positions in terms derived from Aristotelianism or neo-Platonism (as we shall see in following chapters)—that the uniqueness of the Christian perspective was nearly obscured. Yet unique it was, and the best way to perceive its novelty is to set it alongside contrasting views common in the ancient world.

### ***Here Today, Here Tomorrow***

Science is the study of nature, and the possibility of science depends upon one’s attitude toward nature. Biblical religion gave to Western culture several of its fundamental assumptions about the natural world.

To begin with, the Bible teaches that nature is real. If this seems too obvious to mention, recall that many belief systems regard nature as unreal. Various forms of pantheism and idealism teach that finite, particular things are merely “appearances” of the One, the Absolute, the Infinite. Individuality and separateness are illusions. Hinduism, for instance, teaches that the everyday world of material objects is *maya*, illusion. It is doubtful whether a philosophy that so denigrates the material world would be capable of inspiring the careful attention to it that is necessary for science.

The Christian doctrine of creation, on the other hand, teaches that finite objects are not mere appearances of the Infinite. God made them; they have a real existence. In the words of Langdon Gilkey, professor of theology at the University of Chicago School of Divinity, the doctrine of creation implies that the world is not illusory; it is “a realm of definable structures and real relations, and so is a possible object both for scientific and for philosophical study.”<sup>12</sup>

### ***God Made It Good***

Science rests not only on metaphysical convictions but also on convictions about value. A society must be persuaded that nature is of great value, and hence an object worthy of study. The ancient Greeks lacked this conviction. The ancient world often equated the material world with evil and disorder; hence, it denigrated anything to do with material things. Manual labor was relegated to slaves, while philosophers sought a life of leisure in order to pursue the “higher things.” Many historians believe this is one reason the Greeks did not develop an empirical science, which requires practical, hands-on observation and experimentation.

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<sup>10</sup> M. B. Foster, “The Christian Doctrine of Creation and the Rise of Modern Natural Science,” *Mind* 43 (1934), reprinted in *Science and Religious Belief: A Selection of Recent Historical Studies*, ed. C. A. Russell (London: University of London Press, 1973). Also reprinted in *Creation: The Impact of an Idea*, ed. Daniel O’Connor and Francis Oakley (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1969).

<sup>11</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, Free Press, 1925), pp. 12–13.

<sup>12</sup> Langdon Gilkey, *Maker of Heaven and Earth: The Christian Doctrine of Creation in the Light of Modern Knowledge* (New York: University Press of America, 1959), p. 132.

Against the surrounding Greek culture, the early church defended a high view of the material world.<sup>13</sup> Christianity teaches that the world has great value as God's creation. Genesis repeats the joyful refrain again and again: "And God saw that it was good." In the words of Mary Hesse, a British philosopher of science, "there has never been room in the Hebrew or Christian tradition for the idea that the material world is something to be escaped from, and that work in it is degrading. Material things are to be *used* to the glory of God and for the good of men." As a result, "in western Europe in the Christian era there was never the same derogation of manual work. There was no slave class to do the work, and craftsmen were respected."<sup>14</sup>

The dignity of work became an even more prominent theme in the Reformation. The concept of "calling" was extended from church vocations to secular vocations. According to theologian Ian Barbour, Protestants believed that "man should serve God not by withdrawing to a monastic life but by carrying out any honest and useful job with integrity and diligence." This general enhancement of the dignity of work, Barbour says, served to endorse scientific work as well.<sup>15</sup>

John Calvin, for example, did not call merely for the devotional contemplation of creation; he also called for active labor in creation, both practically and intellectually. In Calvin's words, "there is need of art and more exacting toil in order to investigate the motion of the stars, to determine their assigned stations, to measure their intervals, to note their properties."<sup>16</sup>

In the spirit of the Reformation, the astronomer Johannes Kepler wrote of being "called" by God to use his talents in his work as an astronomer. In one of his notebooks, Kepler broke spontaneously into prayer:

I give you thanks, Creator and God, that you have given me this joy in thy creation, and I rejoice in the works of your hands. See I have now completed the work to which I was called. In it I have used all the talents you have lent to my spirit.<sup>17</sup>

In the same spirit, the early chemist Jean-Baptiste van Helmont insisted that the pursuit of science is "a good gift," given by God. This broad concept of calling lent spiritual and moral sanction to science as a legitimate way of serving God.

### ***A Garden, Not a God***

In Biblical teaching, nature is good, but it is not a god. It is merely a creature. The Bible stands firmly against any deification of the creation.

Pagan religions are typically animistic or pantheistic, treating the natural world either as the abode of the divine or as an emanation of God's own essence. The most familiar form of animism holds that spirits or gods reside in nature. In the words of Harvey Cox, a Baptist theologian, pagan man "lives in an enchanted forest." Glens and groves, rocks and streams are alive with spirits, sprites, demons. Nature teems with sun gods, river

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<sup>13</sup> Thomas Torrance writes that the "Christian belief in the goodness and integrity of the physical universe ... played an incalculable part in transforming the ancient worldview. It destroyed the Platonic and Aristotelian idea that matter is, if not evil, the raw material of corruption and unreality and the source of disorder in the universe, and it also ruled entirely out of consideration the pessimistic views of nature that emanated from the dualist sects such as the Manichaeans and Gnostics, thereby emancipating the material reality of the universe for serious scientific attention." From *Divine and Contingent Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 67.

<sup>14</sup> Mary Hesse, *Science and the Human Imagination: Aspects of the History and Logic of Physical Science* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955), pp. 42–43. See also Harvey Cox, "The Christian in a World of Technology," in *Science and Religion: New Perspectives on the Dialogue*, ed. Ian G. Barbour (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 263.

<sup>15</sup> Ian Barbour, *Issues in Science and Religion* (New York: Harper and Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1966), pp. 48–49. This is not to overlook the fact that the monks did engage in labor, regarding it as one way to glorify God. Nevertheless, many historians have noted the distinctive emphasis in Protestantism on the moral and spiritual value of all labor. See, for example, Max Weber in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958). For Luther, Weber says (p. 81), "every legitimate calling has exactly the same worth in the sight of God."

<sup>16</sup> Cited in Eugene M. Klaaren, *Religious Origins of Modern Science: Belief in Creation in Seventeenth-Century Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 41.

<sup>17</sup> Cited in Christopher Kaiser, *Creation and the History of Science* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 127.

goddesses, astral deities. Totemism rests on the idea that the creatures of the natural world are tied to human beings in a bond of spiritual kinship.<sup>18</sup>

The Biblical doctrine of creation rules out all this. God does not inhabit the world the way a dryad inhabits a tree; He is not the personalization of natural forces. He is not the world's "soul"; He is its Creator. It is the work of His hands, as a vase is the work of the potter. The opening lines of Genesis 1 stand in stark contrast to most ancient religions in rejecting any religious status to the sun, moon, and stars. In Genesis the heavenly bodies are not divine; they are merely "light-bearers," placed in the sky to serve God's purposes, the way a woman hangs a lantern to light the porch.

Dutch historian of science R. Hooykaas describes this as the "de-deification" of nature.<sup>19</sup> Natural phenomena—sun, moon, forests, rivers—are no longer seen as the locus of deity, no longer objects of religious awe and reverence. They are creations of God, placed in the world to serve His purposes and contribute to human welfare.

The de-deification of nature was a crucial precondition for science. As long as nature commands religious worship, dissecting her is judged impious. As long as the world is charged with divine beings and powers, the only appropriate response is to supplicate them or ward them off. In the words of seventeenth-century chemist Robert Boyle, the tendency to regard nature as sacred "has been a discouraging impediment" to science.<sup>20</sup>

Science is not merely a method of inquiry; it begins with an intellectual stance vis-a-vis the natural world. As Cox writes, "however highly developed a culture's powers of observation, however refined its equipment for measuring, no real scientific breakthrough is possible until man can face the natural world unafraid."<sup>21</sup> The monotheism of the Bible exorcised the gods of nature, freeing humanity to enjoy and investigate it without fear. When the world was no longer an object of worship, then—and only then—could it become an object of study.

### ***A Rational God, an Orderly World***

To become an object of study the world must be regarded as a place where events occur in a reliable, predictable fashion. This, too, was a legacy of Christianity. Whereas paganism taught a multitude of immanent gods, Christianity taught a single transcendent Creator, whose handiwork is a unified, coherent universe.

Presbyterian theologian Thomas Derr expresses the idea in these words:

Man did not face a world full of ambiguous and capricious gods who were alive in the objects of the natural world. He had to do with one supreme creator God whose will was steadfast. Nature was thus abruptly desacralized, stripped of many of its arbitrary, unpredictable, and doubtless terrifying aspects.<sup>22</sup>

In a similar vein, Nobel Prize-winning biochemist Melvin Calvin muses on the fundamental conviction in science that the universe is ordered:

As I try to discern the origin of that conviction, I seem to find it in a basic notion discovered 2000 or 3000 years ago, and enunciated first in the Western world by the ancient Hebrews: namely, that the

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<sup>18</sup> Harvey Cox, *The Secular City*, rev. ed. (Toronto: Macmillan, 1966), pp. 19–21. Similar themes can be found in Arend van Leeuwen, *Christianity in World History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh House Press, 1964).

<sup>19</sup> R. Hooykaas, *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), p. 17.

<sup>20</sup> The full quotation from Boyle, given in Klaaren p. 150, is as follows:

The veneration, wherewith men are imbued for what they call nature, has been a discouraging impediment to the empire of man over the inferior creatures of God: for many have not only looked upon it, as an impossible thing to compass, but as something *impious to attempt*, the removing of those boundaries which nature seems to have put and settled among her productions; and whilst they look upon her as such a venerable thing, some make a kind of *scruple of conscience* to endeavor so to emulate any of her works, as to excel them. (emphasis added)

<sup>21</sup> Cox, *Secular City*, p. 21. As Forbes observes, it was "Christianity, by its opposition to animism, [that] opened the door to a rational use of the forces of nature." R. J. Forbes, "Power," in *A History of Technology*, vol. 2, ed. Charles Singer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), p. 606.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Sieger Derr, *Ecology and Human Need*, originally published in 1973 under the title *Ecology and Human Liberation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), p. 20.

universe is governed by a single God, and is not the product of the whims of many gods, each governing his own province according to his own laws. This monotheistic view seems to be the historical foundation for modern science.<sup>23</sup>

Of course, the idea of order in nature rests not simply on the *existence* of a single God but also on the *character* of that God. The God revealed in the Bible is trustworthy and dependable; the creation of such a God must likewise be dependable. Derr explains:

As the creation of a trustworthy God, nature exhibited regularity, dependability, and orderliness. It was intelligible and could be studied. It displayed a knowable order.<sup>24</sup>

The work of Copernicus provides a historical example. Copernicus tells us that, in his search for a better cosmology than that of Aristotle and Ptolemy, he first went back to the writings of other ancient philosophers. But he uncovered significant disagreement among the ancients regarding the structure of the universe. This inconsistency disturbed him, Copernicus said, for he knew the universe was “wrought for us by a supremely good and orderly Creator.” His own scientific work became a quest for a better cosmology—one that would, in the words of theologian Christopher Kaiser, “uphold the regularity, uniformity, and symmetry that befitted the work of God.”<sup>25</sup>

Another historical example comes from the eighteenth century when an explosive increase in knowledge of new life forms threatened to destroy belief in an underlying order in the organic world. Zoologist Ernst Mayr describes the near-bewilderment among natural historians of the time:

When viewing the almost chaotic mountains of new species, how could one avoid asking, “Where is that harmony of nature of which every naturalist is dreaming? What are the laws that control diversity? What plan did the father of all things have when he designed little creatures and big ones?”

Yet those committed to the doctrine of creation held firmly to belief in a divine plan even in the face of apparent chaos. “It was simply inconceivable, in a period so strongly dominated by natural theology,” Mayr writes, “that organic diversity could be totally without rhyme or reason, that it could be simply the result of ‘accident.’” This dogged faith spurred naturalists on in the hope of discovering “the plan of creation.”<sup>26</sup> They trusted that because God had made the world, in the end it would reveal an underlying order.

### ***Follow the Law***

Belief in an orderly universe came to be summed up in the concept of natural law. The phrase “laws of nature” is so familiar to the modern mind that we are generally unaware of its uniqueness. People in pagan cultures who see nature as alive and moved by mysterious forces are not likely to develop the conviction that all natural occurrences are lawful and intelligible.

In every culture, of course, craftsmen have developed rough-and-ready rules of procedure. But when they encounter an irregularity or anomaly, they simply accept it as part of the inscrutable nature of things. As historian A. R. Hall points out, the concept of natural law was unknown to both the ancient Western world and the Asian world. When the concept finally arose in the Middle Ages, Hall says, it signified “a notable departure” from anything that had gone before.

The source of this departure Hall identifies as the Biblical teaching of a Creator. As he puts it, the use of the word *law* in the context of natural events “would have been unintelligible in antiquity, whereas the Hebraic and Christian belief in a deity who was at once Creator and Law-giver rendered it valid.”<sup>27</sup> The Biblical God is

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<sup>23</sup> Melvin Calvin, *Chemical Evolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 258.

<sup>24</sup> Derr, *Ecology and Human Need*, p. 26. Derr goes on: “Many scientists, philosophers, and historians ... have remarked that modern science owes much to the Christian faith in the dependability of the creator God.”

<sup>25</sup> Kaiser, *Creation and the History of Science*, p. 109.

<sup>26</sup> Ernst Mayr, *The Growth of Biological Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 199. The quotations here may appear to identify Mayr as a proponent of natural theology. He is not; his own position is a completely materialistic form of evolution.

<sup>27</sup> A. R. Hall, *The Scientific Revolution, 1500–1800: The Formation of the Modern Scientific Attitude* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1954), pp. 171–72. As historian John Randall explains, “Natural laws were regarded as real laws or commands, decrees of the Almighty, literally

the Divine Legislator who governs nature by decrees set down in the beginning. We see that conviction, for example, in the writings of seventeenth-century mathematician and philosopher René Descartes, who said the mathematical laws sought by science were legislated by God in the same manner as a king ordains laws in his realm.

The order of the reasoning here is important. The early scientists did not argue that the world was lawfully ordered, and *therefore* there must be a rational God. Instead, they argued that there was a rational God, and *therefore* the world must be lawfully ordered. They had greater confidence in the existence and character of God than in the lawfulness of nature.

As historian Carl Becker explains, until the scientific revolution was well under way, nature simply did not strike most people as either lawful or rational. Nature “seemed to common sense intractable, even mysterious and dangerous, at best inharmonious to man.” The deep conviction that nature is intelligible came from Biblical principles. In Becker’s words, theologians

argued that, since God is goodness and reason, his creation must somehow be, even if not evidently so to finite minds, good and reasonable. Design in nature was thus derived *a priori* from the character which the Creator was assumed to have.

The idea of natural law, Becker concludes, was not derived from observations; it was derived *prior* to observations from belief in the Biblical God.<sup>28</sup> It was not a fact of experience but an article of faith.

### ***Precisely So***

One of the most distinctive aspects of modern science is its use of mathematics—the conviction not only that nature is lawful but also that those laws can be stated in precise mathematical formulas. This conviction, too, historians have traced to the Biblical teaching on creation.

The Biblical God created the universe *ex nihilo* and hence has absolute control over it. Genesis paints a picture of a Workman completely in charge of His materials. Hence in its essential structure the universe is precisely what God wants it to be.

This idea was alien to the ancient world. In all other religions, the creation of the world begins with some kind of pre-existing substance with its own inherent nature. As a result, the creator is not absolute and does not have the freedom to mold the world exactly as he wills.

For example, in Greek philosophy the world consists of eternal matter structured by eternal rational universals called Ideas or Forms. In Plato’s creation myth, the creator (demiurge) is an inferior deity who did not create from nothing; he merely injected reason (Ideas) into reason-less matter. And even that he did imperfectly because matter was stubborn stuff, capable of resisting the rational structure imparted by the Ideas. In short, this is a creator whose hands are tied, as Hooykaas writes, in two respects:

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obeyed without a single act of rebellion.” John Herman Randall, *The Making of the Modern Mind* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1926, 1940), p. 274. See also Stephen F. Mason, *A History of the Sciences*, originally published under the title *Main Currents of Scientific Thought* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), pp. 173, 182.

<sup>28</sup> Carl Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932), p. 55. By the eighteenth century, however, the logic of the argument began to be reversed, taking on the form familiar to us today. As science progressively revealed the marvelous order of nature, people began to argue not from God to order but from order to God. This is the classic argument from design.

For example, in Hume’s *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, the character Cleanthes does not argue that God is eternal reason, and therefore nature must be rational; instead he argues that nature is a lawful machine, and therefore God must be a rational engineer. Natural law had ceased to be an article of faith and had become identified with the observed behavior of objects. (Becker, pp. 56–57.)

In other words, whereas formerly the existence of God was regarded as so certain that it could serve as the starting point for argument, now it was the orderliness of nature, discovered by science, that was regarded as more certain. Order in nature became the starting point of argument, and the existence of God became an inference from it. This is not to deny the importance or validity of design arguments but only to point out the massive intellectual shift that has taken place.

He had to follow not his own design but the model of the eternal Ideas; and second, he had to put the stamp of the Ideas on a chaotic, recalcitrant matter which he had not created himself.<sup>29</sup>

As a result, the Greeks expected a level of imprecision in nature, a certain fuzziness at the edges. If some facts did not fit their theories, well, that was to be expected in an imperfect world. Individual things were, after all, only rough approximations to the rational Ideas or Forms. As historian Dudley Shapere explains, in Greek thought the physical world “contains an essentially irrational element: nothing in it can be described *exactly* by reason, and in particular by mathematical concepts and laws.”<sup>30</sup>

By contrast, the Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* means there is no pre-existing substance with its own independent properties to limit what God can do. God creates the world exactly as He wills. For a Platonist, if a line in nature is not quite circular, that is because nature is an only partially successful approximation to geometrical Ideas. But for a Christian, if God had wanted the line to be circular, He would have made it that way. If it is not exactly a circle, it must be exactly something else—perhaps an ellipse. The scientist can be confident that it is exactly *something*, and not mere capricious variation from the ideal.

A striking example can be found in the work of Kepler, who struggled for years with the slight difference of eight minutes between observation and calculation of the orbit of the planet Mars. Eventually this slight imprecision drove him to abandon the idea of circular orbits and to postulate elliptical orbits. If Kepler had not maintained the conviction that nature must be precise, he would not have agonized over those eight minutes and would not have broken through a traditional belief in circular orbits that had held sway for two thousand years. Kepler spoke gratefully of those eight minutes as a “gift of God.” Thus the application of geometry and mathematics to the analysis of physical motion rests on the Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. The implication is that God is omnipotent; there is no recalcitrant matter to resist His will. In the words of physicist C. F. von Weizsacker:

Matter in the Platonic sense, which must be ‘prevailed upon’ by reason, will not obey mathematical laws exactly: matter which God has created from nothing may well strictly follow the rules which its Creator has laid down for it. In this sense I called modern science a legacy, I might even have said a child, of Christianity.<sup>31</sup>

Historian R. G. Collingwood expresses the argument most succinctly. He writes: “The possibility of an applied mathematics is an expression, in terms of natural science, of the Christian belief that nature is the creation of an omnipotent God.”<sup>32</sup>

### ***The Spitting Image***

Belief in a rational order in nature would have no practical benefit for science were it not accompanied by the belief that humans can discover that order. Historically, Eiseley says, science stemmed from “the sheer act of faith that the universe possessed order *and could be interpreted by rational minds*.”<sup>33</sup> The latter is just as important as the former. It signifies that science cannot proceed without an epistemology, or theory of

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<sup>29</sup> Hooykaas, *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science*, pp. 3–4.

<sup>30</sup> Dudley Shapere, *Galileo: A Philosophical Study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), pp. 134–36, emphasis in original.

<sup>31</sup> C. F. von Weizsacker, *The Relevance of Science* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 163. See also George Herbert Mead, *Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, Works of George Herbert Mead, vol. 2, ed. and intro. Merritt H. Moore (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), pp. 1, 5–8. Mead writes that science rests on the “confident faith” that every detail in nature can be rationally understood. The source of that faith, he says, is the theological doctrine that the world was created by a God who was infinitely intelligent and who had infinite power. Everything that such a deity created ... must be the expression of that intelligence, and nothing could resist its expression.... There could be nothing accidental or irrational in such a world.

To speak of the rationality of creation is not to deny the Biblical teaching of the Fall, which states that since the original creation the world has been marred by sin, death, and disharmony. Yet the Fall does not completely destroy the inherent character of creation. It represents a temporary disfigurement of that character—a disfigurement that can be reversed in redemption. This is quite different from the Greek view where matter is intrinsically opposed to reason, order, and goodness.

<sup>32</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *An Essay on Metaphysics* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, Gateway Editions, 1972; originally published by London: Oxford University Press, 1940), pp. 253–57.

<sup>33</sup> Eiseley, *Darwin's Century*, p. 62.



knowledge, guaranteeing that the human mind is equipped to gain genuine knowledge of the world. Historically, this guarantee came from the doctrine that humanity was created in the image of God.

A cross-cultural comparison can help clarify the point. Joseph Needham, a student of Chinese culture, asks in his book *The Grand Titration* why the Chinese never developed modern science. The reason, he said, is that the Chinese had no belief either in an intelligible order in nature nor in the human ability to decode an order should it exist. As Needham writes:

There was no confidence that the code of Nature's laws could be unveiled and read, because there was no assurance that a divine being, even more rational than ourselves, had ever formulated such a code capable of being read.

The Chinese did sense some order in nature, but they conceived of it as an inherent necessity inscrutable to the human mind. "It was not an order ordained by a rational personal being," Needham explains, "and hence there was no guarantee that other rational personal beings would be able to spell out in their own earthly languages the pre-existing divine code of laws which he had previously formulated."<sup>34</sup>

In Europe, by contrast, there was such a "guarantee"—namely, belief that a rational Creator made both the world and also "rational personal beings." The implication is that the two kinds of rationality—divine and human—are in some measure similar. As a result, humans can "think God's thoughts after Him." As Kaiser explains, it is because humans reflect the same rationality by which God ordered creation that they can understand that order. Stated briefly, the natural world is comprehensible because "the same Logos that is responsible for its ordering is also reflected in human reason."<sup>35</sup>

We find historical evidence for this confidence in human reason in a study of science and religion in Elizabethan England by historian Paul Kocher. During that period, Kocher says, people generally believed that natural science was a gift of God to humanity. This was not taken to mean that science had been implanted ready-made in the human mind; rather God had created humans with the powers of observation and reasoning necessary to gain reliable knowledge about the natural world. Confidence in human reason was tempered by the doctrine of the Fall, which taught that the human intellect is marred by sin and open to error and distortion. In the main, however, Christian faith undergirded the conviction that humans had been given the capacity to know truth. In Kocher's words, the theory of knowledge tacitly accepted by Elizabethan scientists "rested on the faith that God, having placed man here on earth, could not have been so wasteful or so ironic as to blind him to the real nature of the surrounding world."<sup>36</sup>

### **Look and See**

To say that the order of creation can be grasped by human intelligence is to say that it is intelligible. Yet there may be differing ideas of what *kind* of order and what kind of intelligibility the world exhibits. Throughout Western history, various conceptions of intelligibility have vied for acceptance.

Consider first the Aristotelian concept of intelligibility. Aristotelian logic understood natural objects on the model of man-made artifacts. An artifact like a chair or a saucepan can be analyzed as a material substratum arranged according to the guiding principle of a rational goal or purpose (the Aristotelian Form). Indeed, what *defines* the object is not the material base but the purpose. It does not matter, for example, whether a saucepan is made of aluminum or cast iron, just so long as it is an object in which liquids may be heated.

Moreover, once we understand the purpose of the saucepan, we may then deduce by rigorous logic many of its properties—that its shape must be such that it can contain liquid, that it must not melt when heated, that it must not dissolve in certain liquids, and so on. In Aristotelian logic, these properties belong to its essence or Form.

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<sup>34</sup> Joseph Needham, *The Grand Titration: Science and Society in East and West* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), p. 327.

<sup>35</sup> Kaiser, *Creation and the History of Science*, pp. 10, 121. Similarly, historian Robert Cohen notes that the rise of science required a belief in a "rational creator of all things," with its corollary that "we lesser rational beings might, by virtue of that Godlike rationality, be able to decipher the laws of nature." Robert Cohen, "Alternative Interpretations of the History of Science," in *The Validation of Scientific Theories*, ed. Philipp G. Frank (Boston: Beacon Press, 1956), p. 227.

<sup>36</sup> Paul Kocher, *Science and Religion in Elizabethan England* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1953), p. 32.



The same logic was applied to nature. For the Aristotelian, nature consists of matter structured by purposes, essences, Forms. The scientist best understands a natural object by asking what it is for. Once the purpose of the object has been uncovered, in Aristotle's view, the scientist knows all that is really necessary. He has penetrated to the heart of reality. He does not need to make detailed observations of the object because, with its purpose in mind, he can deduce what its essential properties must be, just as we deduced the properties of a saucepan.<sup>37</sup>

This pattern of reasoning was taken from geometry. Once we know that a triangle is a three-sided figure, we can deduce many of its other properties. Thus Aristotelian science tended to stress rational intuition of purposes or Forms followed by deduction, rather than observation and experiment.

In the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas adapted Aristotelian philosophy to Christian belief in a hybrid system of thought that came to be called scholasticism. The scholastics reinterpreted the Forms as God's purposes in nature, injected by God at creation. In the Christianized version, the Forms became created powers that act as God's lieutenants or vice-regents to order nature. As a result, science continued to emphasize rational intuition of the Forms rather than experimentation. Experimental science had to await a shift away from Aristotelianism.

The shift began when some Christians became troubled by the Aristotelian concept of Forms. The concept appeared to limit God's creative activity, as though God had to make do with the prescribed properties of matter. For example, some Christian Aristotelians argued that the "nature" of the heavens demanded circular motion by its inner law of rational necessity—as though God's hand were restrained by some inherent necessity in the structure of things.

In 1277 Etienne Tempier, Bishop of Paris, issued a condemnation of several theses derived from Aristotelianism—that God could not allow any form of planetary motion other than circular, that He could not make a vacuum, and many more. The condemnation of 1277 helped inspire a form of theology known as voluntarism, which admitted no limitations on God's power. It regarded natural law not as Forms inherent *within* nature but as divine commands imposed from *outside* nature. Voluntarism insisted that the structure of the universe—indeed, its very existence—is not rationally necessary but is contingent upon the free and transcendent will of God.

Voluntarist theology eventually inspired the Reformers who emphasized the passive impotence of sinners in salvation and the freedom and sovereignty of God. As Gary Deason shows, these theological ideas eventually trickled over into science. The view of sinners as passive inspired a parallel view of matter as passive. Matter was driven not by internal rational Forms but by the sovereign commands of God. The freedom of God in bestowing salvation inspired a parallel view of His freedom in creation and providence. God was not restricted by any inherent necessity; He freely bestowed order according to His own will and design.<sup>38</sup>

As historian A. C. Crombie explains, the problem with Christian Aristotelianism was that it viewed the universe as "a necessarily determined emanation from God's reason, instead of a free creation of His will, as Christian theology taught." In its extreme form, Aristotelianism held

that the ultimate rational causes of things in God's mind could be discovered by the human reason; and that Aristotle had in fact discovered those causes, so that the universe *must necessarily* be constituted as he had described it, and *could not* be otherwise.<sup>39</sup>

It was this notion of necessity constraining even God Himself that the voluntarists objected to. In contrast, they emphasized God's omnipotence and His freedom to create the world according to His own purposes, by His sovereign commands.

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<sup>37</sup> Hesse, *Science and the Human Imagination*, pp. 44–45. See also Gilkey, *Maker of Heaven and Earth*, pp. 123–25; O'Connor and Oakley, *Creation: The Impact of an Idea*, General Introduction, p. 18. It is important to keep in mind that, for Aristotle, Form does not mean shape but essential purpose.

<sup>38</sup> Gary Deason, "Reformation Theology and the Mechanistic Conception of Nature," in *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter Between Christianity and Science*, ed. David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

<sup>39</sup> A. C. Crombie, *Medieval and Early Modern Science*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 315, emphasis added.

As a historical example, consider van Helmont, an early chemist. Van Helmont was adamantly opposed to the Aristotelian concept of final cause, and equated natural law with divine command. He wrote:

I believe that Nature is the command of God, whereby a thing is that which it is, and doth that which it is commanded to do or act.

This, he wrote, is “a Christian definition, taken out of the Holy Scripture,” as opposed to an Aristotelian definition.<sup>40</sup> In fact, van Helmont’s intense opposition to Aristotle won him an appearance before the Spanish Inquisition and a stint in prison.

Robert Boyle echoed the themes of voluntarist theology as well, referring to God as the “free establisher of the laws of motion” and noting that these laws “depend perfectly on his will.” He spoke of God’s creatures as “the limited and arbitrary productions of his power and will,” formed not by any independent rational agency within creation but by “God’s immediate fiat.”<sup>41</sup>

Isaac Newton’s commitment to voluntarism is evident in the following quotation from an unpublished manuscript: “The world might have been otherwise than it is (because there may be worlds otherwise framed than this). Twas therefore noe necessary but a voluntary & free determination yt should bee thus.”<sup>42</sup>

One of the most important consequences of voluntarist theology for science is that it helped to inspire and justify an experimental methodology. For if God created freely rather than by logical necessity, then we cannot gain knowledge of it by logical deduction (which traces necessary connections). Instead, we have to go out and look, to observe and experiment. As Barbour puts it:

The world is orderly and dependable because God is trustworthy and not capricious; but the details of the world must be found by observation rather than rational deduction because God is free and did not have to create any particular kind of universe.<sup>43</sup>

For example, Aristotle had argued that the earth must be at the center of the cosmos because it is “natural” for the heaviest element to gravitate towards the geometric center. In other words, he appealed to an innate tendency in matter. Copernicus, on the other hand, argued that there can be many centers of gravity because gravity is “bestowed on the parts of bodies by the Creator”—and obviously the Creator can bestow such powers wherever He chooses. As Kaiser explains, for Copernicus “the laws of nature are not intrinsic and cannot be deduced *a priori*: rather they are imposed or infused by God”<sup>44</sup> and can only be known *a posteriori*, through empirical investigation.

The clearest statement of the connection between voluntarist theology and experimental method is in Roger Cotes’s Preface to the second edition of Newton’s *Principia*. Cotes argued that the world “could arise from nothing but the perfectly free will of God directing and presiding over all.” In all of creation, Cotes wrote, there is “not the least shadow” of logical necessity—and “therefore,” he concluded, we must learn “from observations and experiments.”<sup>45</sup>

We see that the conviction that the world is contingent—its order imposed rather than inherent—provided a powerful justification for the experimental method of science. As historian John Hedley Brooke puts it, “If the workings of nature reflected the free agency of a divine will, then the only way to uncover them was by

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<sup>40</sup> Cited in Kaiser, *Creation and the History of Science*, p. 154.

<sup>41</sup> A thorough discussion of Boyle can be found in Klaaren, *Religious Origins of Modern Science*, from which these quotations were taken (pp. 135, 139, 151).

<sup>42</sup> Cited in Edward B. Davis, “Newton’s Rejection of the ‘Newtonian World View’ The Role of Divine Will in Newton’s Natural Philosophy,” in *Science and Christian Belief*, 3, no. 1, p. 117.

<sup>43</sup> Barbour, *Issues in Science and Religion*, p. 379.

<sup>44</sup> Kaiser, *Creation and the History of Science*, p. 110, emphasis added. Similarly, Marin Mersenne (1588–1648) criticized Kepler’s early attempts to force the solar system into a geometrical pattern—his argument being that it is wrong to cherish any preconceived pattern for the structure of the solar system since it is only one of infinitely numerous possibilities and therefore ultimately dependent on the choice of the deity. See John Hedley Brooke, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 26.

<sup>45</sup> Roger Cotes, preface to the second edition of Newton’s *Principia*, in *Newton’s Philosophy of Nature: Selections from His Writings*, ed. H. S. Thayer (New York: Hafner, 1953), emphasis added.

empirical investigation. No armchair science, premised on how God *must* have organized things, was permissible.”<sup>46</sup> Science must observe and experiment.

### **Not Our Ways**

The idea that the creation is contingent is sometimes taken to mean it is chaotic and unpredictable. But in its Christian form, contingency does not mean that at all. The goal of voluntarist theology was to emphasize that God is not bound by anything outside Himself; He *is*, however, bound by His own nature. As theologian Thomas Torrance writes, “The contingency of the creation as it derives from God is inseparably bound up with its orderliness, for it is the product not merely of his almighty will but of his eternal reason.”<sup>47</sup> The world does not have its own inherent rationality, but it is intelligible because it reflects God’s rationality.

Yet because it is God’s rationality we are talking about and not our own, we cannot always anticipate how it will reveal itself in creation. As theologian John Baillie puts it, “While everything in nature observes a rational pattern, and is therefore in principle intelligible by us, we cannot know in advance *which* rational pattern it is going to follow.”<sup>48</sup> In science that means we cannot merely intuit what seems reasonable. Instead, we must observe how nature operates. We must look and see.

The implication again is that science must be experimental. A prime historical example is Galileo. He did not follow the typical method of inquiry in his day and ask whether it was “reasonable” to suppose that a ten-pound weight would fall to the ground more quickly than a one-pound weight, based on the “nature” of weight. Instead, he dropped two balls from the leaning tower of Pisa and watched what happened. We cannot presume to know how God thinks, Galileo argued; we must go out and look at the world He created.<sup>49</sup>

Roger Cotes gives this argument its clearest expression. “He who is presumptuous enough to think that he can find the true principles of physics and the laws of natural things by the force alone of his own mind, and the internal light of his reason,” Cotes wrote, must suppose “that himself, a miserable reptile, can tell what is fittest to be done.” These words are taken from the same passage quoted above where Cotes recommends that instead of relying on “the internal light” of our own reason, we ought to rely on observation and experiment. Hence the Christian conviction that God’s ways are not our ways was another powerful inspiration in the new experimental approach to science.

### **The Glory of God and the Benefit of Mankind**

Modern science has given birth to modern technology, as we all know. Yet the transition from science to technology itself required certain presuppositions about the world. It required a set of beliefs that sanctioned active intervention in natural processes to advance human purposes.

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<sup>46</sup> Brooke, *Science and Religion*, pp. 139–40, emphasis in original. This interpretation of the condemnation of 1277, as fostering experimental methodology in science, was first advanced by Pierre Duhem. It can also be found in Foster and Hooykaas.

Yet we need to be cautious about drawing a direct causal connection. Historian David Lindberg argues that the immediate effect of the condemnation was to throw a tighter theological rein around the neck of philosophical inquiry. See *The Beginnings of Western Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 234–44.

Edward Grant maintains that the condemnation contributed initially to skepticism by eroding confidence in the capacity of human reason to arrive at demonstrated truth, whether in theology or in natural philosophy. For if there are no necessary rational connections in creation, how can reason penetrate its structure? See “Science and Theology in the Middle Ages,” *God and Nature*, pp. 54–58. It took centuries before science came to be defined as a process not of deducing necessary connections but of describing contingent regularities.

<sup>47</sup> Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order*, p. 109. Similarly, Anglican theologian E. L. Mascall writes, “The Christian God is not only a God of omnipotence and freedom, He is also a God of rationality and order.” From *Christian Theology and Natural Science* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1956), pp. 93–94. See also Francis Oakley, “Christian Theology and the Newtonian Science: The Rise of the Concept of the Laws of Nature,” in *Creation: The Impact of an Idea*.

<sup>48</sup> John Baillie, “Christianity in an Age of Science,” in *Science and Faith Today* by John Baillie, Robert Boyd, Donald Mackay, Douglas Spanner (London: Lutterworth Press, 1953), p. 17, emphasis added.

<sup>49</sup> Some historians have argued that the story of Galileo and the leaning tower of Pisa is apocryphal, or that it was merely a “thought experiment” carried out theoretically. Other historians are more inclined to accept the story as genuine. Either way the point still stands: Galileo argued explicitly that we cannot rationally intuit the ways God created objects to behave; instead, we must observe their actual behavior.

In animism and pantheism, the divine is immanent in the universe, whether conceived as several deities inhabiting the woods and rivers or as a single spirit permeating all things. The universe is the sole all-encompassing reality.

In this context, the individual is an expression of nature, incapable of transcending his environment. The intellectual stance vis-a-vis nature is passive. The human mind is thoroughly embedded in nature; it does not transcend it as subject over against object. As a consequence, humans are interested in knowing nature only in order to adapt and conform to it, not in order to harness its forces for practical ends.

By contrast, the Biblical view begins with a transcendent God and with the creation of humanity in His image. Humans find their essential kinship not with nature—as expressed in totems and idols—but with God. The human mind is thus capable of transcending nature and confronting it as subject. In this context, the individual is active vis-a-vis nature. Humans do not merely conform to nature but are free to manipulate it, both theoretically in mathematical formulas and practically by experiment.<sup>50</sup> In this way, Christianity provided both an intellectual framework and a motive for developing technology. Borrowing a favorite phrase of the early scientists, the goal of science was the glory of God and the benefit of mankind.

Christians found Biblical justification for an active use of nature in the creation account (Genesis 1:28), where God gives human beings “dominion” over the earth. Dominion was understood not as license to exploit nature ruthlessly but as responsibility to cultivate it, care for it, and harness its forces for human benefit.

In Genesis we also learn that God brought the animals to Adam to be named (2:19–20). It was idiomatic in Hebrew that to name something is to assert mastery over it; hence this account gives additional sanction for human dominion over nature. It was also idiomatic in Hebrew that a name should express the essential nature of a thing. Hence naming the animals required careful investigation to determine what sort of things they were—a task involving detailed observation, description, and classification. Thus Genesis appeared to give divine justification to the study and analysis of the natural world. Science came to be understood as one aspect of the “cultural mandate,” the Christian duty to investigate and develop the powers of creation through human culture. John Cotton, a Puritan divine who emigrated to America, wrote in 1654 that “to study the nature and course and use of all God’s works is a duty imposed by God.”<sup>51</sup>

That modern science owes something to the Christian notion of duty was first suggested by sociologist R. K. Merton in the 1930s.<sup>52</sup> Since that time, several critics have assailed the so-called “Merton thesis,” many arguing that his focus was overly narrow. (He treated primarily Puritanism.) Nevertheless, as science historian P. M. Rattansi argues, it is now generally accepted that the Christian concept of moral obligation played an important role in attracting people to the study of nature. It was by necessity a strong attraction, since at the time scientific study had to be carried on “outside the traditional framework of higher education and, indeed, [had] to oppose the natural philosophy taught at the universities.” Hence the enduring truth in the Merton thesis, Rattansi argues, is that the Christian religion provided “a powerful religious motive” for engaging in experimental science. In his words, Protestant principles

encouraged a commitment to the study of God’s “Book of Nature” as complementing the study of the book of God’s word. They imposed a religious obligation to make such study serve the twin ends of glorifying God and benefiting fellow-men.<sup>53</sup>

The second part of that phrase—“benefiting fellow-men”—justified not only science but also technology. The early scientists regarded technology as a means of alleviating the destructive effects of the curse recorded in Genesis 3. As Francis Bacon (1561–1626) expressed it, man “fell at the same time from his state of innocency and from his dominion over creation.” Yet, “both of these losses can, even in this life, be in some part repaired; the former by religion and faith, the latter by arts and sciences.” As humans used the sciences to restore their dominion over creation, they could alleviate the suffering imposed by the Fall.

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<sup>50</sup> Klaaren, *Religious Origins of Modern Science*, p. 15. See also Paul Liben, “Science Within the Limits of Truth,” *First Things*, no. 18, (December 1991), pp. 29–32.

<sup>51</sup> Cited in Mason, *A History of the Sciences*, pp. 177, 178. See also Kocher, *Science and Religion*, pp. 24–28.

<sup>52</sup> R. K. Merton, “Puritanism, Pietism, and Science,” *Sociological Review*, 28, pt. 1, (January 1936). Reprinted in *Science and Ideas*, ed. Arnold B. Arons and Alfred M. Bork (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964).

<sup>53</sup> P. M. Rattansi, “The Social Interpretation of Science in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Science and Society*, ed. Peter Mathias (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 2–3.

Thus science was permeated with religious concern for the poor and the sick, with humanitarian efforts to alleviate toil and tedium. As historian Lynn White explains, the “spiritual egalitarianism” of Biblical religion “ascribes infinite worth to even the lowliest of human beings as potentially children of God”—a conviction that bore fruit in humanitarian efforts to raise them up from their lowly estate. Biblical faith thus engendered “a religious urge to substitute a power machine for a man where the required motion is so severe and monotonous that it seems unworthy of a child of God.”<sup>54</sup>

The very idea that the conditions of human life could be ameliorated was itself revolutionary—and was rooted in Biblical doctrine. As Cox points out, the idea of improving one’s life cannot occur to people trapped in a cyclic, fatalistic, or deterministic view of history.<sup>55</sup> But the Biblical view of history is linear, open to divine activity. In the course of time, God can create something genuinely new. So can human beings, who are made in His image. Both God and humans are first causes who can set in motion a new chain of secondary causes. Thus the Biblical view of history inspired the use of science and technology to improve the human condition.

It might be helpful to summarize this chapter so far by using John Hedley Brooke’s taxonomy of the ways Christianity has influenced the development of science. To begin with, Christian teachings have served as *presuppositions* for the scientific enterprise (e.g., the conviction that nature is lawful was inferred from its creation by a rational God). Second, Christian teachings have *sanctioned* science (e.g., science was justified as a means of alleviating toil and suffering). Third, Christian teachings supplied *motives* for pursuing science (e.g., to show the glory and wisdom of the Creator). And fourth, Christianity played a role in *regulating* scientific methodology (e.g., voluntarist theology was invoked to justify an empirical approach in science).<sup>56</sup>

Among professional historians the image of warfare between faith and science has shattered. Replacing it is a widespread recognition of Christianity’s positive contributions to modern science.

## **CONTROVERSIES BETWEEN CHURCH AND SCIENCE**

Tell the proverbial man on the street that Christianity exerted a positive influence on the rise of modern science, and you are likely to elicit astonishment and disbelief. The new appreciation for religion has not filtered down from the academy to popular culture—or to the church pew. When we told Christian friends that we were writing a book on the contributions of Christianity to science, the typical response was skepticism. To counter that skepticism, we need to debunk some common misconceptions.

Anti-religious polemics have often exaggerated the church’s opposition to science. For example, Andrew Dickson White offers the sweeping statement that “all branches of the Protestant Church—Lutheran, Calvinist, Anglican—vied with each other in denouncing the Copernican doctrine as contrary to Scripture.”<sup>57</sup> But the reality is that the Reformers largely ignored the Copernican controversy, apart from a few scattered remarks recorded from a table talk by Martin Luther and a sermon by John Calvin. And even these are historically questionable. In the case of Luther, the table talks were not recorded until several years later, culled from the memory of participants. Some historians doubt whether Luther actually made the disparaging comment about Copernicus attributed to him.

In the case of Calvin, White tells us Calvin took the lead in opposing Copernicanism, citing Psalm 93:1 (“The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved”) and then asking, “Who will venture to place the authority of Copernicus above that of the Holy Spirit?” But historians point out that Calvin said no such thing and never attacked Copernicus in any way in print.<sup>58</sup>

The truth is that theologians had little reason to concern themselves with Copernicanism. Modern historians often write as though Copernican theory represented a grave threat to the Christian view of human significance. Copernicus demoted mankind, it is said, from his exalted place on the center stage of the

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<sup>54</sup> Lynn White, “What Accelerated Technological Progress in the Western Middle Ages?” in *Scientific Change*, ed. A. C. Crombie (New York: Basic Books), pp. 290–91.

<sup>55</sup> Cox, “The Christian in a World of Technology,” in *Science and Religion: New Perspectives on the Dialogue*, p. 264.

<sup>56</sup> Brooke, *Science and Religion*, pp. 19–33. Brooke also mentions a fifth way Christianity has influenced science—by playing a *constitutive* role in theory formation (e.g., Ray and Linnaeus invoked the language of Genesis 1 in their definitions of species). This will be discussed in chapter 5.

<sup>57</sup> White, *A History of the Warfare*, 1:126.

<sup>58</sup> Russell, *Cross-Currents*, p. 42.

universe. For example, in *The Making of the Modern Mind* historian John Herman Randall writes that the Copernican revolution “swept man out of his proud position as the central figure and end of the universe, and made him a tiny speck on a third-rate planet revolving about a tenth-rate sun drifting in an endless cosmic ocean.”<sup>59</sup>

The implication is that Christians mobilized against Copernicanism to resist this shattering of their cozy cosmology. But the literature of the day does little to support this portrayal. It is true that medieval cosmology, adapted from Aristotelian philosophy, placed the earth at the center of the universe. But in medieval cosmology the center of the universe was not a place of special significance. Quite the contrary, it was the locus of evil. At the very center of the universe was Hell, then the earth, then (moving outward from the center) the progressively nobler spheres of the heavens.

In this scheme of things, humanity’s central location was no compliment, nor was its loss a demotion. In fact, in Copernicus’s own day a common objection to his theory was that it elevated mankind *above* his true station.<sup>60</sup> In medieval cosmology, human significance was rooted not in the earth’s central location but in the regard God shows toward it. Hence the idea that Copernican theory threatened the Christian teaching of human significance is an anachronism. It reads back into history the *angst* of our own age.

### **The Galileo Controversy**

Christian support for the scientific enterprise is revealed more clearly when we draw a distinction between the church and individual believers. Several of the early scientists were at odds with ecclesiastical politics while holding fervently to personal religious beliefs.

The textbook case of religious persecution is the story of Galileo. The standard account was told in Jacob Bronowski’s popular television series the “Ascent of Man,” which portrayed Galileo before the Inquisition as a simple confrontation between good and evil. But historian Martin Rudwick<sup>61</sup> condemns the television series as an example of “scientific triumphalism” unworthy of a scientist of Bronowski’s stature. Bronowski’s treatment of Galileo’s trial was a “travesty,” Rudwick says, that could result only from a deliberate choice “to ignore the historical research” available.

The historical research Rudwick refers to is a body of evidence showing that considerably more was involved than a simple confrontation between science and religion. Giorgio de Santillana, whose book *The Crime of Galileo* is widely considered the best modern account, argues that the Galileo affair was not a confrontation between “the scientist” and a religious credo at all. Ironically “the major part of the Church intellectuals were on the side of Galileo,” de Santillana notes, “while the clearest opposition to him came from secular ideas” (i.e., from the academic philosophers). Even the Pope who ordered Galileo’s return to Rome, in chains if necessary, to answer charges before the Inquisition had once been one of the “Galileisti” (Galileo’s circle of followers).<sup>62</sup>

The truth is that, on the whole, the Catholic church had no argument with Galileo’s theories as science. Their objection had to do with Galileo’s attack on Aristotelian philosophy—and all the metaphysical, spiritual, and social consequences they associated with it. As philosopher of science Philipp Frank explains, the reason

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<sup>59</sup> Randall, *Making of the Modern Mind*, p. 226.

<sup>60</sup> Brooke, *Science and Religion*, p. 88. See also Russell, *Cross-Currents*, pp. 50–51. Arthur O. Lovejoy notes that modern writers often speak as though medieval cosmology, by assigning mankind the central place in the universe, gave “man a high sense of his own importance and dignity.” But in fact the opposite is true. “For the medieval mind ... the centre of the world was not a position of honor; it was rather the place farthest removed from the Empyrean, the bottom of the creation, to which its dregs and baser elements sank.... The geocentric cosmography served rather for man’s humiliation than for his exaltation.” Copernicanism was opposed in part precisely because the theory assigned too lofty a position to the earth by removing it from the center. From *The Great Chain of Being: A Study in the History of an Idea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936, 1964), pp. 101–02.

<sup>61</sup> Martin Rudwick, “Senses of the natural world and senses of God,” in *The Sciences and Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. A. R. Peacocke (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981, paperback ed., 1986), p. 242. For a detailed account of the Galileo controversy, see *The Galileo Connection* by Charles E. Hummel (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1986).

<sup>62</sup> The Pope had even celebrated Galileo’s telescopic discoveries in Latin verse. Giorgio de Santillana, *The Crime of Galileo* (New York: Time Reading Program Special Edition, originally published by Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), pp. xx, 165n.

Galileo's attack on Aristotle was treated so seriously that to many people at the time Aristotle's philosophy was "regarded as necessary for the formulation of religious and moral laws."<sup>63</sup>

Aristotle viewed each object as a quasi-organic entity propelled by an inner striving to fulfill its ideal nature—its purpose or Form—just as human beings are motivated by a sense of moral obligation to fulfill their highest nature. In Aristotelian philosophy, objects are moved by inherent tendencies more akin to moral striving than to push-pull mechanical forces.

One of those inner tendencies was an impulse toward a "natural place" in the universe. In Aristotelian physics, a flame goes up and a rock falls down because every object has a tendency to strive for its "natural place." Physical place was, moreover, associated with degrees of nobility (the center of the universe being the lowliest and the higher realms being the noblest). Thus the physical hierarchy studied by science reflected social and political hierarchies; the order in the physical world was related to the order in human society.

The reason some churchmen resisted giving up Aristotelian physics and cosmology was because these were intimately tied to an overall vision of moral and social life. If that tie were broken, they feared morality itself would be destroyed. Hence Galileo seemed to promote doctrines that were not only wrong but dangerous.<sup>64</sup>

Moreover, these new and dangerous ideas were put forward, as Mary Hesse points out, "dogmatically without sufficient evidence to support them" at the time. (Not until Newton was heliocentrism given a physical mechanism.) And when the evidence available at the time does not support a theory, resistance is neither unscientific nor irrational. Hesse concludes:

...for all their shortsightedness, the representatives of the Church had some reason on their side; theirs were the reactions of men who found, as they thought, the whole structure of their world being threatened by irresponsible speculations which did not at that time even have an adequate body of evidence in their support.<sup>65</sup>

A full understanding of the confrontation between Galileo and the Roman church, suggests philosopher of science Jerome Ravetz,<sup>66</sup> must take account of sociological factors as well. The Catholic hierarchy had recently reaffirmed its commitment to Aristotelianism in response to the challenge posed by Protestantism. Hence, Galileo's attack on Aristotle could be interpreted as giving ammunition to the enemy. In addition, a lively struggle was taking place between an older elite in the universities and churches and the newer, more pragmatically oriented elite to which Galileo belonged. Galileo's decision to publish his works in the vernacular was a deliberate affront to the established elites, part of a broad strategy to transfer intellectual leadership to the wider reading public.<sup>67</sup>

In the course of the debate, both sides stooped to ugly tactics. The church used nasty methods and personal spite in a campaign to cut Galileo down to size. Galileo fought back with deliberately provocative and propagandistic writings. His parable *Dialogue Concerning the Two Principal Systems of the World* includes a

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<sup>63</sup> Philipp Frank, *Philosophy of Science: The Link Between Science and Philosophy* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Spectrum Books, 1957), p. 144.

<sup>64</sup> It was for precisely the same reason that many Christians opposed Darwin's theory of evolution centuries later. Long after Aristotelianism had lost credibility in physics, it remained strong in biology. Darwin's completely materialistic account of life finally broke the Aristotelian connection between physical order and moral order. Adam Sedgwick (1785–1873), Darwin's former teacher, saw exactly what was happening and wrote to him saying,

"Tis the crown and glory of organic science that it does, through *final cause*, link material to moral.... You have ignored this link; and, if I do not mistake your meaning, you have done your best in one or two pregnant cases to break it.

Sedgwick went on to predict that if the link between the material and the moral order were ever broken (which he did not believe could happen), the human race would be morally brutalized and degraded. Cited in Charles Coulston Gillispie in *The Edge of Objectivity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 350, emphasis in original.

<sup>65</sup> Hesse, *Science and the Human Imagination*, pp. 34–35.

<sup>66</sup> Jerome Ravetz, "Tragedy in the History of Science," in *Changing Perspectives in the History of Science: Essays in Honour of Joseph Needham*, ed. Mikuláš Teich and Robert Young (London: Heinemann, 1973), p. 212–14.

<sup>67</sup> Herbert Butterfield, *The Origins of Modern Science: 1300–1800*, rev. ed. (New York: Free Press, 1957, 1965), pp. 178–81.



dim-witted buffoon named Simplicio, a thinly disguised caricature of the Pope who had once been Galileo's friend and follower.<sup>68</sup>

In spite of all this, Galileo never repudiated his faith. The typical retelling of the controversy suggests that since Galileo stood up to the church, he must have been a closet atheist or at least an agnostic. But to be true to history, we must take seriously Galileo's own protestations that he was a genuine Christian believer who had no intention of questioning religious doctrine per se but only the scientific framework inherited from Aristotelian philosophy.

The positivist approach dismisses Galileo's religious defense of his ideas as mere expediency, forced on him by the authorities. But Galileo's behavior cannot be understood unless we accept his own claim that he was a believer and that he placed religion alongside science as a source of genuine information about the world. "Only Galileo's determination to remain within his religious tradition," writes Rudwick, "seems an adequate explanation of why he tried so hard to persuade everyone from the Pope downwards, and why he declined all chances to escape to the safety of the Venetian republic."<sup>69</sup>

### ***Children of Their Time***

Let us be the first to acknowledge that Christians have often opposed new ideas in science. But let us also point out that this is not some perverse failing of religious people but a universal human tendency. *All* people tend to resist new ideas. Nor is that necessarily a failing. After all, as long as an idea remains new, its supporters generally have not yet mustered the necessary evidence for it.

As a case in point, critics often castigate the Reformers for not accepting Copernican cosmology—ignoring the fact that at the time the culture as a *whole* did not yet accept Copernicus. The Reformers were not being churlishly anti-intellectual; they were merely reflecting what were generally considered to be well-founded beliefs in their time. As John Dillenberger notes, "The classical Reformation figures, including Luther, Calvin, and Melancthon, belong to the period in which there was no compelling reason for accepting the Copernican system."<sup>70</sup> In short, the Reformers were geocentric for exactly the same reason that later Protestants were Newtonian and then Einsteinian—namely, that they accepted the scientific theories current in their day.<sup>71</sup>

Altering fundamental concepts about the world is never an easy process. Scientific concepts that appear obvious to moderns because we have been taught them since we were young—concepts such as heliocentricity, elliptical orbits, the circulation of the blood—were exceedingly difficult to hit upon originally. As historian Mark Graubard comments, if the solution to a scientific problem takes generations or even centuries to arrive at, and possibly just as long to become widely accepted, "then it seems more intelligent to believe that the solution is difficult, rather than to blame Aristotle, authoritarianism, human stupidity, vested interests, the Church, or any other scapegoat, for the delay."<sup>72</sup>

If Christian belief were truly a barrier to science, it is difficult to explain why so many founders of modern science were believers. Paracelsus, Boyle, and Newton wrote extensively on theology as well as on science. Others—Kepler and van Helmont—filled their scientific notebooks with prayers, praise, and theological musings.

A common device among historians has been to dismiss these theological interests as irritating distractions from purely scientific work. Yet this reaction is shortsighted, for the religious interest often provided the *motivation* for the scientific work. Many of the early scientists studied creation in an effort to know the Creator. Later, when religious skepticism was on the rise, many scientists hoped to use scientific

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<sup>68</sup> Russell, *Cross-Currents*, p. 44.

<sup>69</sup> Rudwick, in *The Sciences and Theology*, pp. 256–57. Brooke (*Science and Religion*, pp. 98–99) conjectures that the "fateful urgency" with which Galileo sought to convert the Catholic hierarchy to Copernicanism may have reflected a genuine desire to uphold the reputation of Catholic scholarship, to spare it the ignominy of holding a faulty cosmology.

<sup>70</sup> John Dillenberger, *Protestant Thought and Natural Science* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1960), p. 29. If we truly want to understand the Reformers (and not merely castigate them), Dillenberger says, we must look at their generally positive views of science and not merely their reactions to individual theories.

<sup>71</sup> B. A. Gerrish, "The Reformation and the Rise of Modern Science," in *The Impact of the Church Upon Its Culture*, ed. Jerald C. Brauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 264n.

<sup>72</sup> Mark Graubard, introduction, William Harvey, *On the Motion of the Heart and Blood in Animals*, trans. R. Willis, rev. and ed. Alex. Bowie (Chicago: Henry Regnery, Gateway Editions, 1962), p. 13.



discoveries to buttress religious belief. Newton wanted his work used for apologetics, as we shall see in later chapters. Mersenne and Descartes, Rattansi points out, “were actively concerned to furnish new weapons to defend religion at a time when the old arguments seemed to have been discredited.”<sup>73</sup> Descartes is best remembered for his method of radical doubt; we generally forget that his purpose in doubting everything was to clear the way for a more substantial support for faith. To omit or dismiss these religious motivations is to misunderstand the true nature of science.

### ***Whither Science?***

As we conclude this chapter, we cannot avoid a haunting question: If science received much of its impetus from Christian assumptions, what will happen now that those assumptions have eroded—now that Christianity is no longer a public faith undergirding science but merely a private belief held by individual scientists? What will happen to science as the Christian motivation and intellectual scaffolding wither away? Contemporary science still lives off the accumulated capital of centuries of Christian faith. But how long will that capital last? And what will take its place?

“The experimental method succeeded beyond men’s wildest dreams,” notes Eiseley, “but the faith that brought it into being owes something to the Christian conception of the nature of God.” Belief in a trustworthy, rational God led to the assumption of an ordered, rational universe. “And science today,” says Eiseley, is still “sustained by that assumption.”<sup>74</sup> The question is: How long will that assumption *continue* to sustain science?

It may turn out that science is detachable from the Biblical presuppositions and motivations that sustained its initial development. Science may prove itself to be self-sustaining, driven by sheer intellectual curiosity and technological success.

Yet, once separated from the teaching of divine creation, science has no philosophical ground for its most basic assumption—the lawfulness of nature. “Since the time of Hume,” Whitehead says, “fashionable scientific philosophy has been such as to deny the rationality of science.” Hume demonstrated that pure empiricism gives no grounds for belief in even such fundamental principles as cause and effect. As a result, Whitehead concludes, scientists today maintain a “scientific faith” in the order of nature while lacking any rational basis for it.<sup>75</sup> And without a rational basis, it is an open question whether that “scientific faith” can long survive.

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<sup>73</sup> P. M. Rattansi, “Science and Religion in the Seventeenth Century,” in *The Emergence of Science in Western Europe*, ed. Maurice Crosland (London: Macmillan, 1975), pp. 81–82.

<sup>74</sup> Eiseley, *Darwin’s Century*, p. 62.

<sup>75</sup> Surely a “strange contradiction in scientific thought,” Whitehead comments. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, p. 4.

## APPENDIX E – SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS

### NOT SO FAST - SCIENCE CAN ALSO OPERATE UNDER PHILOSOPHICAL/RELIGIOUS CONVICTIONS

By Reid S. Monaghan – The Collegiate Times, Campus Newspaper at Virginia Tech  
Published April 2001

I am writing in response to the April 11th article entitled "Science and Religion not related; genetics a purely scientific matter." Before I begin I would like to note that I received my undergraduate degree in Applied Science and Physics from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. I am also a theist, so I have an interest in these matters. The first observation I made about this article was a very common misconception about scientific knowledge. It is boldly expressed in the article with the following statement "There is nothing scientific about religion and there is nothing religious about science." Some definitions are needed before we begin. Science is a method of inquiry into phenomena using a process that is empirical, testable, and repeatable. Scientific inquiry has been a wonderful tool to discover the working order of our universe but it has its limits and is certainly not the only area of human knowledge. When science makes claims that it alone has access to all the "facts" about reality it has overstepped its bounds into the religious and philosophical. For instance some scientists hold strongly to the "secular religion" of philosophical naturalism or materialism; this is a belief that the only things that exist or could possibly exist are natural and material. This is a belief that is simply not a scientifically verifiable fact; how could one prove such an idea with the scientific method? This is metaphysics and many naturalistic thinkers have openly admitted this in the past ten years.

In the 1993 Annual Meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, at a symposium entitled "The New Antievolutionism", Michael Ruse, philosopher of science at the University of Guelph in Ontario, openly admitted this in his lecture. The following quotes from his speech are enlightening:

"Certainly, historically, that if you look at, say, evolutionary theory, and of course this was brought out I think rather nicely by the talk just before me, it's certainly been the case that evolution has functioned, if not as a religion as such, certainly with elements akin to a secular religion. Those of us who teach philosophy of religion always say there's no way of defining religion by a neat, necessary and sufficient condition. The best that you can do is list a number of characteristics, some of which all religions have, and none of which any religion, whatever or however you sort of put it. And certainly, there's no doubt about it, that in the past, and I think also in the present, for many evolutionists, evolution has functioned as something with elements which are, let us say, akin to being a secular religion."

"I think that philosophically that one should be sensitive to what I think history shows, namely, that evolution, just as much as religion – or at least, leave "just as much," let me leave that phrase – evolution, akin to religion, involves making certain a priori or metaphysical assumptions, which at some level cannot be proven empirically."<sup>1</sup>

One should also note that not all practitioners of the scientific method are or have been philosophical naturalists. Many of the first practitioners of science were very much theists, who predicted the world would be rational and operate according to natural laws because it was the product of divine intelligence.

The final statement of the article "Religion will struggle very hard to *keep up* with science..." is also intriguing. Where is it that we are going that requires religion to "keep up" with science? Could one not say the same thing about philosophical naturalism, which needs to keep up with spiritual and moral truth? Naturalism has an immense struggle attempting to provide satisfying answers to some of the most fundamental and basic questions of human existence. Questions of origin of the universe and life, questions of meaning and purpose, questions of how we *ought* to live, or even questions as to how one defines what is "good" are issues naturalism struggles to answer.

I just wanted to give a quick reminder that the ramifications of scientific investigation and conclusions are many times subject to the belief system of the person doing the science. One example from the field of genetics is appropriate due to the current discussion in the Collegiate Times. Some geneticists, who are theists<sup>2</sup>, see in DNA a blueprint and design for life. This phenomenal new area of knowledge has shown us that there is a "language of life" and there is information actually encoded in each of our cells. The theist sees this as evidence for a common intelligent designer for life and it is in the mind of the creator that the information for life originated. Scientists who hold the belief system of philosophical naturalism look at the

very same DNA and see a random collection of "lucky chemicals" that happened to end up sequenced for that particular kind of life due to a random natural process. This is but one example of how belief interprets evidence and many examples are found in the softer historical and social sciences. I once held beliefs that excluded the religious, spiritual, and non-material world. Ironically it was while studying science in college that I personally concluded that this philosophy was completely inadequate for dealing with the totality of our human experience. Science is a wonderful tool of investigation for human beings, just be aware that some of it may just be a certain philosophy wearing a clever disguise.

Reid Monaghan  
Athletes in Action @ VT

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Full Transcript of Dr. Ruse's lecture is available from The Access Research Network at <http://www.arn.org/docs/orpages/or151/mr93tran.htm>

<sup>2</sup> One example is Francis Collins, director of the Human Genome Project who is a professing Christian.

## APPENDIX F – THE PROBLEM OF EVIL ON A COLLEGE PHILOSOPHY LISTSERV

I too wish to echo the pleas for respectful tone when dealing with issues like the one before us.

I believe Dr. Gifford's premises were stated as follows:

- (1) God is good
- (2) God is all-powerful
- (3) Evil exists in the world

I think these premises are good formulation of what would constitute an argument against the existence of a good, all-powerful God. I have encountered many versions of this argument in the literature and in person (sometimes in the all too familiar hostile tone). Another formulation, which I will keep very close to Dr. Gifford's (there are more flavors of this dealing with God's perfection and the perfection of his created things etc.) is stated as follows:

- 1) If God is all-good, he would desire to eliminate all evil and suffering.
- 2) If God is all-powerful he has the power to eliminate all evil and suffering.
- 3) Evil and suffering exist
- 4) Therefore an all-good, all-powerful God does not exist.

Next, it should be noted that evil should be sectioned into at least two categories (perhaps more, but at least these two). First, we must address moral evil, which has to do with the type of thing we observed Tuesday, evil which is the result of the moral choices of human beings. Second, we must look at what some may call "natural" evil such as earthquakes, birth defects, and other phenomena seemingly unrelated to moral choices.

### **Now to the argument as applied to Moral Evil:**

Everyone I talk to usually agrees that humans have some sort of moral freedom that can result in evil. Now why would God make such a world? God could have made other worlds instead of this one with free moral beings. For instance, he could have made a world of automatons, which would HAVE TO love him, do good, etc.. So why do we live in this world? Arguably the highest ethic known to human beings is love, and it is central to us as created beings (from my travels and interactions with friends from all over the world, love seems to be universal in the human experience) . We all desire to be loved and to love. God so chose to make us in a way that we would freely live in love for him in love and worship. Let me illustrate with an example: If you were a father of a 5 year old you could do the following - You could say, TOMMY, this is my birthday, today you must color me a picture that says "I love Daddy", it must be on my pillow before 9:00pm when I retire for the evening. Now, the child robotically obeys, end of story. OR, you could come home from work, tired from the day's affairs, and Tommy runs to you and hugs you bursting with love, you eat dinner, read a book to Tommy and later retire to your bed. On your pillow rests a scratched out picture with the words "I Love you Daddy". I think the difference is obvious. Robotic creation is much different that love freely given.

Now to Premise (1) - If God is all-good, he would desire to eliminate all evil and suffering.

I would reject this premise for several reasons --> First; Moral evil could be the result of choosing to do certain actions by beings created by God with moral choices. Second, I am not so sure, in this universe that instant, immediate elimination of all evil would be such a desirable thing. I know our class, is full of only good people, but if God were to do such instant large-scale elimination of evil, it might not be such an easy thing on this real world that exists. **Finally, I believe that the option that God has dealt with evil, and WILL eliminate all evil and suffering is not refuted in any way by this argument.**

So by rejecting premise 1, I reject this as an argument against an All good, All powerful God (now this argument is not against a weak God with no love for creation).

### **Now to the problem of NATURAL EVIL:**

I believe the existence of evil is actually evidence that something is objectively wrong with this world. My question is this, why do we know this? I will reference my previous arguments for OBJECTIVE moral values at

this point. If morals are truly objective (that right and wrong exists in reality, apart from human minds or belief), then it speaks to the existence of some transcendent source for morality. Now, taking these same ideas, I state the following argument in relating to evil:

- 1) If God does not exist objective moral values do not exist.
- 2) Evil exists
- 3) Therefore objective moral values exist (some things are absolutely evil)
- 4) Therefore God exists

I would also say that the property that defines something as evil, (I know some will squawk at this point) is that it is grossly NOT good. If someone else has a better definition for evil, even using your own definitions for goodness, I would like to see it. Defining evil as "that which I do not like" will not suffice, because in such cases, evil is just a subjective thing conceived by human minds.

So, our objections against evil actually seem to make more sense if the universe does contain a transcendent source of goodness, which I argue lies in God's own nature/essence. So the question for me is this: is there any meaning or purpose in suffering? I do believe that suffering can bring great goods, even to those suffering. It brings communities and families together, it actually turns large numbers of people towards God, and can make us evaluate what we are living for and why. It may be stated, that all it takes is one example of suffering, from which NO greater good comes to say that at least some suffering is meaningless/purposeless. Some examples were offered - small babies born with severe birth defects etc. (remember we are dealing with Natural evils here)

First, I would ask, how does a finite mind make such a value judgment? How does one KNOW that nothing of greater good in the world, in any persons, will result from this? How can one know the scope of such things?

I will speak only from personal experience at this point because the question is existential. My wife and I have had five babies die in the womb in the last 3.5 years...I cannot pretend to know why this has happened, but I CAN tell you that innumerable goods have come from these experiences, even without some ability to KNOW the future and all the good or bad that may come from an event. We are also happy to say that we are due to have our first child in one week.

One last illustration in the form of a question: Why is it if a child is born with a defect/disease and dies days later is it a gross evil on God's part? But if in the same situation, parents (who do not have infinite knowledge), discovered the defect and decided to abort just one month earlier, this is said to somehow be a good choice...why? Because it is our choice? But such decision making ability is scoffed at when thinking of it as God allowing such a short life span.

Some are quick to want to somehow hold God accountable for things. My question is this: if God actually exists, how could one do this? Will you take God to court? Launch missile attacks? I fear in such cases, atheism is already a presupposition and any arguments to the contrary fall upon minds that are already closed to God. I hope this is not the case.

Finally, does not the problem of evil and suffering (BOTH moral and natural evil), beg for an answer from an atheistic standpoint? This is a question for all of humanity regardless of worldview as life's deepest questions incessantly knock at our doors, desiring entrance to our thinking. What answer is then offered by atheism? I have heard a several (and I was raised by a father who is to this day, very secular) but it usually boils down to something like this (especially for natural evils): \$%#@ just happens...

I reject this conclusion and see great meaning in our existence.

Humbly,  
Reid Monaghan

## BASIC GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Absolutism** – Something that is independent of, and unconditioned by, anything external to itself. It is not relative to something else. Usually used in terms of truth or ethics (moral absolutes).

**Apologetics** – means to give a defense; to give rational justification for one's beliefs.

**Coherence** – Internal logical consistency.

**Correspondence** – that which corresponds to the present state of affairs. Associated with a theory of truth that holds that statements must correspond to reality in order to be true.

**Deductive Reasoning** – Reasoning in which the conclusion of an argument follows with logical necessity (certainty) from the premises. Deductive Reasoning usually proceeds from general to particular or from whole to parts.

**Existential** – dealing with existence and personal experience, existentialism as a 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophical movement especially deals individual human freedom, choice, subjectivity, and existence. Individual expression of the will is the highest of values.

**Naturalism** – The belief that physical nature is the only reality. The philosophy of naturalism is characterized by Monism, antisupernaturalism, scientism, and Humanism.

**Pantheism** – The worldview which holds that all is God or Divine and that “God” is all things.

**Postmodernism** – Your guess is as good as mine ☺ Just Kidding, but it is a bit slippery to define. In fact many postmodern thinkers think “defining things” to be THE problem. For ease of use we will follow Budziszewski – “Postmodernism is the belief that nothing hangs together (or coheres)—that everything is in pieces. A postmodernist thinks that truth is fragmented. He doesn’t believe in a truth that is the same for everyone, only in ‘stories’ or ‘narratives’ or ‘discourses’ that are different for every group.”<sup>1</sup>

**Pragmatism** – An American philosophy which makes workability and practical consequences the test for truth.

**Theism/Theistic** – The world view that affirms the existence of an infinite, personal God, who is the transcendent creator, and immanent sustainer of the world. Judaism, Christianity and Islam are examples of theistic religions.

**Worldview** – We will use James Sire’s definition - “A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.”<sup>2</sup> Sometimes you may see the German word WELTANSCHAUUNG (a conceptual scheme for interpreting reality) associated with this concept.

For other fun definitions please see Greg Koukl’s extremely helpful – *100 Basic Philosophical Terms* at <http://www.str.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5493>  
Many of the above are my adaptations of Koukl’s definitions

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<sup>1</sup> J. Budziszewski, *How to Stay Christian in College* (Colorado Springs: CO Navpress 1999) 45.

<sup>2</sup> James Sire *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept*. (Downers Grove: IL Intervarsity Press 204) 122.

