

IS IT REASONABLE TO BELIEVE



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Thank you so much for making time to engage in this study with us. The speakers have worked hard to make sure that the material contained in this booklet is both timely and relevant. Our hope and prayer is that you will carefully consider the information found in these pages and allow it to draw you closer to God. If you are a visitor to the Judson Road Church of Christ, please accept our sincerest thanks for your presence. The various speakers and the church at Judson Road all stand ready to help you in whatever way that we can. Most of all, may God be glorified by our efforts together!

The Integrity of the Bible by Tyler Sams

“All Scripture is inspired by God,” stated Paul in his second epistle to Timothy. Yet, what Paul was able to summarize and reveal in the space of a few words has become a source of contention for Christians living in an increasingly skeptical world. In this section of our study, our goal is to better understand the word of God as a functional unit, a cohesive revelation of the will of God to mankind. By turning our attention to the claims of Scripture, the evidence of inspiration, and the canon of Scripture, we will arrive at a better understanding of God’s word, and thus, a deeper, more substantial faith.

Part 1 – What do we mean by the Integrity of the Bible?

When speaking about the Bible as a document, the term *integrity* references “the quality or condition of being whole or undivided; completeness.”¹ Thus, when we speak of the integrity of the Bible, the wholeness of the Bible is under consideration. We can view the wholeness of the Bible from many different perspectives: a logical perspective (e.g. claims and proof), a literary perspective (e.g. canonicity), a moral perspective (e.g. approved and disapproved behaviors), etc. The Bible should only be regarded as reflecting the quality of integrity if it truly demonstrates a unique wholeness throughout itself.

Part 2 – Why the Integrity of the Bible is Important to Me

The various claims of inspiration found throughout Scripture are one key aspect of the wholeness of the Bible. It is very significant that the various authors of Scripture claim to be inspired. However, a claim without proof is simply that—a claim. The integrity of the Bible is inextricably linked, not simply to the claims of inspiration, but to the

¹ Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged, 12th Edition 2014. S.v. “integrity.” Retrieved May 10 2016 from <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/integrity>

demonstration of those significant claims. A failure to demonstrate its claims of inspiration will leave the Bible, its authors, and God (most significantly) in the dustbin of history, alongside the dishonored religious manuals, zealots, and leaders of days gone by.

Another key aspect of the wholeness of the Bible is the concept of the canon. From a Greek word referencing a measuring rod, our word *canon*, applied in a biblical context, speaks to the collection of books which, comprising Scripture, serve as the rule and standard for conduct today.² Biblical integrity cannot be separated from canonicity; a faulty or incomplete canon yields a Bible that lacks literary completeness.

The integrity of Scripture is a make-or-break issue. If Scripture is found to be anything other than unified and whole, then it ought to be rejected. God has made the integrity of Scripture one of the battlegrounds of His choosing; thus, the Christian has nothing to fear by a deep and thorough investigation of issues surrounding the integrity of Scripture.

Part 3 – Examining the Integrity of the Bible

Claims of Inspiration

One fundamental way in which the Bible distinguishes itself from other books is by its various authors claiming to be inspired by God. These claims of inspiration serve to take the writing of the message out of the mind of man and place it firmly in the Divine realm. For example, the claim of Peter in his second epistle that “no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God,”³ centers the discussion on God the Father. Jesus does the much the same thing in John 14-16, reassuring His apostles that, even though He was leaving them, they would not be left

² Mark Elliott and Stephen Travis, *Zondervan Handbook to the Bible*. Compiled by Pat Alexander and David Alexander. Third ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 70.

³ 2 Peter 1.21 NASBU95

alone; the Holy Spirit would come to them, “teach [them] all things,”⁴ and “guide [them] into all the truth.”⁵ Specifying that the Holy Spirit would not be acting of His own initiative, but rather would be proceeding forth “from the Father,”⁶ Jesus firmly places God the Father as the fountainhead of inspiration. The logical integrity of the Bible thus rests upon God the Father.

The degree to which the Father inspired the authors of Scripture is noteworthy. When we speak of inspiration, some hold to an illumination view of inspiration, which says that “Scripture contains the noble insights of great people of faith,” but then tempers the idea by affirming that although their thoughts are a source of inspiration to readers, “the authors are not viewed as being divinely [guided].”⁷ Of course, this illumination view of inspiration fails to meet the test of Scripture, as it discounts the Father as the guiding genius of inspiration. Another view of the degree to which God the Father inspired the authors of the Bible, the dynamic view of inspiration, sees the Father inspiring the authors “thought by thought, rather than word by word.”⁸ However, like the illumination view, this dynamic view of inspiration also falls short when compared with the standard of God’s word. Paul could not argue that the Spirit revealed in select words the thoughts of Christ’s mind if the dynamic view of inspiration was true.⁹ Neither could he argue from the

⁴ John 14.26 NASBU95

⁵ John 16.13 NASBU95

⁶ John 15.26 NASBU95

⁷ Steve W. Lemke, “The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture,” in *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Interpreting Scripture*, eds. Bruce Corley, Steve W. Lemke and Grant Lovejoy, Second ed. (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 178.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁹ 1 Corinthians 2.12-16 NASBU95

singular-nature of a word, as he does with the word seed in Galatians, if God had merely inspired the thoughts of Moses and allowed Moses to transcribe them as he wished.¹⁰ Beyond this, the argument of Jesus regarding the tense of singular word is rendered useless if the degree of God's inspiration does not extend to the very words themselves.¹¹ The only way to view God's work in inspiring the authors of Scripture that completely harmonizes with the many statements regarding inspiration in Scripture is to view God as inspiring the authors as to the very words they used, or what Steve Lemke calls the plenary verbal view of inspiration. "'Plenary' means 'fully,' and 'verbal' emphasizes that inspiration extends to the very words themselves, so that every word of the Bible is inspired."^{12,13} This view fits not only with the words of Jesus in John 14-16, but it fits with the overall concept of inspiration as addressed throughout Scripture. The degree to which God inspired the authors of Scripture saw Him overseeing the very words they selected in communicating His gospel.¹⁴ Thus, Scripture claims to be the specifically selected words of God.

¹⁰ Galatians 3.16 NASBU95

¹¹ Matthew 22.31-32 NASBU95

¹² Steve W. Lemke, "The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture," in *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Interpreting Scripture*, eds. Bruce Corley, Steve W. Lemke and Grant Lovejoy, Second ed. (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 180.

¹³ Lemke's confession on p181 is quite enlightening. Speaking of the plenary verbal view, Lemke admits, "Jesus and Paul apparently took this approach to the inspiration of the Old Testament, because they based arguments on a single word in the Old Testament text (John 10.34-35, cf. Ps. 82.6), the tense of a verb (Matt. 22.32, cf. Exod. 3.6), and the distinction between a singular or plural noun (Gal. 3.16, cf. Gen. 12.7). Jesus even stated that not a single letter of Scripture would be taken away (Matt. 5.18)."

¹⁴ As God never overrides an individual's volition, so the writers of Scripture ought not to be viewed as keyboards through which God manually pressed out His words. Rather, consistent with the authors He selected, God used their personalities and writing/speaking abilities as the perfect tool to communicate His selected words to mankind.

It is remarkably significant that the authors and speakers of Scripture turn to God as the source of inspiration. In so doing, the reliability of the written word fell to God, who was superintending the very words they recorded. Mistakes would not be a part of their record, for the words they wrote were overseen and directed by a God who is unbounded in both strength and knowledge.¹⁵¹⁶

The authors of Scripture claimed to be inspired. They claimed to be guided, not only in their thoughts, but also in the very words, tenses, and letters they recorded. They claimed to be inspired by an infinitely strong, infinitely wise God who, through the Holy Spirit, oversaw their writings to make sure it was the revelation He intended for mankind to receive.

The authors of the Bible are quite clear—they claim to be inspired. However, as we mentioned earlier, a claim is insufficient without proof. Is there proof within the pages of Scripture that the claims of these authors are reliable?

Evidences of Inspiration

The evidence of inspiration is one of the major engagements in the battle of biblical integrity. If indeed the Bible is inspired by an all-knowing, all-powerful God, then the book will be without internal contradiction. The presence of internal contradictions would indicate the absence of an all-knowing individual superintending the production of Scripture. If indeed the Bible is inspired by an all-knowing, all-powerful God, then the scientific and historical facts set forth in the book will be consistent with the truths evident in our world. Failures in science (e.g. spontaneous generation) or history (e.g.

¹⁵ Psalm 147.4-5 NASBU95

¹⁶ Isaiah 40.13-14 NASBU95

Nebuchadnezzar invading America) would be evidence that an all-knowing God was not guiding the writer(s) in the completion of their individual messages. What do we find, then, when we honestly examine the word of God?

The consistency seen throughout the pages of Scripture is testimony to a singular individual guiding the process of writing. Whereas others may claim this is the work of forgers, conclaves, or councils, the writers of Scripture are unified in their declaration that God the Father is, ultimately, the person behind the writing of Scripture. Again, Paul's words to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3.16 stand as representative for the mass of other biblical authors—their words were breathed out by God the Father. The unity, consistency, and continuity displayed throughout the various books of the Bible certainly reveal the Father's continual involvement throughout the construction of His word. Examining the entirety of Scripture, we see a unified document that was forged over the span of approximately 1,600 years under the pen of more-or-less forty authors.¹⁷ Yet, over such a great span of centuries and authors, we see unity surrounding not only a consistent theme—salvation through Jesus Christ—but unity seen through the unfolding of God's plan to bring the Savior into the world. The authors, though living at different times and in different locations, never contradict each other, and certainly not on any significant issue. The persistent unity and harmony which pervades Scripture is internal testimony to God's work of inspiration, and thus, the integrity of Scripture.

The case to demonstrate the inspiration and integrity of Scripture is not simply founded upon internal consistency, however. Beyond internal consistency, Scripture maintains its claim of inspiration by an all-knowing, all-powerful God through its foretelling of

¹⁷ Christopher F. Drews, *Introduction to the Books of the Bible* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1929), 3.

historically-accurate movements in world history. An all-knowing God who is bounded by neither time nor space should be able to demonstrate such in the writings which He inspired. And indeed, when we examine the Scriptures, we find God, through various authors of His choosing, speaking of the rise and fall of nations long before such ever occurred. The book of Daniel contains outstanding examples of God foretelling history. Daniel writes during two key time periods of history—the time of the empire of Babylon¹⁸ and the time of the empire of Medo-Persia¹⁹. While living under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, God through Daniel spoke of four successive world empires that would lead to the establishment of God’s indestructible kingdom.²⁰ That Babylon was identified as the first in this line of kingdoms does not necessitate Divine guidance—such a fact was clearly seen by any responsible individual. And perhaps one could even make the case that the growth of the Persian nation during Babylon’s reign revealed the next empire on the world’s stage.²¹ However, Daniel speaks of an empire that would come after the Medo-Persian empire, which would sequentially lead to a fourth worldwide empire and then the establishment of God’s kingdom in Christ. The identity of both Medo-Persia and Greece, the third kingdom, are explicitly revealed in Daniel 8. Seeing a vision of a ram fighting a goat, Daniel is then led by God to understand that what he is seeing is a picture of future historical events. The ram, with its two mismatched²²

¹⁸ Daniel 1.1-6 NASBU95

¹⁹ Daniel 1.21 NASBU95

²⁰ Daniel 2.39-40 NASBU95

²¹ Medo-Persia would overrun Babylon and establish itself, per the prophecy of Daniel 2, as the next world empire in Daniel 5.30-31.

²² Daniel 8.3 NASBU95

horns^{23,24}, represented the Medo-Persian confederacy.²⁵ The goat, with its one large horn²⁶, represented the kingdom of Greece.²⁷ The collision of these two pictured a battle in which the Greek forces would prevail under the leadership of their notable king. In 330 B.C., at the Battle of the Persian Gates, Medo-Persia was overrun by Greece under the leadership of its notable king, Alexander the Great.²⁸ What God had prophesied through Daniel, from the confederacy of Medo-Persia to the victory of Greece under Alexander, occurred just as God had foretold. Beyond this, God foretold through Daniel what would happen to Alexander's Greek empire following his demise. Daniel revealed that, following Alexander's decline, his kingdom would be divided four ways.²⁹ Secular history confirms the biblical account, noting that after the death of Alexander, the Greek empire was divided between four of his generals: Lysimachus (Thrace), Cassander (Macedonia and Greece), Ptolemy (Egypt), and Seleucus (Syria and Persia).³⁰ Indeed, the testimony of secular history only serves to confirm the reliability, integrity, and inspiration of the Bible.

²³ Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire*. Translated by Peter T. Daniels. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 31-32.

²⁴ Under Cyrus the Great, Persia overtook the Medes, yet brought them in to the empire to such a degree that the Medes were granted a degree of respectability in the empire; hence, the Medo-Persian empire.

²⁵ Daniel 8.20 NASBU95

²⁶ Daniel 8.5 NASBU95

²⁷ Daniel 8.21 NASBU95

²⁸ Dr. Kaveh Farrokh, *Shadows in the Desert: Ancient Persia at War* (New York: Osprey, 2007), 106-107.

²⁹ Daniel 8.22 NASBU95

³⁰ Joshua J. Mark, "The Hellenistic World: The World of Alexander the Great," Ancient History Encyclopedia, last modified January 18, 2012, <http://www.ancient.eu/article/94/>

The reliability, integrity, and inspiration of Scripture is not simply founded upon historical accuracy, however. Though the two are often incorrectly paired against one another, earth and human science actually serve to demonstrate the integrity and inspiration of the biblical text. Particularly convincing are those passages in which God reveals a scientific principle or reality long before human scholarship makes the same acknowledgment. Consider the issue of circumcision. God commanded circumcision to occur on the eighth day of life.³¹ Only centuries later would human scientists recognize the wisdom in God's plan: "The vitamin K-deficient state lasts for three to five days and may be the reason why the Israelites did not circumcise their babies until the eighth day (Leviticus 12.3)."³² God also instructed the Israelites to practice circumcision using sharp knives made of flint.³³ What might seem to be an extraneous detail is actually quite remarkable: "The use of this particular knife is also interesting, for in sharpening a flint knife one chips away at the stone until one has a sharp edge—exposing new, uncontaminated stone... practically sterile."³⁴ Sterile tools and an awareness of vitamin levels in infants, two principles not scientifically recognized until centuries, reveal the wisdom of the God who inspired the writing of those laws. Other scientific principles revealed in the Bible before being recognized by the scientific community include ocean

³¹ Leviticus 12.3 NASBU95

³² Lloyd Holly Smith and James B. Wyngaarden, *Cecil Textbook of Medicine 16th Edition* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 1982), 1009.

³³ Joshua 5.2 NASBU95

³⁴ Sim I. McMillen, and David E. Stern, *None of These Diseases* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1984), 95.

currents³⁵, the hydrological cycle³⁶, and the foolishness of bloodletting.³⁷ Taken in concert, there is sufficient evidence to bear out the claims of inspiration found throughout Scripture, even in the scientific arena.

Part 4 – Three Questions Confronting Christians

Question 1 – I agree that the Bible is a good book with noble lessons—but why must I accept it as the inspired word of God?

Certainly we ought to accept the Bible as a good book with lessons that teach us to love each other, to be patient, to be kind, and to be sacrificial. However, we cannot reduce Scripture to merely a “good book”; more to the point, Scripture does not allow itself to be reduced down to a noble, but common book. When Paul calls all Scripture “inspired by God,”³⁸ he introduces an all-or-nothing proposition. God claims to be holy³⁹, wise⁴⁰, and good⁴¹; either God, and thus the word He inspires, is holy, wise, and good, or it is not. Just like the claims of Jesus do not allow us to determine him to be a good man yet not the Son of God, the Scriptures cannot be viewed as good, yet something less than the work of men inspired by Almighty God.

Question 2 – How can you be sure that what you’re reading is an accurate representation of what God inspired those men to write centuries ago?

³⁵ Psalm 8.8 NASBU95

³⁶ Amos 9.6 NASBU95

³⁷ Leviticus 17.13-14 NASBU95

³⁸ 2 Timothy 3.16 NASBU95

³⁹ Leviticus 19.2 NASBU95

⁴⁰ Psalm 147.4-5 NASBU95

⁴¹ Psalm 118.1 NASBU95

This is an important and insightful question. The individuals whom God inspired were the individual authors of Scripture.⁴² Thus, it was the autographs (original documents) that were inspired, not the copies of copies that we possess today. Since the autographs have been either lost or destroyed, how can we ensure that we are following the original message which God delivered through His inspired writers? The same way we determine, when reading any work of antiquity, if the work is an accurate representation of the original—by examining the documentary evidence.

Aside from Scripture, Homer’s Iliad is the most well-documented work of antiquity.⁴³ When reading the Iliad, scholarship tells us we are reading the legitimate words of Homer because of the manuscripts that archeology has uncovered. Consider, then, Homer’s Iliad, and a few other works of history, when compared to the New Testament (for the sake of brevity):

	New Testament	Homer’s <i>Iliad</i>	Plato’s <i>Tetraologies</i>	Tacitus’ <i>Annals</i>
When written?	AD40-100	900BC	427-347BC	AD100
Earliest extant MSS?	AD125 (25-85yrs)	400BC (500yrs)	AD900 (1247-1327yrs)	AD1100 (1000yrs)
# of MSS copies	24,000+	643	7	±20

As the evidence shows, Scripture is the most well-documented and attested work of history. If we are told by modern scholarship that when reading Iliad, Tetraologies, or

⁴² 2 Peter 1.21 NASBU95

⁴³ Josh McDowell and Bill Wilson, *The Best of Josh McDowell: A Ready Defense* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1993), 45.

Annals, we are reading legitimate and faithful representations of the autographs, then why should the biblical text not be held to the same standard?

To press on just a bit further in this line of discussion, modern archeology is uncovering more biblical manuscripts. As these manuscripts are uncovered, rather than disagreeing with the biblical text as we now have it, the manuscripts are confirming the biblical text. For example, consider the John Rylands Papyrus (P52), housed at the University of Manchester Library.⁴⁴ The manuscript fragment, part of the Cairo Geniza discovery in the early 1900s, dates from A.D. 100-150, reveals portions of John 18, and is noted as “the earliest portion of any New Testament writing ever found,”⁴⁵ perhaps only a few years removed from when John actually penned the autograph. When the Greek text of P52 is translated into English, the yield is the basic words of John 18 in our English Bible. Another example is the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyrus II (P46). These manuscripts, held between Dublin, Ireland, and the University of Michigan, contains a nearly complete copy of the book of Galatians. “While P46 was copied more than a century after Paul originally wrote his Epistles, this codex is nevertheless the closest that modern scholars have been able to get to Paul's original words.”⁴⁶ Identified in the 1930s, these manuscripts, rather than overturning modern English bibles, served to confirm the accuracy of the biblical text. Indeed, the manuscript evidence available today only supports the integrity of Scripture.

⁴⁴ St John Fragment." St. John Fragment (The University of Manchester Library). Accessed May 11, 2016. <http://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/search-resources/guide-to-special-collections/st-john-fragment/>

⁴⁵ "What Is the Significance of This Fragment?" (The University of Manchester Library). Accessed May 11, 2016. <http://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/search-resources/guide-to-special-collections/st-john-fragment/what-is-the-significance/>

⁴⁶ P46 in Perspective." P46 in Perspective. Accessed May 11, 2016. <http://www.lib.umich.edu/reading/Paul/perspective.html>

Question 3 – But what about those missing books of the Bible?

Works of film and literature, such as Dan Brown's The Da Vinci Code, have recently turned their attention to the canon of Scripture. In these works of fiction there is a subtle attempt to plant within the audience's mind the idea that there are legitimate books which have been excluded (sometimes deliberately) from the Bible that we possess today. Images are conjured up by authors and directors of nefarious, robe-clad Catholic leaders in the early centuries A.D., huddled together in dark, foreboding conference halls, deciding to exclude books of the Bible because they consider them a threat to the power and popularity of the Roman Catholicism—is this notion correct? Is it true that groups of individuals, be they Catholic or otherwise, have conspired together to destroy the canon of Scripture?

First, let us understand something about the canon of Scripture; rather than creating the canon, man simply recognizes what is canonical. Lecturing on the notion of inspiration and the canon of Scripture, James White notes, "God creates canon by inspiring some writings, and not others. Canon, then, is a part of revelation itself. It is an 'artifact of revelation,' not an object of revelation itself... Man's knowledge of canon is passive, not active. Man (or church) does not create canon, but seeks to recognize it."⁴⁷ The canon of Scripture is a necessary component of God's work of inspiration through the Holy Spirit; the canon, of necessity, came into existence the moment God inspired the first biblical author. It is in this sense that God, not man, creates the canon of Scripture. As it relates to the canon, our responsibility is to recognize those books which bear the marks of God's inspiration. If a historical work fails to meet the test of inspiration from God, then that

⁴⁷ James White, "The Inspiration, Canonization, and Transmission of Scripture." November 4, 2014. Accessed May 10, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BqwcxoxoUo>

book must be excluded from the canon, for the creator of the canon is God Himself, by virtue of the process of inspiration He began. Thus, the question of the canonicity of certain books returns, as do all of the issues we have discussed, to God; has He inspired the book?

When speaking of the canon of Scripture, we recognize that our English bibles exist in two parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament. Each of these sections belongs to a distinct time in history; the Old Testament focuses on the time before Christ, while the New Testament traces from the incarnation of Christ, onward. A gap of some 400 years separates the chronological end of the Old Testament, Malachi, from the narrative of the birth of John the Baptist, which begins the content of the New Testament.

As it relates to the Old Testament, questions of canonicity are more easily answered, at least for the Bible-believer. Paul affirmed that God was involved in the compilation of the Old Testament canon when he referenced the Jews being “entrusted with the oracles of God.”⁴⁸ The matter of the Old Testament canon, then, is resolved for us by God. Does God, then, reveal the canon of the Old Testament to us? Nearly every Old Testament book is cited authoritatively in the New Testament, and those which are not cited authoritatively are the subjects of references and allusions in the New Testament.⁴⁹ The most compelling argument, however, for the completeness of the Old Testament canon comes from Jesus. Jesus repeatedly spoke to His audiences about Himself, encouraging them to test His claims through Scripture, which He, and others, often referred to as “the Law and the

⁴⁸ Romans 3.2 NASBU95

⁴⁹ Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *From God to Us: How We Got Our Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), 79.

Prophets.”⁵⁰ The Old Testament was commonly divided by the Jews into two parts—the writings of Moses (law) and everything else (prophets). At times, the section called “prophets” was further refined to separate writings such as Jeremiah and Isaiah from what we commonly call “wisdom literature”, books like Psalms and Proverbs; those “wisdom literature” books saw themselves classified as simply “Psalms”.⁵¹ It is noteworthy that these divisions are merely topical, not substantive; whether the books were classified as “Law” or “Psalms”, they were nonetheless inspired by God and worthy of acceptance. Jesus makes this clear when He spoke of “Moses and the Prophets” as being synonymous with “the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms...”⁵² And finally, beyond all this, the words of Hebrew history attest to the conclusion of the Old Testament canon following Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi: “Since the death of the last prophets--Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi--the Holy Spirit has left Israel,”⁵³ indicating that the inspired writings of the OT were concluded following the works of those three men. Indeed, the Old Testament we possess today, beginning with Genesis and ending with Malachi, is the inspired word of God—there are no missing books. Add to this the fact that some of the *deuterocanonical books* present teachings that are in stark contrast to the Law of Moses, and it becomes quite clear that the Old Testament canon, speaking to an audience using English bibles, rightly begins with Genesis and ends with the prophet Malachi.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Matthew 5.17; Luke 16.29; John 1.45 NASBU95

⁵¹ Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *From God to Us: How We Got Our Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), 84-85.

⁵² Luke 24.27,44 NASBU95.

⁵³ "SYNOPSIS OF SUBJECTS." Babylonian Talmud, Book 8, Tr. Rodkinson: Tract Sanhedrin: Synopsis of Subjects. Accessed May 12, 2016. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/t08/t0803.htm>

⁵⁴ For example, Tobit 6.1-9 seemingly advocates the practice of magic, while 2 Maccabees 12.43ff speaks glowingly of the practice of indulgences for the dead.

The matter of the New Testament canon is a bit different than the Old Testament. As it is not written to one specific nation, but rather includes epistles that were sent throughout the world, the logistics behind identifying the New Testament canon were a bit more difficult. That being said, there is no reason to doubt the New Testament canon today. For example, rather than being the product of some mid-600s council, all of the books of the New Testament we recognize today had been identified as being the inspired word of God by A.D. 373; and, with the exception of 3 John, every New Testament book had been cited in extra-biblical sources by A.D. 202.⁵⁵ These facts alone are sufficient to dismiss the idea that the canon of the New Testament was absolutely unknown until a Catholic convention centuries after the autographs were penned.

As it relates to the specific topic of books missing from the New Testament, the two most questioned books are 1 Clement and Shepherd of Hermas. Is there a reason these books were rejected from the New Testament canon? Or, through a process of subterfuge, were they deliberately excluded, though bearing the marks of inspiration? In reality, there is good reason why both of these books were rejected from the New Testament canon. Among other reasons, 1 Clement is rejected not only because the author does not claim inspiration, but also because he presents the story of a phoenix as being true.⁵⁶ Very obviously, the work of 1 Clement does not meet the test for Divine inspiration; thus, the work is counted as non-canonical and excluded from the New Testament. As it relates to

⁵⁵ Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *From God to Us: How We Got Our Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), 109.

⁵⁶ "First Clement." *Early Christian Writings*. Accessed May 12, 2016. <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/1clement-lightfoot.html>

Shepherd of Hermas, this text is rejected because its teachings violate the teachings of other non-disputed books of the New Testament.⁵⁷

All things honestly considered, the case of the integrity of the canon of Scripture is strong. Ongoing archeological discoveries are confirming, not disputing, the canon of Scripture we now recognize. The case for legitimately inspired books being excluded from the canon has not been demonstrated.

Part 5 – Three Questions that Sceptics Must Confront

Question 1 – How can the many instances of scientific foreknowledge be sufficiently explained, taking into account the prevailing scientific knowledge of those ancient communities?

As we have previously noted, a multitude of scientific principles are revealed in Scripture, long before their acceptance by later scientific communities. The process of circumcision, the foolishness of bloodletting, the wisdom of washing hands and body, procedures for dealing with human waste, the hydrological cycle, and others: how can all of these many scientific breakthroughs be rationally explained in the context of a band of wandering, monotheistic former slaves? The many scientific realizations demonstrated throughout Scripture give witness to the Inspirer behind Scripture.

Question 2 – Were the many instances of history being explicitly foretold in great detail by Old Testament prophets merely the product of chance and luck?

Isaiah's prophecies concerning Cyrus; Daniel's prophecies concerning Persia, Greece, and Rome; Ezekiel's prophecies about Tyre: were all of these instances of foretelling the

⁵⁷ Mandate 4, 29:6 contradicts the words of Jesus in Matthew 19:9. Parable 5, 59:5-7 contradicts the teaching of Jesus in John 14-17 (as well as the teaching of the apostles in other places) regarding the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Vision 2, 6:5 teaches that there comes a day when forgiveness is unavailable to the Christian, "whereas for the Gentiles there is repentance until the last day."

result of luck? Surely it did not take great wisdom to deduce the Belshazzar's reign would end in ignominy; but to specify the very means by which the Medo-Persians would conquer the kingdom of Babylon is puzzling, if the Divine element in inspiration is discounted. Truly, in the end, all the sceptic is left with is time, chance, and sheer luck.

Question 3 – What evidence exists that groups of individuals, Catholic or otherwise, banded together to thwart humanity's general understanding of the canon of Scripture?

Though the claim is often repeated, evidence to substantiate the claim is sorely lacking. Where is the evidence that certain books, which purportedly belong in Scripture, were deliberately and with malice excluded, in order to protect a group's power or popularity? Instead of merely making claims, proof needs to be conclusively demonstrated. In the noteworthy absence of such proof, the claims of an abused canon must be rejected.

Part 6 – Application and Conclusion

Either God has spoken, or He has not.

Either God has inspired His word, or He has not.

Either God has produced works consistent with His nature, or He has not.

Either God has created a canon of Scripture for us, or He has not.

Everything we have discussed in this study focuses upon one Person—God the Father. Either He, through the Holy Spirit, inspired men to write concerning the coming of His Son, Jesus Christ, or He did not. Make no mistake, the question of the integrity of Scripture is not simply a question reserved for theologians, seminaries, or Bible-believers with way too much time on their hands; the question of Scripture's integrity is a direct reflection upon God our Father. To claim that inspired Scripture is flawed is to claim that

the One who inspired is flawed. There is nothing wrong with asking questions or seeking more information; however, we must tread extremely cautiously when hurling accusations at Scripture. For, in controverting Scripture, we are fighting against God Himself.

Christians have nothing to fear by an examination of Scripture. Time and time again, the legitimacy, wisdom, and practicality of Scripture have been confirmed. For centuries, attacks have been waged against God and His word, and for centuries, God and His word have withstood those attacks. Developments in the scientific community in past years have served to demonstrate, not overturn, the wisdom and insight of the biblical text; it is not foolish to believe in the Bible. For those who would oppose Scripture as being the inspired word of God, only one thing is required to be successful in overturning Scripture: proof. In the absence of such proof, the firm ground of inspired Scripture is where this author chooses to build his life. The testimony of Scripture has stood throughout the centuries of history gone-by. The reason for that perseverance is simple—“All Scripture is inspired by God.”⁵⁸

⁵⁸ 2 Timothy 3.16 NASBU95

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Living By Faith In A Skeptical World by Bruce Reeves

As Christians we often feel that we live in a world that, simply put, would like nothing better than to destroy our faith in God. We are told repeatedly that “God does not exist” and “religion is nothing but a myth of uneducated and unenlightened people,” which interestingly enough is a myth of some non-believers. Our secularized society strives to fill us with a feeling of despair and we are told that we are wasting our time. Yet the mission of the Kingdom of God remains before us, Christ is in us, and His grace has redeemed us. This is not the time for retreat, cowardice or shame; it is a time for God’s people to live by faith (Hebrews 10:38-39). In the story of salvation it is always in the darkest moments that the light of God’s truth shines most brightly (Matthew 4:16).

We express our faith in many ways to the world: first and foremost by our living example, that is, to say how we worship, how we live and how we love. Other times we simply share our faith in conversation with fellow-believers concerning Biblical teaching regarding God and His will for His people. However as those devoted to seeking and saving the lost we must be willing to engage non-believers and skeptics. But the question is, “How do we do so?”

So What Does Faith Look Like In A Skeptical World?

Faith is beyond reason, but not contrary to reason.⁵⁹ Human beings long to know God, yet unaided human reason cannot fully answer the question of the purpose of

⁵⁹ Alister E. McGrath, *Theology: The Basics* (3d ed.; Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 7.

humanity. For this reason God chose to make these things known through revelation (Acts 17:24-31).

Secularists often attempt to define faith as a “blind leap” and unfortunately many Christians grant such a deficient definition of faith. It is imperative, however, for believers to understand that this is not the biblical definition of faith. The Christian does not ignore the world, but recognizes it as God’s beautiful creation and acknowledges creation itself as a foundational part of salvation history (Psalm 19:1-6).

Although, these are not necessarily “proofs,”⁶⁰ in a post-enlightenment and restrictive sense of that word they do confirm or corroborate the basic themes of faith.⁶¹ Faith is not a question of shutting one’s eyes, gritting one’s teeth, and believing the impossible. It involves a leap, but a leap into the light rather than the dark. The universe is deeply intelligible, rationally beautiful, fruitfully fine tuned, intrinsically rational, partly veiled in character, but open in its process and information generating in its nature. Therefore, the most reasonable conclusion is that the world is the orderly creation of God (Romans 1:18-20).⁶²

Although some atheist writers persist in portraying the faith of Christians as a blind leap in the dark, Thomas Aquinas pointed out that faith has its reasons. The center of my faith lies in Jesus Christ and it is here that I find the heart of my hope. On a supportive level, there are also implications of God’s presence from scientific knowledge through the

⁶⁰ The term “proof” has had a variety of meanings in the pre-enlightenment period in contrast to post enlightenment period. There are means of ascertaining knowledge of truth outside of the scientific method, e.g. aesthetic qualities, moral and value judgments, presuppositions of math and science as distinctive disciplines.

⁶¹ McGrath, *The Basics*, 8.

⁶² *Ibid.* 8

irreducible complexities of His creation. However, the actual question of “How” turns out to point us on to pressing the question of “Why?” so that science by itself is found not to be sufficiently satisfying. Our question is, “Is it reasonable to believe in God?”

The Problem of “Just Believing”

There is a concerning problem of fideism among believers.⁶³ Fideism is defined more popularly as “blind faith” and is willing to ignore evidence to the contrary, which in the end undermines biblical faith, e.g. “I just believe no matter what.” How would one test the truthfulness of such claims?

What Are Signs of Fideism Rather Than True Faith?

Fideism is often indicated by *special pleading*, by those instances where the rules of evidence and rationality that we employ when examining our own faith differ from the standards we employ in evaluating the religious beliefs of others. Fideism is also indicated when we reject certain concepts simply because a non-Christian said it. We certainly ask for non-believers to not dismiss truth claims merely because a Christian expressed those concepts. Fideism is most clearly seen when we assume whatever we think is God’s will despite reason, logic or even biblical teaching.

What Is Faith?

How is faith defined in the Bible? Faith trusts God’s promises and surrenders to God’s will. The Hebrew writer describes faith as “*the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen*” (Heb. 11:1). This trust surrenders in obedience to God, “*But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him*” (Hebrews 11:6). This faith

⁶³ Kenton L. Sparks, *God’s Word In Human Words, An Evangelical Appropriation of Critical Biblical Scholarship*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 135-139.

is also the conviction of things unseen as the most reasonable conclusion in light of the revelation of God.

But what is the source of faith? Faith is produced by the Lord's influence in His Word (Romans 10:17; Romans 1:16). This is why it is worthwhile and even necessary to consider the integrity, inspiration and trustworthiness of the Bible.

The Role of Reason in Faith: Putting the Pieces Together

The Bible teaches us to give the *“reason of the hope, which is in you with meekness and fear”* (I Peter 3:15). The term *apologia* is the Greek word for “defense.” Jude writes that we are to “contend earnestly for the faith” (Jude 3). We have reasons at our disposal, if we would only articulate them to the world. Since Christianity is rooted in history and corroborated by philosophy and science, why not consider and express this line of argumentation?

Throughout the book of Acts we see a number of examples of the apostles defending the truthfulness of the faith. Acts shows instances of the apostles disputing, proving, explaining, demonstrating, reasoning and persuading (Acts 15:2; 17:2-4, 17; 18:4, 19, 27-28; 19:8-10; 28:23, 24). The Biblical record reveals that the message of the gospel has been preserved by the providence of God and is sufficient to produce saving faith in our hearts (Acts 15:8-9; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).⁶⁴ It is through belief in the eyewitness testimony of those who touched and handled Jesus that we come to faith (John 20:27-31; I John 1:1-4). Therefore, faith presupposes reason. If our faith is merely an emotional response it is incomplete and

⁶⁴ Paul's point in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 is not about the extent of the canon so much as the nature of scripture as being adequate and sufficient to perfectly equip His servants to full maturity. 2 Peter 1:20-21 speaks to the process of inspiration as Peter speaks of men of God as being “carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

insufficient to navigate substantive issues confronting us. Such a faith fears open discussion of the truth and closes itself off to healthy dialogue. Even though there are convincing reasons to trust God, some will not, but it is precisely because they will not; not because they cannot. While our faith transcends human reason, it is not unreasonable.

A Serious, But Not Fearful Approach.

The mission of God's Kingdom is to engage our culture with the gospel. We must be interested in discovering the hidden causes for the denial of God because we take the questions of others seriously. Our purpose as light-bearers of the message of Christ must be to reach the margins with the gospel (Romans 1:16, 18-32; I Corinthians 6:9-11). Paul engaged the city of Athens, which was a "*city full of idols*," in spite of various pagan philosophies (Acts 17:16-18). Yes, let's not be naïve about the challenge we face in talking about faith to skeptics in a secular age, but on the other hand let us not panic or fear thereby exhibiting hostility. How often have we said, "The truth does not fear investigation"? Do we believe what we preach and teach? We must devote ourselves to listening to others and having a real dialogue and discussion. Our fear may say more about us than it does those with whom we differ.

Be Discerning: Try To Understand the Situation.

This discussion is not due to an intelligence issue; there are very intelligent believers and non-believers. We must be willing to study, hear and read from various perspectives. What are simple things we can do? Hear their perspective; see through hostility – for every Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins, there is an Anthony

Flew.⁶⁵ Some may say, *“Well, I don’t need this – do I have to know this to go to heaven?”* Have you ever been struck with tragedy? Have you been transparent and open in your relationship with God? What will you say when your children or grandchildren have a crisis of faith? What happens when they ask you questions? We are attempting to strengthen your faith and encourage you so that we may see the reasonableness of faith and the blessing of confidence that God has given (I Timothy 1:7).

Let us not forget that the work of the church is to equip believers to greater service. We cannot offer faith and hope if we do not provide an environment where doubts may be expressed. Our desire must be to be a community where real life changing discussions can occur. It is an eminent danger to our youth if we wait until they hear of the issues we will discuss in this lectureship from an unbeliever. How can believers be shaped and formed in Christ if in our preaching and teaching we are unresponsive to people’s deepest questions? This is the work of feeding the flock and fostering real spiritual growth!

If the church has become only a place where we parrot phrases we have heard without any conceptual understanding or if we have become a place where we merely reinforce what we already know, without any challenge to stimulate our faith, spiritual death will be inevitable. God’s church is meant to be so much more!

Living Our Faith Before An Unbelieving World.

This was the encouragement to Christians living in a pagan, persecuting, non-believing and hostile world – live your faith. Demonstrating Christ in character and life may be the most powerful lesson that can be preached or taught (I Peter 2:9-12, 19-20;

⁶⁵ Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins have been hostile enemies of Christianity and although they have been acknowledged in popular culture as worthy defenders of atheism, in more intellectual circles, they have been exposed as having been found lacking. Yet, for all their hostility, Anthony Flew who in the past was an atheist has now at the very least declared his deism and has had a more sophisticated approach to discussions with theists.

3:13-17; 4:12-19). The declaration of the gospel cannot be reduced to well-calculated response – our lives in Christ open doors of opportunity (2 Corinthians 3:1-2). I want to share with you a quotation from a well know atheist named Penn Gillette that I think is worthwhile:

“I want to talk to you about this...I get home after the show...there was one guy waiting over to the side after I was done. Big guy, probably about my age and he had been the guy that helps with props... He walked over to me and he said ‘I was here last night, I was here at the show...’ He was very complimentary in a really genuine way. He said, ‘I brought this for you’ and he handed me a pocket edition of the New Testament. He said, ‘I wrote in the front of it and I wanted you to have this...I am evangelizing. I’m a business-man, I’m sane and I am not crazy’ and he looked me right in the eye. It was really wonderful. I believe he knew I was an atheist. But he was not defensive and he looked me right in the eyes...he was really kind, nice, sane, and looked me right in the eyes and gave me this Bible. I have always said, ‘I don’t respect people who believe and yet do not evangelize.’ I don’t respect that at all.

“If you believe there is a heaven and hell and people could go to hell or not receive eternal life and you think it is not really worth telling this because it will make it socially awkward ... How much do you have to hate someone to not tell them about salvation’ I have always thought that...but this guy was a really good guy and he was polite and honest...He wrote me a little note and left phone numbers. I’ll tell you he was a good man...”

Conclusion

We look forward to a faith-building week! We sincerely believe that there is one true and living God who gave His only Son to save us from our sins. The Bible teaches that all those who will confess faith in Jesus Christ, turning to the Lord in repentance and receive the baptism of Christ for the forgiveness of their sins can truly have salvation. Come partake of the water of life freely!

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The Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ by Shawn Chancellor

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the central doctrine of New Testament Christianity. In the resurrection, we see the fulfillment of the combined Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. Through the resurrection the head of the serpent is bruised, the consolation of Israel is realized and the kingdom of God has an eternal King to sit upon the throne. Without the resurrection, our faith is vain and we have no reason for our hope. Because the Lamb that was slain is standing and the one who was dead is alive evermore, we have every reason to believe in the power of God to keep us through eternity. This wonderful doctrine serves as a touchstone that empowers us and encourages us not to love our lives to the death. It is in the resurrection of Jesus that we see a glimpse of ourselves in eternity, as He serves as the first fruits of those who are asleep.

For the atheist no claim could be less credible or more despicable. The resurrection doctrine merely demonstrates the irrational mind of faith which refuses to acknowledge that the resurrection could not occur because the dead do not rise. Furthermore, in this worldview, the evidence for the resurrection does not bear true examination on the basis that the impossible cannot be an historical event. Any evidence offered is viewed as just another facet of the myth created by the disciples to form the religious traditions that are observed to this day.

The resurrection carries implications that the atheist mindset cannot bear. A resurrection implies that there is more to life than mere atoms, that there is a supernatural

realm/power, and that there is a truly personal god. Such a demonstration of life giving power at the very least calls into question the naturalistic explanations for the beginning of life. Perhaps most despicable to this mindset, if sufficient evidence for the resurrection can be given to demonstrate its occurrence is more likely than not, then a major atheistic argument, i.e. that theists cling to faith in the absence of reason, is completely undone.

Having seen the significance of this subject, there seem to be at least three questions that the reasonable mind must seek answers to. First, we must ask if the resurrection of Christ can be considered an historical event. We are not asking at this point if we can be confident that the event occurred, rather we are asking if the evidence for the event is such that it falls within the realm of historical research, or is this a question limited to the realm of theology. Next, we must ask if there is enough historical evidence to believe that this event actually happened. Finally, we must ask ourselves, if there is enough evidence to believe this event occurred what does it prove, i.e. how do I use this evidence to persuade the skeptic?

To the ears of a believer, asking if the resurrection is a historic event sounds strange. We accept the Biblical account as historically accurate and believe that the events recorded therein occurred in the time and place recorded. As a result, we tend to approach conversations with skeptics armed with answers to arguments about swoon theories and disciples hiding a body. However, many skeptics simply reject the notion of the resurrection, or for that matter any miraculous event, *a priori*. As David Hume argued, “no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous, than the fact, which it endeavours to

establish.....⁶⁶” He bases this argument on his understanding of what he calls the “firm and unalterable” laws of nature⁶⁷ arguing that anything outside of these laws is logically impossible. In the case of the resurrection, the skeptic might argue that since we know that the dead do not rise no amount of testimony to the contrary is sufficient. In his book *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, N.T. Wright says that this is the result of a “post-Enlightenment” view of history which he defines as,

“...the period in which people have imagined some kind of analogy, even correlation, between history and the hard sciences. In this sense, ‘historical’ means not only that which can be demonstrated and written, but that which can be demonstrated and written within the post-Enlightenment worldview.”⁶⁸

This “post-Enlightenment” worldview would tell us that only science, i.e. the scientific method of experimentation, repetition and explanation by natural law, can offer true knowledge. By limiting history to what fits within this worldview, the skeptic eliminates from consideration any past event that cannot be explained naturally. It is this narrow definition of history that has led some to say of the resurrection, “Is it not a mythical event pure and simple? Obviously it is not an event of past history.”⁶⁹

Such a position puts the typical Christian, armed with evidences and answers to the various objections to the resurrection at a decided disadvantage, because this argument

⁶⁶ David Hume and Charles William Hendel, *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding: With a Supplement, an Abstract of a Treatise of Human Nature* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 114–16.

⁶⁷ i.b.i.d.

⁶⁸ N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2003), 13.

⁶⁹ Rudolph Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), <http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/Pdfs/BultmannNTMyth.pdf>.

places the entire discussion in the same category as a debate concerning the symbolism of The Lord of the Rings, or inconsistencies in the Harry Potter series. No matter how consistent one is, or what facts are introduced in discussing a myth or a legend it remains a myth or a legend.

Rather than be dismayed at this, we need to recognize that there are at least two flaws with this line of reasoning. First, the argument begs the question. By assuming the very thing that needs to be proven, resurrection is impossible, we know that Christ was not resurrected. In other words, if we ignore any testimony or evidence of that does not fit our predetermined view then we can “know” that our assumptions are correct. Secondly, we might question the very notion of “firm and unalterable laws of nature.” One has to wonder what testimony could be offered to Hume, who lived from 1711-1776, that data could be transmitted over long distances through the air, humans could indeed fly, and that in fact men could explore outer space, or any other number of things that would have been considered outside of the “firm and unalterable laws of nature” in Hume’s day. As John Montgomery points out, “the universe is no longer a tight, safe, predictable playing-field in which we know all the rules. Since Einstein no modern man has had the right to rule out the possibility of events because of prior knowledge of ‘natural law.’⁷⁰”

Is it not more reasonable to make judgments based on the historical evidence? If we were to do historical research in any other context this is precisely what we would do, examine the facts in evidence and allow them to guide us to reasonable conclusions. As Gary Habermas writes, “Although the historian himself will not be able to participate in

⁷⁰ John Warwick Montgomery, *Where Is History Going?: Essays in Support of the Historical Truth of the Christian Revelation*, 1st edition (Zondervan Pub. House, 1969), 71-74.

the event that has already occurred...he is able to inspect the relevant data such as the eyewitnesses, written documents and various other records, structures or archeological finds. Upon such confirmation the historian must obtain his evidence.⁷¹"

If the amount and variety of evidence for the resurrection were presented for any other event, the honest observer would readily accept the historicity of the event in question. We have multiple independent sources that write about resurrection. We have the recorded testimony of enemies of Christ, as well as embarrassing admissions in the case of the Jewish priesthood and the guard assigned to the tomb. We have eyewitness accounts of those who claim to have seen the resurrected Christ. We have early testimony which does not leave opportunity for exaggeration or legend to become a part of the record.⁷² The majority of this evidence can be found in the four gospel accounts of the resurrection. Paul, in the book of Acts and 1 Corinthians, offers early testimony as well as the "church fathers" of the first and second century.

It is important to note that we have not yet attempted to answer the question, did the resurrection occur, rather we have asked if this is even a fair question and do we have what is needed to properly ask it. Again this may seem a strange question to the believer, but for the skeptic it is a necessary starting point. What value is there in attempting to persuade David Hume that the plane we flew to Scotland in is blue without persuading him that human flight is possible? By the same token, we must understand that convincing someone that the Gospels are in fact consistent with one another and with the cultural

⁷¹Gary R. Habermas, *The Verdict of History: Conclusive Evidence for the Life of Jesus* (T. Nelson, 1988), 21.

⁷²For more information on the five historical principles that speak to the resurrection see chapter 2 of Gary R. Habermas and Michael R. Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, First Edition (Kregel Publications, 2004).

setting of the day has little value if that person considers all testimony of the resurrection as mere storytelling, and completely outside the realm of possibility. For this reason, we must begin by exposing the irrationality of rejecting the evidence simply because one does not like where it leads.

Considering the fact that much of the evidence comes from the Gospels, is there reason to believe that the Gospel writers are reliable witnesses? Many skeptics suggest that the Gospels have no evidentiary value. They argue that too much time passed between the supposed event and the writing of the Gospel accounts. We are told this allowed time for legend to grow and alterations to be made. Often, the bias of the writers themselves is used to degrade their testimony, that their desire to maintain some position in the early church led to the forming of this legend. Another complaint regards the lack of a firsthand account of what took place within the tomb. Since no one saw the actual resurrection itself we have no proof that Christ was raised, instead we are left to infer that Christ was raised from the various resurrection appearances.

At first these concerns may sound legitimate. However, even a cursory examination of other historical sources from antiquity demonstrates that rejecting the Gospels, on the basis of these charges, while accepting other ancient sources is nothing more than special pleading. In fact, many of the most noted historians of antiquity are known for their biased views, inaccuracies, and writing of things which they did not themselves witness. Habermas points out that Tacitus, considered by many to be Rome's greatest historian, "is known to have had prejudices, such as his 'aristocratic bias' and his conviction that

moralizing was the 'highest function' of writing history.⁷³ He goes on to notice that Tacitus and Livy are "examples of ancient historians who wrote about events which occurred much earlier, sometimes up to as much as five centuries before."⁷⁴ However, when dealing with historical sources such as these, scholars do not throw up their hands saying there is no value in their work. Instead they carefully examine and cross-examine the various sources in an effort to reconstruct past events. This brings up an important point, historical research cannot reach a point of complete certainty regarding past events. In other words, historical research cannot prove, in the Post-Enlightenment sense, that any event did or did not occur. "Much like physics there is a certain amount of dependence on probability in history as well."⁷⁵

When we compare the Gospel accounts to other historical resources we find compelling reasons to accept at the very least that these men were telling the truth as they understood it. If we accept Mark as the earliest Gospel, as many scholars do, he would have written between 55-65 A.D. making his account at most some 30 years after the resurrection. Such a timeline leaves very little time and far too great a likelihood of contradiction for legend to creep into the account. As for bias, each of these men suffered greatly precisely because they proclaimed a risen Christ. Mathew, Luke and John specifically would have written their accounts at a point when persecution was becoming more intense. What could they have had to gain? As for the lack of a firsthand description of the actual resurrection, if Jesus was truly dead, if he was truly buried, and he was truly

⁷³Habermas, *The Verdict of History*, 18.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid., 19.

seen alive again what other conclusion can we draw than that He was raised again? Regarding the idea that oral transmission led to this “legend,” the question must be asked where such a tradition would have come from. As N.T. Wright goes to great length to prove, neither Jewish nor Pagan culture in the first century held any concept that death could be reversed as we see in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.⁷⁶

The only fair conclusion is that the resurrection must be examined as an historical event. If we choose to avoid the faulty logic of begging the question and special pleading, we must examine the evidence and follow where it leads. The evidence itself meets the criteria for historical research, and in fact is superior to much of the historical material produced by other accepted sources from the same period of history.

If the resurrection can stand or fall based on the examination of the historical evidence, we must ask if there is sufficient evidence to support the claim that a dead Jesus was indeed brought back to life. Admittedly this is a grand claim, one that goes against our experience and understanding of the natural realm. However, if we have reasonable evidence and the best explanation of that evidence is that Christ was raised from the dead what reason do we have not to believe?

The first question we might ask regarding these evidences regards the Gospels themselves. Do we have an accurate record of what the witnesses testified to? The integrity of the New Testament is another subject in and of itself, however we will point out that no book from antiquity has been scrutinized the way the Bible has been. This close

⁷⁶N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2003), 83–84.

examination has revealed that the Bible is archeologically accurate, geographically accurate, and culturally accurate. In other words, in every area in which the scriptures can be tested they have been demonstrated to be reliable. Furthermore, when we consider the New Testament it is to be noted that we have more manuscripts of the New Testament than of any other ancient work, and unlike most ancient works we have the entire text of the New Testament. Perhaps most importantly the gap between the original New Testament writings and the oldest manuscripts is very small. For example, the Chester Beatty Papyri, containing most of the New Testament, dates to the 200's A.D. Most ancient classical works have a gap of 700-1400 years between the original writer and the oldest manuscript.⁷⁷

Critics often point to the alleged inconsistencies between the Gospel accounts in order to discount their testimony. In an effort to combat this, many scholars claim that the writers were using different source material. It is our contention that a more reasonable explanation has to do with the different audiences of the original Gospels, the particular point of emphasis that the author was expounding on, and time between authorship. For example, if we again accept that Mark wrote first and that his account had been in circulation for some years before Matthew wrote, why should Matthew feel the need to plow the exact same ground? These men were not depending on each other for information, nor were they writing to corroborate each other's stories, but to educate particular groups of people before the last of the eyewitnesses were gone.

⁷⁷For more information see Habermas, *The Verdict of History*, 41.

Part of the power of the testimony of the Gospels is the fact that the authors were obviously convinced that they had in fact seen Jesus alive after He had died. There are several key facts that indicate these men believed what they wrote, and that they were not making up a legend to deceive and manipulate.

The simple fact that these men willingly died for their testimony that Jesus was raised from the dead speaks strongly of their conviction that He was raised. This was true not only of the Apostles themselves but of many disciples in the first and second century. Many of these executions are recorded by extra-biblical sources that corroborate the testimony of the New Testament writers.⁷⁸ Some might argue that there are martyrs even today from several different religious groups, why should we believe the Apostles and not a Muslim who blows himself up in the name of Allah? As Habermas points out,

“Extreme acts do not validate the truth of their beliefs, but willingness to die indicates that they regarded their beliefs as true. Moreover, there is an important difference between the apostle martyrs and those who die for their beliefs today. Modern martyrs act solely out of their trust in beliefs that others have taught them. The apostles died for holding to their own testimony that they had personally seen the risen Jesus. Contemporary martyrs die for what they believe to be true. The disciples of Jesus died for what they knew to be either true or false.”⁷⁹

It is also significant that all four Gospel writers mention that women were the first to discover the empty tomb. Women were not considered reliable witnesses in the first

⁷⁸See Habermas, *The Case of the Resurrection of Jesus*. In chapter 3, Habermas offers several extra-biblical authors and their testimony to the deaths of both the Apostles and several others, noting that their executions were based on their faith in the resurrected Christ. He also makes a strong case that they willingly died in that they had opportunity to recant and yet refused.

⁷⁹Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, (Kindle Location 528).

century, furthermore in many settings they were considered to be second class citizens.⁸⁰ If someone were trying to create a legend to inspire people to follow them in the first century this would not have been the way to go about it.

The embarrassing admissions regarding the Apostles themselves lends credence to their testimony. We might notice the many times we see the Apostles in a negative light before the crucifixion. They rarely seem to understand the mission Jesus is giving them, often involve themselves in senseless quarreling, and regularly seem to lack the faith that their Gospels are intended to inspire. Why would a man like Matthew include his own cowardice in Matthew 26:56, if he was attempting to become the leader of a countercultural movement through the invention of a legend? However, if he were merely writing an accurate account of what occurred these embarrassing admissions would actually lend credence to his words.

The inclusion of Joseph of Arimathea seems an unlikely twist if the Gospels are mere fabrications. As a member of the Sanhedrin Council, he would have been a part of

⁸⁰"Sooner let the words of the Law be burnt than delivered to women. (Talmud, Sotah 19a) The world cannot exist without males and without females-happy is he whose children are males, and woe to him whose children are females. males. (Talmud, Kiddushin 82b)³⁵ But let not the testimony of women be admitted, on account of the levity and boldness of their sex, nor let servants be admitted to give testimony on account of the ignobility of their soul; since it is probable that they may not speak truth, either out of hope of gain, or fear of punishment. (Josephus, Antiquities 4.8.15)³" Any evidence which a woman [gives] is not valid (to offer), also they are not valid to offer. This is equivalent to saying that one who is Rabbinically accounted a robber is qualified to give the same evidence as a woman. (Talmud, Rosh Hashannah 1.8) ... Some Romans shared a similarly low view of females. The Roman historian Suetonius (c. A.D. 115) writes of Caesar Augustus who was emperor at the time of Jesus' birth through A.D. 14: Whereas men and women had hitherto always sat together, Augustus confined women to the back rows even at gladiatorial shows: the only ones exempt from this rule being the Vestal Virgins, for whom separate rate accommodation was provided, facing the praetor's tribunal. No women at all were allowed to witness the athletic contests; indeed, when the audience clamoured at the Games for a special boxing match to celebrate his appointment as Chief Priest, Augustus postponed this until early the next morning, and issued a proclamation to the effect that it was the Chief Priest's desire that women should not attend the Theatre before ten o'clock. 3." Ibid. (Kindle Locations 645-657).

the very group that was seeking Jesus death. Again, the introduction of such an unlikely figure seems unlikely to be the product of an evolving story.

The conversion of Paul and James also speaks to the strength of the evidence. Both of these men are presented at one point as being antagonistic toward the Messianic claims of Jesus. However, both of these men become leaders in the church testifying to and ultimately dying for their profession of the resurrected Christ. We are introduced to James the brother of Jesus in Matthew 13:55 and we find in John 7:5 that none of Jesus' brothers believed in Him. However, Paul informs us in 1Cor 15:3-7 that Jesus appeared to James after His resurrection. By Acts 15, this man who once did not believe had become a central figure in the church of Jerusalem. Habermas points out that, "not only did James convert to Christianity, his beliefs in Jesus and his resurrection were so strong that he died as a martyr because of them. James's martyrdom is attested by Josephus, Hegesippus, and Clement of Alexandria. While we no longer have original copies of the works of Hegesippus or the writings of Clement where the event is mentioned sections have been preserved by Eusebius. Therefore, his martyrdom is attested by both Christian and non-Christian sources.⁸¹" Is it reasonable to believe that a skeptic became a leader in the church and died a martyrs death for a legend?

We see the same process with the Apostle Paul. We first meet Paul, then known as Saul of Tarsus, consenting to the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7. In Acts 8, he began "ravaging the church." His hatred of Christianity was so great that he sought permission to go to Damascus and look for Christians to persecute there as well. However, before he

⁸¹Ibid. (Kindle Locations 605-608).

arrived in Damascus Jesus appears to him. The result of this encounter, recorded in Acts 9, was the conversion of this persecutor of the Way to Christianity. Not only does he convert, but he becomes a devoted servant preaching the Gospel of the resurrection all over the world. As with James, history tells us that this man died as a result of the message he presented, a message that revolved around the resurrection of Jesus.

We may question what the disciples actually saw, but an examination of the facts leads only to one conclusion. These men believed that Jesus of Nazareth died of crucifixion, was buried, and on the third day he was found to be dead no more. Their conviction was written in their blood and their testimony sealed with their deaths.

What about the many objections that are raised concerning the facts themselves? Could it be that Jesus did not really die? What if the disciples did hide the body? Most of these objections are actually rooted in a doubt of the integrity of Scripture itself. These objections have been written on at length by various authors and so we will not attempt to catalogue and answer each one, but we will note a few more popular ideas.

The notion that Roman soldiers who were trained in the art of dealing death could not, in a controlled setting, determine if a man was dead or not is absurd. We are not dealing with a man in a condition that might make it easy to mistake him for dead, nor did the soldiers leave it to chance that Jesus had in fact died. Instead they pierced him with a

spear and watched as blood and water came out (John 19:34). In fact, John's entire description is consistent with one who died by crucifixion.⁸²

Two other objections that have often been raised question whether a guard was placed at the tomb or, for that matter, if there ever was a tomb. By removing the guard from the tomb, the skeptic invents a situation in which it would have been easy for the disciples to have moved the body. However, this objection has its own difficulties to overcome, not the least of which is the silence of the disciples under extreme duress. As history has shown us through many examples, such conspiracies involving a dozen or more people have a very low probability of success. Removing the tomb from the testimony of the witnesses does present a greater problem. N.T. Wright offers a concise summary of this argument,

⁸² That inability to breathe was the cause of death by crucifixion is a fact supported ported by an ancient writing composed around the middle of the second century A.D.: The Gospel of Peter. Although all but a handful of the most radical of critical scholars maintain that this writing was composed much later than the canonical Gospels and was certainly dependent on them, it does provide us with insight regarding why the practice of breaking the legs of crucified victims was done: "And having become irritated at him, they ordered that there be no leg-breaking, breaking, so that he might die tormented." To the victim of crucifixion, shattering the legs, painful as it was, was, in an ironic sense, a merciful act, because it shortened their time on the cross. The soldiers had seen hundreds of men executed by crucifixion. It was routine to know when the victim was dead. He was not pushing up any longer for air. The team writing the article concluded, "Accordingly, interpretations based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge."⁵² Moreover, if the spear wound described in John 19:34-35 was inflicted on Jesus, the blood and water that were described as flowing from his body were probably due to the rupturing of the sac that surrounds the heart (called the pericardium). This would produce the water and, if the right side of the heart was pierced, blood would likewise flow (as attested by our medical sources above). The Roman author Quintilian (A.D. 35-95) reports of this procedure being performed on crucifixion victims.⁵³ No question remained concerning the status of the victim afterward. Second, over a century before this study, one liberal scholar who thought hallucinations accounted for the appearances of the risen Jesus ended up decimating mating the swoon theory. The German scholar D. F. Strauss wrote that it was not plausible that, having been scourged and crucified, Jesus pushed the heavy stone away from the tomb with pierced hands and walked blocks on pierced and wounded feet. Even if such a ridiculous scenario were possible, when he appeared to his disciples in his pathetic and mutilated state, would this convince them that he was the risen Prince of life?" Alive? Barely. Risen? No. Ibid. (Kindle Locations 928-940).

“What came first, according to this modern narrative, was a belief in Jesus’ exaltation. There then grew up ‘Easter legends’ about appearances and/or an empty tomb. Mark’s account, the first to be written, was short and mysterious, deliberately stopping with the women being so afraid that they said nothing to anyone. There are no actual appearances of the risen Jesus, and no announcement by the women, even to the disciples. All we have is an empty tomb (introduced into the tradition late in the day as an apologetic motif connected with these recently invented ‘Easter legends’) and an angel who says that Jesus will be seen in Galilee. Matthew’s account, written next, has Jesus appearing briefly to the women, and then, at only slightly more length, to the disciples in Galilee, where his closing words serve to round off several themes from earlier in Matthew’s gospel.”⁸³

This argument would impact the resurrection account in two important ways. First, it would offer no means for those who saw the resurrected Christ to corroborate objectively that they had seen the Jesus that was crucified. Peter himself states the significance of this in Acts 2:25-29. Quoting Psalm 16:10, “You will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor allow Your Holy One to undergo decay,” he states, “brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.” The ability to visit these tombs and see for themselves offered credence to Peter’s claims. For the modern audience, the significance may be even greater. Why should we believe anything found in the Gospels if the writers fabricated such a crucial piece of information? Which leads us back to a discussion regarding the integrity of Scripture and the same circular reasoning that we noticed above.

Several explanations have been offered to explain away the many sightings of Jesus that occur after the crucifixion. The problem is that none of them fit every instance. The popular hallucination theory fails to account for the groups of people that witnessed Jesus

⁸³ N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2003), 588.

at the same time. While it may be possible to get a group to hallucinate simultaneously, a group sharing the same hallucination simply does not happen.⁸⁴ Delusion may explain Peter and the others in the upper room in John 20, but what about Paul and James both of whom were antagonistic to Jesus' claims? What about a combination? Could Peter and the 500 been deluded, Paul consumed with guilt or a desire for power and James suffering from some other physiological issue? Sure, we could also flip ten coins at the same time and have them all land on heads, but what is the probability of that happening? Each theory that we add in an effort to explain away the resurrection decreases the probability of finding a solution.

Can we prove that Jesus was raised from the dead? The simple answer is no. However, the same can be said of essentially every past event. Much like a crime being discussed in a courtroom, historical events can only be evaluated and either accepted or rejected in light of the quality of the evidence presented, and the willingness of the jury to follow the evidence where it leads. The fact that the resurrection cannot be proven, in the scientific sense, actually helps us begin to see how discussing the resurrection with the skeptic can be a valuable endeavor.

⁸⁴U.S. Navy SEALs are arguably the most elite fighting force in the world. Before becoming a SEAL, the candidate must complete a grueling "Hell Week." All of the candidates are put through intense exercises and experience extreme stress during the week on only a total of three to five hours of sleep. As extreme fatigue and sleep deprivation quickly set in, most of the candidates experience hallucinations. According to several SEALs interviewed, most hallucinations occur while the candidates, as a team, paddle in a raft out in the ocean. One believed that he saw an octopus come out of the water and wave at him! Another thought he saw a train coming across the water headed straight toward the raft. Another believed that he saw a large wall, which the raft would crash into if the team persisted in paddling. When the octopus, train, and wall were pointed out by the candidates to the rest of the team, no one else saw them, even though they were all in the same frame of mind. Most of them hallucinated at some point, but none of them participated in the hallucination of another.

Gary R. Habermas; Michael R. Licona. The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus (Kindle Locations 978-985).

The charge most often levied against the Christian by the unbeliever is that of being illogical. The claim is made that theists use faith rather than reason. Christians are told that they ignore reason to believe in a six-day creation, and that belief in a super natural realm is logically untenable. These are philosophical and scientific questions that can only be examined from a distance since both of these subjects are outside of human experience. However, with the resurrection we are dealing with eyewitness testimony which is corroborated by both physical evidence, the empty tomb and the post-resurrection appearances, as well as logical evidence, the disciples being martyred for their testimony and the lasting impact of the resurrection doctrine. Thus we are presented with an opportunity to expose the skeptics reliance on their own faith, i.e. their conviction that the resurrection could not have happened because it does not fit their worldview. Likewise, we are presented with an opportunity to demonstrate our own willingness to reason through the evidence and come to a logical conclusion based on that evidence.

Sharing the resurrection story also offers a glimpse into how God interacts with man through history. Much has been made in skeptical writing about the extreme views of God's interaction with the physical realm. On one hand, there is the deist's view of a passive almost unconcerned God who simply turns a blind eye to the sorry plight of His creation. On the other hand, we have the pantheistic view of so many evangelicals who see God interacting in almost aspect of their lives. This concept has done little more than turn God into an object of ridicule and lend credence to the notion that believers base their faith on emotion rather than reason. In the resurrection, we see something far different from either of these extremes.

The resurrection suggests the existence of a god who is concerned with his creation and has acted for the good of that creation. The resurrection cannot be explained through natural means; thus we have only the supernatural to offer an explanation. We are not left to wonder what supernatural entity could be responsible, instead we have predictive prophecy such as Psalm 16 and a host of other passages that serve as statements of intent. Of one thing we can be sure, if Jesus was raised from the dead it was the God of the Bible who raised Him.

In the resurrection, we are given a glimpse the criteria for divine intervention. God does not insert himself into every mundane and trivial thing as if He were some overprotective parent intent on controlling His children; rather He intervenes at significant moments. What qualifies as significant? What we see in the resurrection is a moment of eternal spiritual significance. Paul argues that the resurrection of Christ was a “first-fruit” or a template for God’s intention for all of those who place their faith in him. So we see in Jesus resurrection an action that has potential significance for all of mankind, a moment that provided opportunity for all men to be given eternal life in Him.

Perhaps most importantly, the resurrection offers a demonstrable difference between the Christian faith and every other world religion. No other religion offers a test of authenticity such as the resurrection presents for Christianity. Falsifiability is often held as a standard for sound conclusions, the idea being that if there is no way to test a conclusion to see if it is false there is no way in which it can be proven true. With the resurrection we see just such a demonstration. This seems to be at least in part the point that Paul made in Romans 1:3-4, the resurrection demonstrated that Jesus is the Son of God. But what if Jesus had not been raised? Paul answered that question for us in

1Corinthians 15:14-19 where he concluded that if that were the case “your faith is worthless.” Why should I put my faith in the carpenter’s son from Nazareth? Why should I believe that he was anything more than a kind man who taught an inspiring philosophy of life? Because he “died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.”

Our faith does not rest on mere myth, but on the reasonable interpretation of valid evidence. Our hope is not in a fairytale, but is seen in an empty tomb. Our trust is not in a dead letter, but in a living Savior.

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Biblical and Extra-Biblical Scientific Evidences for God and Creation
by Shane Carrington

Science: the word has a respected place in our vocabulary. It is defined as “the intellectual and practical activity encompassing the systematic study of the structure and behavior of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment”.⁸⁵

Observation and experiment — these are hallmarks of scientifically conducted studies.

For many people in our culture, “science” has replaced religion. Science should be a systematic quest for truth, but the philosophical mindset with which we approach the study of evidence greatly affects the outcome we discover. As Matt Cartmill, an anthropologist from Duke University, said, “The importance of our science lies in its effects on our world view — on the way people think of themselves and the universe and their place in it — which is a subject within the province of ideology and religion, broadly defined....”⁸⁶ He continued by saying that some paleoanthropologists “felt that ‘I had slandered our profession by questioning its purity, by depicting it as contaminated with unscientific elements.’”⁸⁷ It is important to let the facts speak. May we have the hunger and humility to be fair with how we treat the evidence.

⁸⁵ Oxford Dictionaries, s. v. “science,” accessed May 13, 2016, http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/science

⁸⁶ Roger Lewin, *Bones of Contention* (London: Penguin Books, 1987), 302.

⁸⁷ Roger Lewin, *Bones of Contention* (London: Penguin Books, 1987), 302.

Scientists and Creation

Evolutionists suppose that all true scientists support their claims. And while there are many scientists today who cleave to an evolutionary model of how we got here, there have always been many scientists who cleave to belief in God just as vigorously.

Consider this collection of names:

Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519 A. D.) believed in God and creation. He was a well-known scientist and inventor.

Robert Boyle (1627-1691 A. D.) believed in God and creation, and he was one of the founders of modern chemistry.

Isaac Newton (1642-1727 A. D.) was well-known for believing in both God and creation. He was a brilliant mathematician, and is well-known in many fields of scientific study, including his studies in gravity. He said, "This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being."⁸⁸

Stephen Meyer (1958-), whose Ph.D. is from Cambridge in the philosophy of science, said, "I personally take a third approach, which is that scientific evidence actually supports theistic belief. In fact, across a wide range of the sciences, evidence has come to light in the last fifty years which, taken together, provides a robust case for theism. Only theism can provide an intellectually satisfying causal explanation for all of this evidence."⁸⁹ "I believe that the testimony of science supports theism. While there will

⁸⁸ James Gills and Thomas Woodward. *Darwinism Under the Microscope* (Lake Mary, FL; Charisma House, 2002), 64.

⁸⁹ Lee Strobel. *The Case for a Creator: A Journalist Investigates Scientific Evidence That Points Toward God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 89.

always be points of tension or unresolved conflict, the major developments in science in the past five decades have been running in a strongly theistic direction.’ He paused momentarily, then punched his conclusion: ‘Science, done right, points toward God.’”⁹⁰

Albert Einstein (1879-1955 A. D.). Former atheist Anthony Flew⁹¹, wrote:

*“Einstein’s most relevant report: namely, that the integrated complexity of the world of physics has led him to believe that there must be a Divine Intelligence behind it (I myself think it obvious that if this argument is applicable to the world of physics then it must be hugely more powerful if it is applied to the immeasurably more complicated world of biology).”*⁹²

Many famous scientists are well-known for believing in the scientific method — and a creator God. When discussing evolution and atheism, we are not debating as scientists vs. believers. There are scientists who believe and scientists who affirm atheism. Look at the facts; weigh them in the balance. Then determine whether or not you believe in God and creation.

Scientific Reasons for Faith in God and Creation

Evolutionary and atheistic scientists seem to think they have cornered the market on the scientific method — and that they have explained away the need for belief in God. The reality, though, is that not only do many scientists believe in both God and creation, but consistent, proper use of the scientific method will tend toward God and creation. If God is the supernatural First Cause, who created all things, then proper use of the

⁹⁰ Strobel. *The Case for a Creator: A Journalist Investigates Scientific Evidence That Points Toward God*, 93.

⁹¹ Flew was a famous debater against belief in God. He was also a scholar who changed his mind about atheism and wrote the book, “There Is a God: How the World’s Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind” (2007).

⁹² Anthony Flew, “Anthony Flew Reviews Dawkins’ ‘The God Delusion,’” *Uncommon Descent*, August 28, 2008. Accessed May 13, 2016. <http://www.uncommondescent.com/intelligent-design/antony-flew-reviews-dawkins-the-god-delusion/>

scientific method will give evidence for Him and creation. The following areas of scientific study and discovery give evidence for God. Consider ...

1st Law of Thermodynamics: Law of Conservation of Energy

Isaac Asimov in discussing the first law of thermodynamics, said: “is considered the most powerful and most fundamental generalization about the universe the scientists have ever been able to make.”⁹³

Fred Heeren describes consequences of the 1st law as,

“neither mass nor energy can appear from nothing. Such an occurrence would be ‘a free lunch,’ as big bang theorist Alan Guth likes to say, in contradiction to the common sense notion that there is no free lunch. And yet, there is no denying that the universe is here; so the universe itself appears to be a free lunch. But from the laws of physics we see operating today, creation is impossible as an ongoing event. That is, the conditions that we know hold true in our present universe prevent any possibility of matter springing out of nothing today.”⁹⁴

Since in the natural world it is impossible for matter spring from nothing, there must be a supernatural first Cause, God, as the explanation for how everything came to be.

In harmony with this, since God finished creating everything (Gen. 2:2,3), now He is conserving it — Heb. 1:3 (“upholding”); Col. 1:15-17 (“in Him all things consist,” NKJB; “hold together,” NASB) — by His powerful word.

2nd Law of Thermodynamics: Law of the Increase of Entropy⁹⁵

We have illustrations of this law’s work in the world around us and within us: cars, tires, batteries, cell phones, the human body, etc.. Everything is running down! Three

⁹³ Hank Hanegraaff, *The Face That Demonstrates the Farce of Evolution* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1998), 83.

⁹⁴ Hank Hanegraaff, *The Face That Demonstrates the Farce of Evolution* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1998), 83.

⁹⁵ defined as disorder or randomness

things in the natural world that are running down are plants, the sun, and even the universe.

One prediction of the 2nd law of thermodynamics would be the expansion and decrease of useable energy available in the universe. Some scientists theorize a big bang to explain this. But if there was a big bang, there had to be a Big Banger. Genesis chapter 1 asserts that God spoke everything into existence. That would be quite a “bang,” would it not? Regardless how God did it, He created all things “good” (Gen. 1:4,10,12,18,21,25, 31). From that point on it has been running down.

Since the creation was completed, scripture declares what the 2nd law says: everything is running down (Isa. 51:6; Ps. 102:25-27 with Heb. 1:10-12).

Since everything is running down, and there is no mere physical way the universe could have been wound up, that leaves only a supernatural explanation. And His name is God!

Symbiosis

This is the idea of two organisms that interact with one another in ways necessary to the survival of each. Bees and the pollination of plants are an example of this. Without pollen that comes from the plants, the bees could not survive. Pollen is necessary for their production of honey. Without bees the plants could not be pollinated, so they could not survive.

However in a symbiotic relationship, neither could have formed independently of the other, because both are required for survival. Therefore the Grand Designer, God, made them both, tying them to one another. Thus another scientific evidence for God becomes obvious.

Probability: Irreducible Complexity

Let's place 4 white marbles in a box. In a blind test, if I draw one marble from the box, what is the probability it will be white? 4 out of 4 or 100%

Let's place 4 numbered marbles in a box. In a blind test, if I draw one marble from the box, what is the probability it will be marble #3? 1 out of 4 or 25%

Now, let's make this more exciting. Let's place the same numbered marbles in the box. In a blind test, what is the probability I will be able to draw them out in order: 1, 2, 3, 4? This is a great deal more complicated! It involves what mathematicians call factorials. The formula goes like this. You multiply the number of objects you have by each other to get the results. It looks like this: with 4 objects it would be 4! (pronounced "4 factorial"), or $1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4$, which equals 24. That is a 1 in 24 chance of drawing them out in order: only a 4% chance.

If we had 5 numbered marbles? 5! is $1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5 = 120$, so we would only have a 1 in 120 chance of drawing them in order.

If we had 6 numbered marbles? 6! is $1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5 \times 6 = 720$, so we would only have a 1 in 720 chance of drawing them in order.

Here's what it would look like if you had 206 numbered marbles! (see overhead)
Oh, and the system in your body composed of 206 parts is your skeletal system.

Whew! Since each living cell (not to mention each living organism ... or even you!) has billions of parts, what would be the chances (if merely by chance) of those developing accidentally? That's right! It would be mathematically impossible!

What would be the probability of taking a working wrist watch — disassembling it, putting all the pieces in a bag, and shaking them for an infinite amount of time — and it

coming back together as a fully-functioning watch? It would never happen! Since we understand this principle with a disassembled watch, where all the parts and unlimited time and energy are available, we should be able to see this about each living cell.

Michael J. Behe, in *Darwin's Black Box*, illustrated by using a simple mouse trap. In order for a mouse trap to work, the following parts are required: a platform, holding bar, catch, spring, and hammer. All of these parts are necessary. Even if you had all the parts, but one was defective, it would not work. And a mouse trap is a simple system, especially when compared to an eye or brain or even a "simple" cell!⁹⁶

Then there's this telling statement from Darwin's "Origin of Species":

*"If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down."*⁹⁷

It takes intelligence, energy, and matter to do what chance alone cannot. In other words, it takes God! (see DNA below for more on this) Mr. Darwin, I submit to you that your theory has broken down.

Evolution would require too many "accidents"! Besides, consider the earth and its relationship to the sun. What if the rotation, tilt, or proximity to the sun were off just a little? We would either freeze or fry. It would require too many happy accidents for things to be the way they are.

We needed a Designer. And He left his fingerprints all over His creation.

DNA

⁹⁶ Michael J. Behe. *Darwin's Black Box* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 42-45.

⁹⁷ Michael J. Behe. *Darwin's Black Box* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 39.

“Richard Dawkins of Oxford said that ‘the machine code of the genes is uncannily computer-like.’ If you reflect on that, you realize that computers run on software programs that are produced by intelligent engineers. Every experience we have about information—whether it’s a computer code, hieroglyphic inscription, a book, or a cave painting—points toward intelligence. The same is true about the information inside every cell in every living creature.”⁹⁸

Since our DNA code carries information (programming), it had to come from a Programmer, and His name is God.

The Geologic Column

Evolutionists claim that primary evidence for faith in their theory comes from the rocks. But an unbiased look at the geologic column (the order of fossils in the strata of the earth) can produce a different view.

The Cambrian explosion, for example, does not tend toward the current evolutionary model. Evolution would predict slow transitions from lower forms of life to higher forms of life — a tree beginning with simple organisms and growing complex (see graphic). Yet the Cambrian explosion shows a different model.

Of Darwin, Stephen Meyer said,

“His theory predicts a long history of gradual divergence from a common ancestor, with the differences slowly becoming bigger and bigger until you get the major differences we have now. The fossil evidence, even in his day, showed the opposite: the rapid appearance of phylum-level differences in what’s called the ‘Cambrian explosion.’”⁹⁹

He continued: “Darwin believed that future fossil discoveries would vindicate his theory—but that hasn’t happened. Actually, fossil discoveries over the last hundred and

⁹⁸ Lee Strobel. *The Case For A Creator: A Journalist Investigates Scientific Evidence That Points Toward God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 95.

⁹⁹ Lee Strobel. *The Case For A Creator: A Journalist Investigates Scientific Evidence That Points Toward God*, 50.

fifty years have turned his tree upside down by showing the Cambrian explosion was even more abrupt and extensive than scientists once thought.”¹⁰⁰

So, rather than a gradual rise of organisms from lower life forms to more complex, there was an explosion of life all at once. This is the opposite of what the evolutionary model would predict.

Further, there are fossils that protrude through multiple layers of strata (a 30 ft. petrified tree, including coal seams, in several layers of strata; see picture), evidence of rapid fossilization (petrified foot in boot, fossilized soft insects, etc.; see pictures), evidence of rapidly produced stalactites and stalagmites (see pictures), and evidence of a worldwide flood (more below).

With this in mind, consider Mt. St. Helens. On May 18, 1980 a volcanic eruption there took the top off of the mountain (see pictures). Over the next several months, water was dammed up due to the eruption which eventually overflowed, cutting two smaller, Grand Canyon-style formations. One of them is over 100 feet deep.¹⁰¹ If such as that can occur so rapidly, imagine what a world-wide flood could do!

Science In Scripture: Reasons for Faith in God and Creation

What is your favorite animal? We all have one. God created all the animals! Including your favorite! He designed each animal magnificently. What a blessing to live in this incredible world God created!

¹⁰⁰ Lee Strobel. *The Case For A Creator: A Journalist Investigates Scientific Evidence That Points Toward God*, 50-51.

¹⁰¹ Steven A. Austin, "Rapid Erosion At Mt. St. Helens," *Origins* 11, no. 2 (August 1984): 90-98.

God gave us so many evidences for His existence in His creation. But our greatest evidence for God is the Bible itself. Lessons by others this week will discuss different aspects of this. But among the many evidences for God that are found in scripture are the scientific facts mentioned — many of which were impossible for scientists to discover by human reason or study until years after the Bible was written. While the Bible is not a science textbook, when it appeals to matters scientific, it is always accurate.

Scripture itself declares that the creation gives evidence for faith in God (see Ps. 19:1-11; Rom. 1:18-25). We saw several scientific evidences in the previous section. But scientific evidences also abound in scripture. Consider a few.

Spherical earth (Job 26:10)

While many cultures believed the world flat for many years, scripture declares no such nonsense. The Bible describes the earth as spherical. Long before human scientific discovery, the Bible declares this scientific fact, giving us faith in God and the Bible as His word.

Suspended earth (Job 26:7)

Ancient Greeks believed the god Atlas carried the earth on his back. Some cultures believed the earth was carried about by a turtle or fish or some other animal. The Bible records no such mythology. Rather this scientific fact: the earth is suspended upon nothing. Thus another evidence for God, the Bible, and creation, for this could not have been scientifically discovered back then.

Ocean springs (Job 38:16)

The deepest part of the oceans is the Mariana Trench. It is 36,070 feet deep. Place Mt. Everest there, and it would still be covered by a mile of water. One mile is 5,280 feet.¹⁰² The Mariana Trench is 6.83 miles deep!

But whether in the depths of the Mariana Trench or only several hundred feet deep, ocean springs were not discoverable by humans in Job's day! Yet scripture boldly declares their existence. Thus another evidence of the supernatural origin of the Bible — and the existence of God.

The water cycle (Job 36:27,28; Eccles. 1:7)

We are very familiar with the water cycle (see graphic). Rain falls to the ground and is either absorbed or runs into streams. The streams run into rivers, and rivers run into the oceans. The heat of the sun bearing down on the water (especially that in the oceans), causes evaporation. The moisture that is evaporated forms clouds that drop the rain back to earth. Thus the cycle continues.

In the days of Job and Solomon, they could not have known these things. Yet there they are in the Bible, providing evidence that the Bible is God's word, God is real, and that we should listen to all the Bible tells us!

The jet stream (Eccles. 1:6)

Have you ever paid attention to the lines and arrows on the weather forecast on television or on an electronic device? (see graphic) These graphics show us what scientists discovered in modern times. Yet long before such scientific discovery, scripture describes the jet stream, providing us evidence for faith in God and in the Bible as His word.

¹⁰² <http://geology.com/records/deepest-part-of-the-ocean.shtml>

Blood and physical life (Lev. 17:11)

Bloodletting was practiced by Herophilos of Alexandria in 350 B. C., thinking this would rid the body of disease. Barbers, who were also surgeons at one time (thus the red stripe on the Barber's pole), practiced bloodletting to rid the body of disease. They would drain blood from both arms, thinking this would keep the body in balance. It wasn't until 1900 A. D. that we medically discovered the necessity of blood for life.¹⁰³

Many races — one origin (Acts 17:26)

Racism was once rampant in evolutionary circles. Thomas Huxley (who invented the term, agnostic), H. F. Osborn (former director of the American Museum of National History), and Charles Darwin himself all imbibed of this spirit.¹⁰⁴ Consider this quotation from a letter Darwin wrote to W. Graham on July 3, 1881:

*"The more civilized so-called Caucasian races have beaten the Turkish hollow in the struggle for existence. Looking to the world at no very distant date, what an endless number of the lower races will have been eliminated by the high civilized races throughout the world."*¹⁰⁵

Many more such quotations exist. This was the typical sentiment of evolutionists in years gone by.

Such explosive non-sense as this is not in scripture. In the Bible we learn that we all have the same origin (see also Gen. 3:20; 6-11; etc.) and, thus, the dignity of being created in God's image (Gen. 1:26,27).

G. W. Bromily captures well the importance of the biblical understanding about the human race:

¹⁰³ A. O. Schnabel, *Has God Spoken?* (Tampa: Schnabel Publishing, 1974), 65-66.

¹⁰⁴ Hank Hanegraaff, *The Face That Demonstrates The Farce of Evolution* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1998), 24-27.

¹⁰⁵ Hank Hanegraaff, *The Face That Demonstrates The Farce of Evolution* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1998), 24-25.

“The unity of the race has several important implications in theology and ethics. It means equality before God. It means corporate as well as individual responsibility. It makes nonsense of Cain’s suggestion that he is not his brother’s keeper.... It is also the basis of God’s saving work in Jesus Christ. Because the race is a unity, the one can act for all.”¹⁰⁶

All human beings are God’s handiwork — special creations of God. Long before scientific minds could discover the genetic markers that tie all the races together, God in scripture declares the connection and dignity of each human being, because He created us as one big human family. “Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight.”

Always have been; always will.

The books of the Bible were written long ago, from about 1450 B. C. to the late first century A. D., yet these scientific facts were recorded in scripture long before they were scientifically discovered by humanity. These prescientific facts give evidence that the Bible was composed by men who were moved by the Holy Spirit of God, revealing things humans had not discovered — and long before we were capable of such findings. What a magnificent book the Bible is! And what a magnificent God who created such wonders and revealed them to us in the pages of His word to develop and strengthen our faith!

Indicators of a Global Flood

Scientific theories, if valid, should make it possible for us to make predictions. For example, a theory that predicts Pavlov’s dogs, conditioned with food when a bell rings, would salivate with the sound of a bell even in the absence of food. This prediction is true!

¹⁰⁶ G. W. Bromily, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, G. W. Bromily, s. v. “Anthropology,” vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 134.

Similarly, if we theorize a global flood occurred, as Genesis 6-9 declares happened in Noah's day, that theory would predict some outcomes we would expect to see in the geology of the earth today. And that is exactly what we see!

For example, **we would expect to see ...**

1. **Fossils of sea life on mountain tops** and in areas that are far from water (prairies, etc.). And we do! There even are fossils at the top of Mt. Everest!¹⁰⁷ There are also fossils in the prairies and plains throughout our nation.

2. **Massive graves of animal and plant life**, swept there by the flood waters. Dinosaur National Monument, bridging NW Colorado and eastern Utah, is one such example.¹⁰⁸ Coal beds and oil fields (which are buried in many places throughout the earth) result from the catastrophic depositing of vegetation that was covered quickly by layers of soil and rock.

3. **Fossils protruding through multiple layers** that were laid down by the ebb and flow of water. There are upright fossilized trees at Yellowstone (which I have personally seen). There are also coal seams in various places on a 30 ft. fossilized tree (see pictures).

4. **Evidence of quick fossilization.** There is a fossil of fish giving birth, leaf and dragonfly impressions, a stalactite with a bat encased, and examples of tissue fossilization. (see pictures)

The flood would predict all of these! What powerful, wonderful evidence God put into this world He created!

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.montana.edu/everest/about/research.htm>

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.nps.gov/dino/index.htm>

Objections to the Genesis Account of Creation

Some today think there are scientific reasons why the creation account in scripture is fantasy rather than fact. Among the points they bring up: the apparent age of the earth and the universe. "The earth is really old," they claim, "which we know through scientific discoveries like carbon dating and radiometric dating. And the universe is really old too, which we know, because light travels 186,000 miles per second, and since we can see the stars (which are billions of light years away), the earth and universe must be old enough for that light to travel far enough for us to see them!"

Those are interesting claims, but consider a few thoughts.

1. The Bible does not give an exact age for the earth. While the Bible account of creation would give strong evidence that the earth is not billions or millions of years old,¹⁰⁹ there is no exact date given. This should cause us to be cautious about trying to give the earth an exact date.
2. When God created Adam and Eve, He did not create them as babies. He created them as full-grown adults capable having dominion and reproducing (Gen. 1:26-28). So, when you looked at Adam and Eve on day 7, they would look like adults, but they would only be one day old. On day 16, they would look like adults, but they would only be 10 days old, etc.. So, when God created Adam and Eve, they looked much older than they really were.

Similarly, when God created the universe, He created it with some sense of maturity. That is, He created it with the ability to work in the manner He wanted, which

¹⁰⁹The days of creation are literal days (compare Gen. 1 with Exod. 20:9-11). Further, Adam was created on the 6th day (Gen. 1:26-31), thus Bible evidence seems to point toward a young earth and humans being on earth from close to the beginning of its existence.

would require a sense of maturity: rocks and the earth compacted together, soil in a form proper for plant and animal life, light from the stars visible to people earth, etc.. The fact that the universe looks old does not necessarily mean it is old, whether the surface of the earth, light visible from the stars, or the mature look of Adam and Eve on the very day in which they were created.

3. With the dating methods used today, they must use controls and beginning points to determine how well these dating methods will work. If a scientist begins with the premise that rocks are millions of years old (or the universe billions of years old, etc.), would it be surprising if the tests they use are set up in such a way as to skew the results toward their expected findings?

Further, these tests are designed to measure gradual changes in elements consistently over time; they do not take into account rapid changes in the measurements of these elements that could occur during catastrophic events. We must take this into account when considering these tests. Besides, we saw evidence in the section on the flood of Noah's day about the possibility of quick fossilization. It does not require millions of years! There are too many variables to place too much confidence in these dating methods.¹¹⁰

4. And then there is the consideration of what impact the flood of Noah's day would have had on the way the earth looks and works.¹¹¹

5. "What about the dinosaurs?" Well, they obviously existed! There is too much evidence to deny this. Why would we want to deny their existence, anyway? The Genesis

¹¹⁰ Roger Lewin, *Bones of Contention* (London: Penguin Books, 1987), 189-210.

¹¹¹ See Mt. St. Helens example under Geologic Column above and Indicators of a Global Flood above.

account of creation would certainly allow for their presence in this world (see Gen. 1:20-25).

In Job, God speaks of dinosaur-sounding creatures known to Job's culture (see Job 40:15-41:34): behemoth and leviathan. Further, there are carvings and pottery from Mexico depicting dinosaurs! (see pictures) How did those cultures know about these creatures, unless they had access to them? Further, the atmospheric and topographical changes to the earth due to the global flood of Noah's day could have made the continued existence of dinosaurs less likely, even if representatives of dinosaurs survived a stay on Noah's ark. The flood could also account for the massive dinosaur graves in various places on the earth, as flood waters swept many of these animals together, deposited their bodies in close proximity to each other, then covered them with the ebb and flow of the rising then receding flood waters, forming these dinosaur graves. The flood is a solid, logical rationale as to how these things happened. Dinosaurs are evidence for God! What a blessing to know about them and study them!

Conclusion

Faith has nothing to fear from scientific study. In fact, famous former-atheist Anthony Flew changed his mind about the existence of God after spending decades opposing faith. He changed his mind because "...research on DNA and what he believed to be inconsistencies in the Darwinian account of evolution had forced him to reconsider his views. DNA research, he said, 'has shown, by the almost unbelievable complexity of

the arrangements which are needed to produce life, that intelligence must have been involved.”¹¹²

If the evidence for God was strong enough to finally persuade a scholarly, adamant, former-atheist to believe in a divine creator, there is certainly enough evidence to strengthen our faith.

What a blessing God supplied by building so much evidence for His existence into the created universe and the Bible! Thank Him, love Him, trust Him, and serve Him every day, encouraged and emboldened by the amazing *scientific* evidence God gave us!

“Now **faith** is the **substance** of things **hoped** for, the **evidence** of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1; NKJB).

Based on our study, let’s consider

1. Three questions confronting faith

a. What is the basis of our faith? The word of God, of course (Rom. 10:17).

But the creation also speaks to the existence of a Creator (Ps. 19:1-11; Rom. 1:18-25).

b. What about the many scientists who believe in evolution? The truth is that there are also many scientists who believe in God and creation. This is not a debate between scientists and believers. Each of us should look personally at the facts.

c. Why does the universe look so old? God created the universe with a look of maturity. He did the same with Adam and Eve. They were not created as infants, but as adults capable of reproducing. So, do not allow the fact that the universe looks “old” sway you into believing in evolution.

¹¹² Williams Grimes. “Antony Flew, Philosopher and Ex-Atheist, Dies at 87,” *New York Times*, April 16, 2010, accessed May 11, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/17/arts/17flew.html?_r=0

2. Three questions that atheists must confront
 - a. How did all that scientific evidence get into the Bible? The jet stream, the water cycle, the unsuspected nature of the earth, the necessity of blood for physical life, etc.: these scientific facts are in the Bible. They were present long before humans were capable of discovering them scientifically. This should give atheists pause.
 - b. What scientific evidences tend toward belief in a Creator God? The laws of thermodynamics, probability, DNA code, etc.: these tend more toward belief in the Supernatural/God as the reason for our existence, not blind chance.
 - c. Why do so many features of this world point toward a global flood? From fossils on Mt. Everest to fossil beds in Colorado to upright fossilized trees, there are many features visible on this planet that you would expect as the result of a global flood as described in the Bible. These should give atheists pause to consider the Bible account and all of what scripture says concerning God and His Son.
3. Three of the strongest evidences we have discussed in favor of God and creation
 - a. Evidence of design. It is obvious in DNA code, symbiosis (like bees and pollenating plants), and the distance from and rotation of the earth around the sun that there is a grand Designer. And His name is God.
 - b. Scientific evidences in scripture. There are many scientific facts mentioned in the Bible: facts humans did not discover until long after the Bible was written. Prescientific statements in the Bible speak to a Supernatural author of scripture, and His name is God.
 - c. Well-known scientific principles. The laws of thermodynamics, probability, etc.: these speak to the impossibility of the universe developing accidentally. Too many

happy accidents are required for us to have come to be through a mindless big bang and evolutionary processes. Belief in an eternal, powerful, wise creator God is consistent both with these scientific principles and reason.

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God, Morality and Suffering:
Questions and Doubts Confronting Christians
by Bruce Reeves

We all know it to be true, “Bad things happen to good people.” There are times in our lives in which problems associated with moral and physical evil painfully challenge our faith and we ask, “Why?” Many unbelievers use the existence of suffering as a mantra of their denial of God, although there may be various motives for unbelief. Yet even the theist¹¹³ must spend time in reasonable consideration of the nature of God and the reality of the evil world in which he or she lives. In light of the fact that the subject of morality and the question of human suffering is at the forefront of the discussions which go on between theists and atheists, it is worthwhile for believers to consider this challenging subject in reference to the Biblical story of redemption. Additionally, the arguments of atheists too often are dismissed rather than carefully considered and critical ground is granted, which undermines the faith of future generations.

Challenge To Our Faith:
Reality of Suffering

The Bible does not present a fictitious picture of the raw realities of this life. The Scriptures declare that the godly will and do suffer, “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12). The book of Job offers a story that reveals as much, if not more, about YHWH as it does Job. We read that Job was an “upright” man and yet God permits him to suffer as a result of the dialogue between the Lord and Satan (Job 1:1, 6-12; 2:6-7). Of course, the narrative offers vindication of the sovereign

¹¹³ I will be using the terms *theist* and *atheist* frequently throughout this lecture. By the term *theist* I refer to one who believes in a personal God, who is sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all things. By the term *atheist* I have reference to one who denies the existence of God.

faithfulness of YHWH, as well as the faith of His servant, Job. This is not to say that Job did not struggle with his faith in the context of suffering. He cried out to God for explanation (Job 18, 19). Job reveals the truth that God's faithfulness is not undermined by the reality of suffering humanity, although it is reasonable to ask why such is the case. Asaph, likewise, struggled with his faith as he observed the suffering of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked. However, he found resolution in his relationship with God,

"Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart! But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling, my steps had almost slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant, as I saw the prosperity of the wicked...Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and washed by hands in innocence...When I pondered to understand this, it was troublesome in my sight. Until I came into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end...when my heart was embittered and I was pierced within, then I was senseless and ignorant; I was like a beast before you. Nevertheless I am continually with you; you have taken hold of my right hand. With your counsel you will guide me, and afterward receive me to glory...my flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." (Psalm 73:1-3, 13, 16, 22-24, 26)

It is right for believers to ask questions and delve into discussions regarding this topic in order to grow closer to our Lord and enable ourselves to offer "a reason of the hope" that is within us (1 Peter 3:15).

The Skeptic's Argument Regarding the Goodness of God and Suffering

J.L. Mackie, an Australian philosopher, holds that the perfect goodness and omnipotence of God are incompatible with the reality of evil in the world.

"God is omnipotent: God is wholly good; and yet evil exists. There seems to be some contradiction between these three propositions so that if any two of them were true the third would be false. But at the same time all three are essential parts of most theological positions; the theologian it seems, at once must adhere and cannot consistently adhere to all three...From these it follows that a good

omnipotent thing eliminates evil completely, and then the propositions that a good, omnipotent thing exists, and that evil exists, are incompatible.”¹¹⁴

Interestingly, the argument assumes the very truths that argue for the existence of God, in that, it presupposes such concepts as moral good, moral evil, justice and injustice. C.S. Lewis speaks to this underlying problem on the part of those who resort to the moral argument in their attempt to refute the existence of God.

“And of course, that raises a very big question. If a good God made the world why has it gone wrong? And for many years I simply refused to listen to the Christian answers to this question, because I kept on feeling ‘whatever you say, and however clever your arguments are, isn’t it much simpler and easier to say that the world was not made by any intelligent power?’ Aren’t all your arguments simply a complicated attempt to avoid the obvious?’ But then that threw me back into another difficulty. 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”? If the whole show was bad and senseless from A to Z, so to speak, why did I, who was supposed to be part of the show, find myself in such violent reaction against it...Of course I could have given up my idea of justice by saying it was nothing but a private idea of my own. But if I did that, then my argument against God collapsed too—for the argument depended on saying that the world was really unjust, not simply that it did not happen to please my fancies. Thus in the very act of trying to prove that God did not exist – in other words, that the whole of reality was senseless—I found I was forced to assume that one part of reality—namely my idea of justice—was full of sense. Consequently atheism turns out to be too simple. If the whole universe has no meaning, we should never have found out that it has no meaning...”¹¹⁵

Objective Morality Is Rooted In The Nature Of God

It is important to understand, when dialoguing with skeptics, that although theists and atheists use similar or even identical language, they define critical terms differently.

¹¹⁴ J.L. Makie, “Evil and Omnipotence,” Nelson Pike, ed., *God and Evil* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 46.

¹¹⁵ C.S. Lewis, *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics* (New York: Harper One, 2002), 41.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the discussion of morality. The atheist assumes a definition of morality without substantiating his claim. If morality is nothing but a social convention or social contract defined by majority consensus or survival of the fittest, then how can such a concept be employed to argue against the existence of God? If one is arguing that morality is a transcultural and objective set of beliefs, then one is made to wonder how and why such exists without God. Unbelievers have to borrow Biblical concepts to even express their argument against theism. Ironically, to argue against God they unwittingly argue for Him.

Is morality just an arbitrary pattern of social behavior? Is it merely that which physically benefits society? Remember, atheists are arguing against the existence of God on the basis of morality, justice and goodness and yet have not sustained the foundation of morality, justice or goodness objectively without the existence of God. If morality is objective, that is, true whether one believes it or not, then there must be a reasonable standard outside of humanity by which such values are grounded. In this case, moral standards exist independently of personal preference or cultural fashion.

Some will ask the entrapping question, "Did God create morality?" However, such a question is illogical and irrational to the informed theist. There has never been a time when morality was not! Morality is, because God is, because morality is rooted and grounded in the personality and attributes of God. This is not to say that atheists cannot act morally, but they do so in spite of their philosophy, not because of it.

God is necessary for morality in at least three ways: grounding moral values, i.e. what counts as good and evil; grounding moral duties, i.e. what we ought to do and what

we ought not to do and finally He grounds moral accountability in that He determines our ultimate fate depending on our moral actions and choices.

Paul Copan writes,

*“Even secular ethical systems – whether variations on the ethical views of the philosophers Aristotle or Kant or perhaps some social contract view—may affirm many truths that believers in God affirm. These systems may agree that we ought to carry out certain moral obligations or cultivate character qualities. Even so, these systems are still incomplete because they don’t offer a basis for human dignity and worth.”*¹¹⁶

Richard Dawkins’ synopsis of human worth succinctly states the logical conclusion of atheism’s perspective of humanity, “...there is at bottom no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pointless indifference...We are machines for propagating DNA...It is every living object’s sole reason for being.”¹¹⁷

To summarize, whether some action is good or evil is determined independently of human acceptance. Individual and social opinions do not decide these standards of good or evil. There are important questions atheists must answer: What is the basis of objective moral values? What is the basis of human value on atheism? Why should we do the right thing and avoid the wrong thing? What is the basis of moral responsibility? Having demonstrated that true objective justice and morality logically support theism, unbelievers

¹¹⁶ Paul Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2011), 211.

¹¹⁷ Richard Dawkins, *Unweaving the Rainbow* (London: Allen Lane, 1998), cited in Lewis Wolpert, *Six Impossible Things before Breakfast* (London: Faber and Faber, 2006), 215. Unfortunately, Wolpert’s reference is mistaken. The quotation seems to be a pastiche from Richard Dawkins, *River out of Eden: a Darwinian View of Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 133 and Richard Dawkins, “The Ultraviolet Garden,” Lecture 4 of 7 Royal Institution Christmas Lectures (1992), <http://physicshead.blogspot.com/2007/01/richard-dawkins-lecture-4-ultraviolet.html>.

are shown to be inconsistent to employ such concepts in their attack on God. Let us now consider the Biblical explanation as to why God allows suffering.

The Transcendence Of God And Human Suffering

It is important to ask, "Is the issue of suffering the actual reason for the denial of God or is it merely an over-simplification of the nature of God and the human condition?" This is not a simplistic issue and the theist has significant argumentation to offer to the discussion. Granted, even believers will have questions about the sovereignty, goodness and justice of God in light of a suffering world; we must, however, acknowledge that the God we serve transcends our own finite understanding (Isa.55: 8, 9; Jer.10: 23).

While God can operate providentially within the time-space sphere, He exists outside of that sphere. We must be wary of the attempt to establish ultimatums for God. Although Job had desired to question God concerning his condition, he found it difficult to do so when in the awesome and glorious presence of YHWH (Job 38-42:7). Although we must progress reverently, we must not fail to study thoughtfully and deeply regarding the problem of evil and the nature of God as we share the gospel with a skeptical society. Fideism¹¹⁸ has been as destructive to the faith as skepticism. There are reasonable and logical foundations for embracing faith in God.

The Biblical Affirmation of the Goodness of God and Suffering

The assumption in the argumentation of the atheist, such as we noticed earlier by J.L. Mackie, is that it is not morally justifiable for an omnipotent, loving and good God to allow suffering. However, were it to be affirmed that God had a morally justifiable reason for having created a world in which evil could occur, namely soul building, then the

¹¹⁸ Fideism argues that theological truth and reason are incompatible.

underlying assumption of the atheistic proposition is denied. This is precisely the argument Christians ought to advance.

The Biblical story of YHWH and His creation offers the bright alternative to the dark narrative of atheism. The primary motive of God in His creation was to participate in fellowship with humanity. In order for this to come to be a reality the Lord's creation had to be endowed with libertarian free will, that is, mankind had to have the genuine capacity to choose either good or evil (Gen. 1:26-27; Josh. 24:14-16). When God created the world and humanity He said it was "very good" (Gen. 1: 31), but when man sinned he opened the door for suffering and death to enter into the world (Gen. 3:16-19; I Cor. 15:22). Some have asked why God would create free will creatures if there were the potential for such evil to occur. C.S. Lewis speaks to this issue when he writes,

"Of course God knew what would happen if they used their freedom the wrong way: apparently He thought it worth the risk. Perhaps we feel inclined to disagree with Him. But there is a difficulty in disagreeing with God. He is the source from which all your reasoning power comes: you could not be right and He wrong any more than a stream can rise higher than its own source. When you are arguing against him you are arguing against the very power that makes you able to argue at all: it is like cutting off the branch you are sitting on. If God thinks this state of war in the universe, a price worth paying for free will, then we may take it -- it is worth paying."¹¹⁹

Consider the truth that the God of the universe wanted to sustain a loving relationship with us so earnestly that He was willing to undergo the pain of much of His creation rejecting Him in order to receive us as His children (John 3:16). Every instance of human suffering results from conditions, which were necessary to provide mankind with the opportunity to be redeemed, restored and perfected in the image of His Son (Rom.

¹¹⁹ Lewis, *The Signature Classics*, 48.

8:29, 30; I Cor. 15:24-28). This world has been marred by sin, but Christ has demonstrated God's love and desire to restore us to His eternal fellowship and continuously reminds us that we are to be the new humanity as His new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:1-13). His eternal purpose is to reverse the destructive effects of sin and death in both the historical resurrection of Christ and the anticipated resurrection of His people (Rom. 8:23; I Cor. 15:24-28, 35-58).

The theist must thoughtfully present and define the attributes of God in contrast to the superficial explanations, which atheists often assert in reference to the Creator. Both among atheists and theists there have been some gross misunderstandings of God's knowledge, power and goodness. When delineated reasonably the assumptions of the atheistic proposition are revealed and the Biblical perspective is clarified and sustained. It is not uncommon for God's divine ability or power to be defined as "the power to do anything." Yet, this is not a Biblical definition of omnipotence. God has the power to do whatever He wishes, which is in harmony with His purpose and nature. For example, God cannot lie, nor can He sin (Heb. 6:18; I John 1:5).

Additionally, when the goodness of God is wrongly understood, theological and philosophical fuel is thrown on the fires of unbelief, but when the goodness of God is presented appropriately support for theism is found. Frequently, the goodness of God is defined in the terms of our Sustainer providing us with our desires and expectations.

However, the Scriptures reveal that the goodness of God acts in the context of our spiritual maturation, rather than the fulfillment of our every whim. His primary purpose is to bring us into communion with His presence, rather than all of our physical appetites being satisfied. Our Father's goodness is always consistent with both His justice and mercy.

C.S. Lewis reflects on the goodness of God, when he writes,

“We want, in fact, not so much a Father in Heaven as a grandfather in Heaven—a senile benevolence...whose plan for the universe was simply that it might be said at the end of each day, ‘A good time was had by all.’... I should very much like to live in a universe, which was governed on such lines. But since it is abundantly clear that I don’t, and since I have reason to believe, nevertheless, that God is love. I conclude that my conception of love needs correction.”¹²⁰

Rather, than denying the reasonable conclusion that God exists, perhaps we should rethink our definition of goodness, as it surpasses the selfishness and finiteness of our own human expressions of love. It was not immoral, but actually moral for God to permit the potential of the occurrence of evil in order to allow His creation to freely choose to love or not to love.

It is usually at this juncture that the will of God is questioned, but we must acknowledge the truth that the will of God is multi-faceted. The permissive will of God references those things He allows, the decretive will of God speaks to those things He has ordained, the perceptive will of God speaks to those things God desires and the preceptive will of God is observed in the command of God. To illustrate, God desires that all men be saved (2 Peter 3:9), but His command requires that men repent (Acts 17:30-31). He has permitted man to sin, because of his will that humans be free, although He has not commanded that men do such (1 John 1:5). A parent must allow the potential of disobedience in order to fulfill his will for his children to make their own choices, however that same parent may well apply rewards and consequences to their child conditioned on their decision in order to uphold accountability.

¹²⁰ Lewis, *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*, 569.

Suffering exists for a variety of reasons: (1) personal sin (Gal. 6:7-8; 2 Sam. 12:1-15, 23; (2) sins of others (Ex. 20:5); objects of Satan's attack (Job 1:11; 2:7; I Thess. 2:18; I Pet. 4:16). God allows Satan to have a certain level of activity, but has promised ultimately to defeat Him through Christ.

Can Suffering Work For Our Good?

Although suffering is the result of sin, God, in His wisdom, has used suffering as a means of leading us to Himself through Christ (I Peter 1:3:15-21). He even uses the suffering of this world to develop the faith of His people. Paul had a "thorn in the flesh," which he desired the Lord to remove, but it remained as an act of discipline (2 Cor. 12:7-10). Note the spiritual benefits in his suffering. His suffering helped him maintain the proper perspective about himself and Christ. He wrote that the thorn in flesh remained in order to "keep me from exalting myself..." (2 Cor. 12:7). He goes on to describe the background of the experience, "There was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan" (2 Cor. 12:7). The term "buffet" means to "strike with the fist," "to pound away," "abuse" or "torment."¹²¹ It also led him to petition God for divine help, "Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me" (2 Cor. 12:8). Finally, suffering brought Paul to experience the power of Christ that was always available to him, "And he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness'" (2 Cor. 12:9, 10). Why does God allow suffering, if not, to bring us into closer fellowship with Him and to transform us in His grace? The Lord is providentially chiseling out the character of His Son with the divine hammer of the sufferings of Christ (Rom. 8:16, 17; 2

¹²¹ Melvin Curry, *The Book of Second Corinthians*, Truth Commentaries (Bowling Green: Guardian of Truth Foundation, 2008), 417.

Cor. 4:16-18; I Pet. 1:6-9). We will miss our loved ones, but we rejoice for their spiritual victory in Christ (Phil. 1:21-24; I Thess. 4:13-18).

How Should We React To Suffering?

We will all experience suffering in this life, but how we react to such suffering will be critical to either the vindication or defeat of our faith. Even though the Lord told Paul “no” in his request for the removal of the “thorn in the flesh,” the apostle trusted God faithfully (2 Cor.12: 10). Peter encourages Christians to glorify God in our sufferings (I Pet. 4:16). In fact, we can even use suffering as an opportunity to share Christ with others (I Pet. 3:15). Job worshipped God in his time of travail and refused the temptation to foolishly charge God (Job 1:20-22; 2:9-10). David cried out to God when he was disoriented in his faith, but he always looked to God’s gracious counsel to reorient and restore his faith (Psa. 30).

Questions We Will Be Asked and Three Questions We Must Ask:

- (1) If morality is nothing but a social convention or social contract defined by majority consensus or survival of the fittest, then how can such a concept be employed to argue against the existence of God?
 - (2) What is the basis of objective moral values?
 - (3) What is the basis of human value on atheism?
 - (4) Why should we do the right thing and avoid the wrong thing? What is the basis of moral responsibility?
 - (5) How can an atheist appeal to reason, logic or morality?
-

- (1) How could God have created a world wherein such evil could be possible?

- (2) If God can do anything, why did he not create humanity with free will without the potential of evil being present?
- (3) How can one believe in the goodness of God and recognize the presence of evil?

Is The Old Testament God Moral?
Did God Not Bring Suffering In His Judgments In The Old Testament?

Is God a moral monster? How do we harmonize goodness and love with His judgments in the Old Testament, which brought suffering to people? While there are multiple examples one could examine along this line of argumentation this study will focus on the divine commandment to Israel regarding the Canaanites. There can be no denial that God did command Israel to destroy the Canaanites for sake of their own holiness (Deuteronomy 7:1-6; 20:16-18).

William Lane Craig insightfully writes,

“These stories offend our moral sensibilities. Ironically, however our moral sensibilities in the West have been largely, and for many people unconsciously, shaped by our Judeo-Christian heritage, which has taught us the intrinsic value of human beings, the importance of dealing justly rather than capriciously, and the necessity of the punishment’s fitting the crime. The Bible itself inculcates the values that these stories seem to violate.”¹²²

Yet, God does not bring judgment rashly (Ezekiel 33:11; Genesis 18:23-25). Let us address this argument from our skeptic friends by offering several points of rebuttal. First of all, if one is truly an atheist then there is no room to employ some independent and objective sense of the concept of evil, because it is merely a matter of social contract. But

¹²² William Lane Craig, *A Reasonable Response, Answers To Tough Questions on God, Christianity And The Bible* (Moody Publishers: Chicago, 2013), 277.

if we are granting that there is a God and simply trying to harmonize this story in a theodicy of Him then it is a fair question.

Secondly, we must ask, "Is God arbitrary or does He have reasons for His judgment on the Canaanites?" The answer is that He had divine reasons, which are expressed in the Hebrew Bible. He had held His vengeance back for four hundred years (Genesis 15: 13, 16). Also, it must be acknowledged that by the time YHWH brought judgment on this people they were extremely immoral, cruel and vicious. They were embracing such practices as ritual prostitution and child sacrifice (Deut. 20:18). As a Christian I believe that those children who perished were saved by God's grace.

It is also extremely inconsistent for the very people who accuse God of being immoral, because He allows evil to then argue that He is also evil for intervening to stop gross wickedness. Which one is it? If he does not intervene he is accused of being evil and when he does intervene, after exhibiting longsuffering with the Canaanites, He is accused as well.

Is God really committing murder? No, he is not. He created life and therefore has the right to take it. He is not annihilating life; He is simply transitioning life from the physical sphere to the spiritual. It should also be acknowledged that the Old Testament is not the ideal, but was meant to preserve God's people so they might provide the Messiah to redeem the world. Perhaps, the Old Testament depiction of God bothers those who despise the concept of being judged by a sovereign Creator (Galatians 3:22-29; Romans 11:33-36).¹²³

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The Outcomes of the Atheistic Worldview by Shawn Chancellor

When the Biblical Worldview and Atheistic Worldview are compared objectively it becomes obvious, that they are completely incompatible. The distinction between these world-views is far greater than an argument about the age of the universe or the precise means by which it came to be. Each of these paradigms speak to the very central issue of what mankind is, where mankind has come from, and in light of both of these, what mankind as a whole should be seeking to become and they do so in such a way that two distinct species are presented. The Atheistic Worldview, with its reliance on undirected occurrences that eventually produce order, presents humanity as a recent descendant of the simplest of organisms, whose sole purpose is to ensure the continuation of the species. The Biblical Worldview sees man as the purposeful design of an intelligent being, consisting not merely of a material husk but a tripartite being made in the very image of the Creator. This paradigm provides a reason for our existence and a purpose for our lives that goes far beyond the material.

Beyond the degraded view of humanity, atheism inevitably creates a world without an objective moral order. This is a necessary outcome for the simple reason that objective nonphysical concepts cannot arise from solely material sources. We are not saying that an atheist cannot behave in a morally acceptable manner. However, we are saying that his reason for doing so will either be selfish or illogical. Metaphysical or nonmaterial concepts, such as “good” or “evil,” have no objective basis in an undirected world. Therefore, any definition applied to them arises from either personal bias, i.e., what seems

best for self in the moment, or the illogical claim that objective standards were the product of a community of biased thinkers. This aspect of atheistic thought is seen clearly in the many social struggles that our nation is embroiled in today. The manner in which issues such as abortion, gay marriage, and transgender equality are gaining acceptance in our society points to a paradigm that has no rightful claim to objective morality, which does not see an inherent value in humanity and fails to provide a mechanism for the resolution of these issues beyond survival of the fittest.

The Biblical Worldview presents us with both an objective morality and an objective basis for that morality. If we can understand that an action is right or wrong based on its relationship to God's law, and a thing is either good or evil based on its relationship to God's character, we can see a moral standard that has nothing to do with an individual's desires. This is by no means intended to say that theists have in every case recognized or maintained that objective standard. Many who acknowledge God's existence still choose to live in a sort of practical atheism, by ignoring the moral standard He has provided. Others, such as the Calvinists, have misrepresented the character of God in such a way as to make right and wrong all but unrecognizable. For instance, Classical Calvinism would present God as the first cause of evil¹²⁴ and even the most relaxed forms of Calvinism present sin in the believer's life as being compatible with

¹²⁴ "Both evil and good come from God... So what happens when you emphasize the will of man, then evil becomes only associated, there is no sense in which God decrees evil, there is no sense in which God wills evil and so evil is only from the heart of man and from the heart of Satan... but we recognize as reformed Christians that those are secondary causes, that the first cause of evil is God himself." Gene Cook, *The Two Wills of God*, August 12, 2005

fellowship with God.¹²⁵ However, these denials and misrepresentations do not undo the reality that God is the only true moral standard any more than denying or misrepresenting the law of gravity will prevent an injury from a fall.

In our modern world, there has been an attempt to force a middle ground that allows both worldviews to coexist. We have sought this through political correctness and a laissez-faire approach. However, as we are witnessing with the rapid moral transitions taking place in our country today this is a short-lived compromise that is destined to fail.

Before going further, it is important that we define certain key terms. By theism, or theistic, we mean “belief in the existence of a god or gods *specifically*: belief in the existence of one God viewed as the creative source of the human race and the world who transcends yet is immanent in the world.”¹²⁶ By atheism or atheistic, we mean, “a disbelief in the existence of deity.”¹²⁷ Because both of these terms are rather generic and allow for a broad range of thought, it is necessary to narrow down our usage a bit further. For our purposes in this discussion, we are using the term “theistic” to represent a Biblical Worldview. By this, we mean a belief in God as He is presented in Scripture as the eternal, all-wise, holy and benevolent creator and sustainer of the universe who is the ultimate judge of humanity. This definition is intended to reject the human traditions and

¹²⁵ “All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” *The Baptist Faith and Message*, Southern Baptist Convention, June 14, 2000, accessed June 2, 2016, <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp>.

¹²⁶ Merriam-Webster, Inc. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003.

¹²⁷ Merriam-Webster, Inc. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003.

implications of doctrines such as, Oneness Pentecostalism, Mormonism, Jehovah Witnesses, and Catholicism as these doctrines introduce consequences unique to their position and unnecessary to theism. Likewise, within atheism, there is a broad range of thought from strong doubt in the existence of the God of the Bible to strong rejection of any suggestion of a supernatural realm.

For our purposes, we are focusing on what is commonly called New Atheism. This doctrine has become popular due in large part to the writings of Sam Morris, Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins, Lawrence Krauss and others. New Atheism is characterized by a materialistic naturalism which is the idea that the only thing that exists is matter. It is the philosophy that all things are composed of matter and all natural phenomena are the result of material interactions that are governed solely by natural laws and forces (as opposed to supernatural or spiritual).¹²⁸ This view tends to be fairly extreme and many of its proponents are rather militaristic, however it is the view that fully embraces the realities of life without God.

In this discussion, we are going to examine three primary consequences of atheism and notice how a Biblical Worldview treats these problems. First, we will discuss the destruction of reason that is inherent in the atheistic view of origins and notice some results that this failure is presenting in our world today. Secondly, we will notice how the Atheistic Worldview removes any real sense of purpose from humanity. Third, we will see that atheism degrades humanity, presenting man as no more or better than an animal.

¹²⁸ For more on naturalism and materialism see the following articles: "Naturalism," David Papineau, accessed May 28, 2016, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/naturalism/#MorFac>. "Physicalism," Daniel Stoljar, accessed May 28:2016, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/physicalism/>.

The Destruction of Reason

Richard Dawkins has said that, “Reason has built the modern world.”¹²⁹ A common theme among those who view the world through the Atheistic lens is that reason is to be cherished above all else and that the proper application of reason leaves no room or need for God. It was to this end that Madalyn Murray O’Hair said,

“We must look to materialistic philosophy which alone enables men to understand reality and to know how to deal with it . . . Atheism is based upon a materialist philosophy, which holds that nothing exists but natural phenomena. There are no supernatural forces or entities, nor can there be any. Nature simply exists. But there are those who deny this, who assert that only mind or idea or spirit is primary. This question of the relation of the human mind to material being is one of the fundamental questions dealt with by all philosophers, however satisfactorily. The Atheist must slice through all obfuscation to bedrock, to the basic idea that those who regard nature as primary and thought as a property (or function) of matter belong to the camp of materialism, and that those who maintain that spirit or idea or mind existed before nature or created nature or uphold nature belong to the camp of idealism. All conventional religions are based on idealism.”¹³⁰

Richard Feynman put it more succinctly, “all things are made of atoms, and ... everything that living things do can be understood in terms of the jiggings and wiggings of atoms.”¹³¹

It was Charles Darwin that noted the problem with a worldview that prided itself on reason, but depended on purely natural phenomenon to explain how reason was possible. In a letter to William Graham he wrote, “With me the horrid doubt always arises whether

¹²⁹ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Enemies_of_Reason, accessed May 26, 2016

¹³⁰ Tom Gilson; Carson Weitnauer, *True Reason: Christian Responses to the Challenge of Atheism* (Patheos Press), Kindle edition, Kindle Locations 242-249.

¹³¹ Curtis White, *The Science Delusion: Asking the Big Questions in a Culture of Easy Answers* (Melville House, 2013-05-28), Kindle Edition, Kindle Locations 778-780.

the convictions of man's mind, which has been developed from the mind of the lower animals, are of any value or at all trustworthy. Would any one trust in the convictions of a monkey's mind, if there are any convictions in such a mind?"¹³²

While the Atheistic Worldview has attempted to develop a complex and detailed explanation of how the human brain came to be, they have no explanation for how the mind came to be. Naturalism would tell us that thoughts, feelings, desires etc. are just the product of various particles and chemicals interacting in a particular way all of which is the product of natural selection, but if that were true, then reason would be even further out of their grasp. Natural Selection in the evolutionary scheme is the unseen hand that directs the flow of random occurrences, weeding out those that are not helpful and promoting those that are beneficial. However, Natural Selection is said to promote those traits that aid in survival and reproduction. What value does reason possess if the concern of natural selection is simply survival and reproduction? Speaking to this issue Carson Weitnauer said,

*"If human reasoning evolved naturally, it's because it helped human beings survive and reproduce. Does this give us any basis for trusting our reasoning ability when it comes to questions of cosmology, or quantum mechanics, or neuroscience? Not at all. At best, our cognitive faculties would be reliable when it comes to finding berries, or using a spear against an enemy, or doing something to attract a mate."*¹³³

If we accept the Atheistic Worldview, we cannot trust human reason at all.

¹³² Letter to William Graham, 3 July 1881. The letter can be accessed online: <http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/entry-13230>.

¹³³ Tom Gilson; Carson Weitnauer, True Reason: Christian Responses to the Challenge of Atheism (Patheos Press), Kindle edition, Kindle Locations 1515-1518.

Furthermore, if the Atheistic Worldview is correct then logic itself could not exist. Logic cannot be observed, weighed or measured. The laws of logic are not material constructs and so they cannot be described through scientific experimentation. Furthermore, the laws of logic do not depend on the human mind in order to exist. For example, the Law of Non-Contradiction would be true whether humans exist or not. For atheists to claim that a community of thinkers are responsible for logic is to miss the point. We are not discussing the description or recognition of logic but the existence of logic. For that matter, what rules of reasoning would this community utilize to draw their conclusions, if there were no logic? Truly "the fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God'" (Ps 14:1 NASB).

This is more than an academic argument. We are currently seeing the impact of living in a society that is increasingly influenced by the Atheistic Worldview and its lack of objective reason. For example, consider the current stance that our society has taken on abortion. The atheist argues that humanity is the product of random mutations guided by the hand of natural selection, solely for the purpose of sustaining and reproducing to ensure the survival human species, and yet argue for the destruction of human life through abortion? Reason would suggest, that such an act would work against the goal that we should be striving for and should be abolished. However, the more our society is affected by the materialistic paradigm the more accepted the killing of unborn children becomes. The same logic would apply to the notion of accepting and facilitating someone making a transition from one gender to another, which effectively works against the hand of natural selection. By what reasoning would one suggest that this should be treated as anything

other than a disorder? However, it is the materialists who are insisting that these actions be normalized, accepted and even celebrated.

By removing the basis for objective standards, whether we are speaking of the rules of logic or objective morality, any society that accepts the Atheistic Worldview makes it impossible to generate reasonable, consistent and moral laws by which to govern a society. Instead, this worldview guarantees a consistent march toward unreasonable immorality that will eventually destroy the society that embraces it.

On the other hand, the Biblical Worldview presents man as being made purposefully in the image of a rational being. The Psalmist states that, “The heavens are telling the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands” (Ps 19:1 NASB). When we examine the universe as the intentional result of an intelligent Creator, we should be awestruck by the mind that conceived of all that is before us. This mind reasoned through the intricacies involved in the inner workings of the solar system and the atom, and even had the power to create, form and order all that exists. Logic, objective truth and morality fit perfectly in the Biblical Worldview. Beyond that, this worldview cannot function without them. More importantly, we are not left to discover these important concepts on our own. Instead, they are revealed to us as our Creator reveals Himself. This revelation is in understandable language offering us information and evidence to weigh and consider. It is written in a way that gives us room to draw conclusions and make inferences, i.e., to exercise the abilities that are ours as a result of being a special creation made in the image of God.

Removal of Purpose

In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon experiments with what we might consider Practical Atheism. Through the use of wisdom (human reasoning) and devotion to pleasure, he set out to discover if there was an enlightenment that could elevate a man above the vanities of life. In Ecclesiastes 1:12-18, he lays out the parameters of this experiment, in chapter 2:1-11 he gives a summary of his findings and through the rest of the book he offers a detailed examination of the results. His findings can be summed up in a single word, vanity. He systematically demonstrates that every human endeavor in and of itself was useless, of no profit and “striving after wind.” In 6:3, he goes so far as to say of the man who lives this life, “Better the miscarriage than he.” The book is filled with passages that paint such a life as dark, depressing and in the end, of no value.

These passages, as much as any other in the Bible, give us reason to hope that the Atheistic Worldview is wrong. The cause Solomon finally points to for this empty despair is the simple fact that atheism, whether realized or practical, robs man of his purpose. Solomon speaks volumes when he says, “The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments because this applies to every person” (Eccl. 12:13 NASB).

The American Atheists Center states that, “An Atheist believes that only in a knowledge of himself and a knowledge of his fellow man can he find the understanding that will help to a life of fulfillment.”¹³⁴ The question we must ask is, what is to be accomplished by this “enlightenment”?

¹³⁴ American Atheists, “History of American Atheists,” accessed May 27, 2016, <https://atheists.org/about-us/history>.

If in this worldview, "The universe is just there and that's all"¹³⁵ what is there to be gained by pursuing knowledge? Frank Zindler, former President of American Atheist states in his article *Ethics Without Gods*, "the person who practices "enlightened" self-interest... is the person whose behavioral strategy simultaneously maximizes both the intensity and duration of personal gratification. An enlightened strategy will be one which, when practiced over a long span of time, will generate ever greater amounts and varieties of pleasures and satisfactions."¹³⁶ Here we begin to understand what enlightenment is being sought, the knowledge of how to find and extend pleasure.

The problem with this philosophy is that it is self-defeating. As Solomon came to realize, pleasure can only last so long, accomplishments are soon forgotten or misused, and "all came from the dust and all return to the dust" (Eccl.. 3:20).

Again, we must consider the mechanism of the Atheistic Worldview, Darwinian Evolution, and the consequences it implies. According to this theory, all living organisms share a common purpose, namely the survival of their species. Over vast eons of time, adaptations have been discarded and accepted based on their ability to assist with this one goal. Other adaptations, which allow for the protection of the species are also incorporated, but these are in service of the same goal, ensuring the survival of the species by allowing breeding pairs to reproduce. This worldview takes man, whose intellect can conceive of and invent spaceships, microprocessors and robots and provides him no real purpose greater than reproduction. Should we ignore the correlation between the

¹³⁵ Bertrand Russell and F. C. Copleston, "The Existence of God," in *The Existence of God*, ed. with an Introduction by John Hick, *Problems of Philosophy Series* (New York: Macmillan, 1964), p. 175.

¹³⁶ Frank Zindler, *Ethics Without Gods*, American Atheists, accessed May 27, 2016, <http://atheists.org/activism/resources/ethics>.

increasing prevalence of the Atheistic Worldview and the rise of psychological disorders such as anxiety disorders, impulse control disorders, and substance abuse disorders?¹³⁷

The Biblical Worldview presents us with an answer to the dismal reality of the vanity of life. In Romans 8, Paul discusses the harsh reality that even those who are children of God suffer in this world, however the answer that he offers is not the selfish pursuit of pleasure, or losing oneself in material enlightenment. Instead, he speaks of “waiting eagerly for...the redemption of our body.” He emphasizes that there is something greater that we are intended for and that this is realized in the resurrection. This is so important to his worldview that he says, “in hope we have been saved.” In contrast to Solomon’s morbid view through the lens of practical atheism (despite his devotion to pleasure and wisdom), Paul sees a goal worth attaining, a purpose in his suffering, a reason for the life that he lives. This understanding offers men a use for their intellect and an application for their innate desire for companionship, that is far greater than reproduction and is not scarred by the smear of selfishness found in the principle of enlightened self-interest; the sharing of this great hope with others. While the atheist may scoff at talk of things such as hope, he certainly has nothing to offer in its place.

¹³⁷ “Previous widely cited large-scale surveys in the US were the Epidemiological Catchment Area (ECA) survey and subsequent National Comorbidity Survey (NCS). The NCS was replicated and updated between 2000 and 2003 and indicated that, of those groups of disorders assessed, nearly half of Americans (46.4%) reported meeting criteria at some point in their life for either a DSM-IV anxiety disorder (28.8%), mood disorder (20.8%), impulse-control disorder (24.8%) or substance use disorders (14.6%). Half of all lifetime cases had started by age 14 and 3/4 by age 24. In the prior 12-month period only, around a quarter (26.2%) met criteria for any disorder— anxiety disorders 18.1%; mood disorders 9.5%; impulse control disorders 8.9%; and substance use disorders 3.8%. A substantial minority (23%) met criteria for more than two disorders. 22.3% of cases were classed as serious, 37.3% as moderate and 40.4% as mild.” (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prevalence_of_mental_disorders)

The Degradation of Humanity

The Atheistic Worldview presents, through evolutionary theory, a very degraded view of humanity. To some degree this is accomplished by the destruction of any basis for reason, logic or morality as well as the erasing of any real purpose for the life that we live, as discussed above. However, inherent in evolution there is a lowering of man in an even more practical way. Allow Darwin himself to express this view,

“The main conclusion here arrived at, and now held by many naturalists who are well competent to form a sound judgment, is that man is descended from some less highly organised form. The grounds upon which this conclusion rests will never be shaken, for the close similarity between man and the lower animals in embryonic development, as well as in innumerable points of structure and constitution, both of high and of the most trifling importance,—the rudiments which he retains, and the abnormal reversions to which he is occasionally liable, are facts which cannot be disputed.”¹³⁸

While this statement is certainly not shocking to the modern ear, the point should, nonetheless bring to our minds a devastating consequence. If the Atheistic Worldview were true, we have no real intrinsic value. Again, we will let Darwin articulate the point,

“With savages, the weak in body or mind are soon eliminated; and those that survive commonly exhibit a vigorous state of health. We civilised men, on the other hand, do our utmost to check the process of elimination; we build asylums for the imbecile, the maimed, and the sick; we institute poor-laws; and our medical men exert their utmost skill to save the life of every one to the last moment. There is reason to believe that vaccination has preserved thousands, who from a weak constitution would formerly have succumbed to small-pox. Thus the weak members of civilised societies propagate their kind. No one who has attended to the breeding of domestic animals will doubt that this must be highly injurious to the race of man. It is surprising how soon a want of care, or care wrongly directed, leads to the

¹³⁸ Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, (3/24/2011) Kindle Edition, (Kindle Locations 10761-10764).

degeneration of a domestic race; but excepting in the case of man himself, hardly any one is so ignorant as to allow his worst animals to breed.”¹³⁹

Richard Dawkins acknowledged the dark side of evolution when he said, “My own feeling is that a human society based simply on the gene’s law of universal ruthless selfishness would be a very nasty society in which to live. But unfortunately, however much we may deplore something, it does not stop it being true.”¹⁴⁰ To be fair Dawkins was not advocating for that outcome. However, his statement does present us with an important question. If we are simply descendants of the lowest forms of life, if we have come to this point by nothing more than genetic mutations, if the only real guidance that has brought us to this point is natural selection, who are we to object to this “ruthless selfishness?” The atheist will certainly argue against the idea that their worldview lacks a basis for morality, but just as pressing is the point that their worldview lacks a reason for morality.

It is hard to read these citations without thinking again of our modern day practice of abortion. We often hear Christians wondering aloud, how one can participate in the murder of a child. In this protest, we see the difference between the two paradigms clearly demonstrated. In the Biblical Worldview, the unborn person is valuable simply because they exist and this value is deemed intrinsic and inviolable. In the Atheistic

¹³⁹ Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, (3/24/2011) Kindle Edition (Kindle Location 2530).

¹⁴⁰ Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) pp. 2,3

Worldview, the unborn has no intrinsic value at all and thus is not worthy of any sort of detrimental treatment.¹⁴¹

The compromise that some have attempted to cobble together is the theory of Theistic Evolution. This model proposes that God is the cause and evolution is the means. By acknowledging God's existence, and even to some degree His involvement in the natural realm, the Theistic Evolutionist attempts to supply a basis for morality, reason and logic, and the other nonmaterial absolutes that are undeniably a part of the universe while still acknowledging the scientific evidence for evolution. The problems with this are too numerous to discuss at the present time, so we will limit ourselves to noticing two. First, there is no need to compromise with a position that claims all life came from non-life, but

¹⁴¹ "As an example, consider the position of the late evolutionist, Carl Sagan, and his wife, Ann Druyan. In an article on "The Question of Abortion" that they co-authored for Parade magazine, these two humanists contended for the ethical permissibility of human abortion on the grounds that the fetus, growing within a woman's body for several months following conception, is not a human being. Their conclusion, therefore, was this: the killing of this tiny creature is not murder.

And what was the basis for this assertion? Sagan and Druyan argued their case by subtly employing the concept known as "embryonic recapitulation," which suggests that as the human embryo develops, it repeats its evolutionary history, going through ancestral stages such as an amoeba-like blob, a fish, an amphibian, a reptile, etc. So, watching the human embryo grow is like watching a "silent moving picture" of evolution. They stated that the embryo first is "a kind of parasite" that eventually looks like a "segmented worm." Further alterations, they wrote, reveal "gill arches" like that of a "fish or amphibian." Supposedly, "reptilian" features emerge, and later give rise to "mammalian...pig-like" traits. By the end of two months, according to these two authors, the creature resembles a "primate but is still not quite human" (1990, p. 6). The concept of embryonic recapitulation, which was first set forth in the mid-1860s by German scientist Ernst Haeckel, long since has been discredited, and shown to be without any basis in scientific fact (see Simpson et al., 1957, p. 352). But so desperate were Sagan and Druyan to find something—anything—in science to justify their belief that abortion is not murder, they resurrected the ancient concept, dusted it off, and attempted to give it some credibility as an appropriate reason why abortion is not murder. Surely, this shows the lengths to which evolutionists will go in attempts to substantiate their theory, and the inordinate practices that the theory generates when followed to its logical conclusion." Bert Thompson, *The Implications of Evolution*, accessed May 27, 2016, <http://www.apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=9&article=247>

cannot even begin to offer an explanation as to how this occurred¹⁴². Just as importantly, if not more so, is the fact that Theistic Evolution fails in its defense of theism and in doing so degrades humanity just as the Atheistic Worldview does.

The Theistic Evolutionist sees the Genesis account as a metaphor. In doing this, not only is the reliability of Scripture destroyed, but two essential principles are removed from the Biblical story. Beginning in Genesis 1:11, we read of God creating every category of life which reproduced “after their kind.” After chronicling the creation of each category of plant and animal life, the statement “after their kind” is repeated, until we get to Genesis 1:26-27 where we see a sudden departure from the pattern. “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...God created man in His own image.’” It is in this statement that we find man has value far above any other life. It is the very fact that we did not descend from “their kind” that sets us apart. Theistic Evolution destroys this essential premise.

¹⁴² Stephen Meyer deals with this issue in his book *Darwin's Doubt...* the following statement presents just one of the difficulties that modern science has not been able to provide any answer for.

“To those unfamiliar with the particular problems faced by scientists trying to explain the origin of life, it might not seem obvious why invoking natural selection does not help to explain the origin of the first life. After all, if natural selection and random mutations can generate new information in living organisms, why can it also not do so in a prebiotic environment? But the distinction between a biological and prebiotic context was crucially important to my argument. Natural selection assumes the existence of living organisms with a capacity to reproduce. Yet self-replication in all extant cells depends upon information-rich proteins and nucleic acids (DNA and RNA), and the origin of such information-rich molecules is precisely what origin-of-life research needs to explain. That's why Theodosius Dobzhansky, one of the founders of the modern neo-Darwinian synthesis, can state flatly, “Pre-biological natural selection is a contradiction in terms.” Or, as Nobel Prize-winning molecular biologist and origin-of-life researcher Christian de Duve explains, theories of prebiotic natural selection fail because they “need information which implies they have to presuppose what is to be explained in the first place.”⁶ Clearly, it is not sufficient to invoke a process that commences only once life has begun, or once biological information has arisen, to explain the origin of life or the origin of the information necessary to produce it.”

Stephen C. Meyer, *Darwin's Doubt: The Explosive Origin of Animal Life and the Case for Intelligent Design*, (HarperCollins 2013-06-18), Kindle Edition (Kindle Locations 111-112)

This compromise position also destroys the hope of redemption that is the essential theme of Scripture. Throughout the Bible, there is a repeated use of Adam and Christ as representatives of humanity as a whole. In Adam mankind is introduced to sin and death, but in Christ man finds redemption and life (Ro 5:12, 1Co 15:20-21). Luke traces Jesus' lineage all the way back to Adam in Luke 3:23-38. Paul calls Jesus "the last Adam" in 1Corinthians 15:45. This typology is essential to the theme of the Gospel, and is at the root of the Christian's hope. To remove this typology destroys the message of Bible and thus destroys any reason to have faith in God. This is precisely the consequence of Theistic Evolution. By removing the very possibility of a literal Adam, the theory strips man of his worth, removes the basis of the Christ story, and eliminates redemption from the redemption story. In its effort to compromise and cushion the harsh edges of Atheistic Evolution, Theistic Evolution in fact perpetrates an even greater evil by deceiving men into believing they can be both Materialists and Christians, while in fact leaving them stranded in a no man's land, without any hope of rescue.

In conclusion, let us sum up by looking at three statements we might expect from the Atheistic Worldview, along with brief answers from the Theistic Worldview. Proponents of the Atheistic Worldview typically claim that they have cornered the market on reason, and that by removing God and His dictates they alone are able to look logically at the universe and draw a valid conclusion from their own synthesis of information. To this we might ask, "Upon what basis do you trust your own reasoning abilities and how does Materialistic Naturalism account for abstract thought and the very logic that you depend on?" The Proponent of the Atheistic Worldview will likely claim that shedding the shackles of theism has allowed him an enlightenment that is preferable to the

hope offered in Christianity. To this we might respond by asking, "What purpose is found in their pursuit of knowledge and enlightenment?" As Solomon said, "In much wisdom is much grief, and increasing knowledge results in increasing pain" (Eccl. 1:18). Finally, the Atheistic Worldview presents man as the crowning achievement of the evolutionary process. However, this very process strips humanity of any intrinsic value, destroys the very foundation of reason and, if carried to its logical conclusion, will inevitably reduce man to his most selfish impulses. On the other hand, The Biblical Worldview presents man as unique, not only in his capabilities, but also in his essential nature, in that, he has been created in the very image of God (Gen. 1:26-27). Because of this, we have hope in something greater than the grave, i.e., the restoration of body, soul and spirit (1Thess 5:23). This hope gives us reason to love our fellow man, to live by a higher standard than our own selfishness and to look forward to eternity.

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