

Theism versus Atheism “Debate”

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Adapted from a conversation at The Smoke Zone, May 13, 2009

Last Wednesday some friends and I went out witnessing in the Stevenson Ranch area of Valencia. After a time of fellowship and prayer, we dropped into the Smoke Zone, a tobacco store that features a lounge area for cigar smokers. Three men comfortably seated were drawing pensively upon their Havana cigars and blowing bluish smoke into the still air. They asked if the four of us would like to sit down.

We agreed, took every available seat, and began entering into small talk about sports and politics. The conversation became a little more personal as a father son duo spoke of their interest in backpacking, the outdoors, and wilderness swimming holes.

Forty minutes had passed without any mention of the gospel—we had just been enjoying getting to know these men—there had been no attempt on our part to bring up the subject of the Christian religion. Then, the son of the older gentleman announced out of the blue that he was an atheist (like his father who was present with us). We took this as an open door. I immediately mentioned that I was a professor from The Master’s College, and that several of those with me had attended, or were attending the college.

I asked his permission if I might subject his viewpoint of atheism to some scrutiny—mentioning that if he has found atheism to be a trustworthy worldview; then he ought not mind if a series of questions were posed that were designed to test its internal consistency (and if his atheism matched this experience in the real world). He agreed to discuss his position.

Now what is interesting is that this younger man, a professed atheist in late twenties, said that he had some objections to biblical Christianity which he wanted to voice. So I consented to let the discussion take the form of my answering his objections to biblical theism. (In this paper you will notice that the objections which he lodged against Christianity appear in bold italics.)

OBJECTION 1. *“If God is infinite; then something is flawed with the whole idea of infiniteness applied to a divine figure. Think about it—if God can’t make a rock too big to lift then He is not infinite. If He can make a rock too big to lift—it also demonstrates He is not infinite.”*

Semantic word puzzles are not an accurate way of conceiving of the God of the Bible. God is not an undefined infinite impersonal force. Nor does God have to prove His abilities by fitting the tests we may contrive in our imaginations. Because God is an absolute, self-contained, self-existent Person, all of His acts are completely consistent with His holy character.

God always acts true to Himself, therefore it is irrational to subject Him to tests which would violate His stated character and purposes (2 Tim 2:13). To suggest that God’s infiniteness shall be accurately tested by man’s theorems (in order to determine what He is capable of doing)

is counterproductive—because only God, the infinite Being, is capable of taking His own measure.

We are locked into our existential situation of finitude, creaturehood, time, space, and mass. For us, we have no experiential knowledge of infiniteness—infinity is only a bare concept for us, not a reality in which we can participate or measure, touch, or experience.

In order to know God we are dependent upon the Holy Scriptures; for they constitute God's authoritative self-revelation. In the Scriptures He shares with us the relational aspects of His infiniteness when He proclaims to us in the Bible that His infinite power (omnipotence); infinite knowledge and wisdom (omniscience); and infinite presence (omniscience) are who He is—and that we do not relate to Him truthfully unless we recognize that He deals with us out of the limitlessness of these characteristics (Ps 139).

This means that because of His unchanging character, He is worthy of our trust, obedience, reverence, and worship. Those who have entrusted their lives to Him through Christ may be assured that God's infinite wisdom, knowledge, and power are exercised by Almighty God in the interest of His glory and their care, preservation, and blessing (2 Tim 1:12).

OBJECTION 2. *“Carl Sagan comments on our insignificance compared to the Milky Way, “[E]veryone you ever heard of, every human being who ever lived, lived out their lives. The aggregate of all our joys and sufferings, thousands of confident religions, ideologies and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilizations, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every hopeful child, every mother and father, every inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every superstar, every supreme leader, every saint and sinner in the history of our species, lived there on a mote of dust, suspended in a sunbeam.*

The earth is a very small stage in a vast cosmic arena. Think of the rivers of blood spilled by all those generals and emperors so that in glory and in triumph they could become the momentary masters of a fraction of a dot. Think of the endless cruelties visited by the inhabitants of one corner of the dot on scarcely distinguishable inhabitants of some other corner of the dot. How frequent their misunderstandings, how eager they are to kill one another, how fervent their hatreds. Our posturings, our imagined self-importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the universe, are challenged by this point of pale light.

Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity -- in all this vastness -- there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves. It is up to us. It's been said that astronomy is a humbling, and I might add, a character-building experience. To my mind, there is perhaps no better demonstration of the folly of human conceits than this distant image of our tiny world. To me, it underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly and compassionately with one another and to preserve and cherish that pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known” CARL SAGAN.

My atheist friend at the “Smoke Zone” argued that Sagan’s quote represents “pure logic”—i.e. man’s imagined self-importance is belied by the sheer magnitude of our own galaxy not to mention the universe itself.

Is that pure logic to assume that because of the size of the universe (compared to man) we are to determine, or positively conclude that man is without meaning, purpose, significance, importance—that any concept of man’s importance is an exercise in arrogance and that the term, *nihilism* (man is ultimately meaningless) best describes man’s existence? First of all, your assumption that you are operating by pure logic (which I take you to mean without any biases) is misinformed. Here’s the reason why: All reasoning depends upon presuppositions about the nature of reality (metaphysic), and about authoritative sources of knowledge (epistemology). In fact, we can’t even reason (gather, process, and correlate facts) without presuppositions.

May I suggest that your conclusion about man’s insignificance was to a great degree driven by your assumption that the nature of reality is physical (i.e. matter and motion make up prime reality). By your initial assumption you presupposed that prime reality is NOT personal (namely you assumed that there is no infinitely wise and powerful God who is Creator, Upholder, and Definer of the universe, and who is ultimate reality).

The science of logic tells us that we are inconsistent if we do not pursue a conclusion that undergirds our original presupposition or assumption. And, our original presupposition (which conditions the way in which we process facts) is taken on faith (by ‘faith’ I mean that you arrived at your initial assumption NOT on the basis of research; but as a faith commitment. There is no scientific test to determine the nature of reality).

Now presuppositions are easy to identify—just ask the question, “What do I appeal to when I run out of reasons for what I believe?” Another way to identify a presupposition is, “How do I explain my answer to the query, ‘Why are things the way they are?’ Your answer reveals your presupposition: ‘Things are the way they are because . . .’” Our presuppositions are inseparably joined to, and express our views of: the nature of reality; the nature of knowledge; and the nature of man.

What is fascinating about the conclusion of our atheist friend is this: the very reason Sagan cites as an argument for man’s lack of significance (the smallness of man in relation to the universe) the Word of God cites as the reason man DOES have significance. In the words, because God has placed us over the works of His hands, we have been designated the ‘crown of His creation’ (Ps 8). Out of an entire universe, planet earth is the place that God has chosen to send His Son to be a propitiation for human sin (1 Jn 4:9-10). Only planet earth is the God-appointed ‘stage’ for the drama of divine redemption.

Scripture takes that same initial reason (the smallness of man in relation to the universe) and argues for the significance of man. Here is why it does so: man has significance because the same Almighty God who created the galaxies also created us in His own image and likeness (Gen 1:26-27); for His own purposes (Ps 8). I agree with Sagan only to this point—for man to attempt to find his own significance and importance in himself is arrogance—to find his significance and meaning in God is both humility and reality.

OBJECTION 3. *“Things not explained by science are not real—they are just subjective ideas in the heads of people (mostly destructive superstitions).”*

Again this assertion that man’s mind aided by science will tell us all we need to know is an extension of the presupposition that the nature of prime reality is material and not personal. The assumptions of the Enlightenment (that man’s reason is ultimate and reliable and, that unaided by God’s revelation, is able to explain all reality) is actually a departure from the foundations of modern science.

The scientists who laid the foundations of modern science (Newton, Boyle, Kepler,

Bacon, etc.) were believers in the God of the Bible. Their confidence to investigate the laws of science was actually drawn from their faith that an infinitely wise Creator was conserving what He has created by means of laws He had put into motion—and that man, as God’s steward, was endowed with the ability to investigate and research these laws by means of empirical science.

Now empirical science (scientific method) is worlds apart from contemporary expressions of Darwinian Theory. The theory of evolution (as held by modern scientists today) tends to be joined to Philosophic Naturalism (PN is captured in the dogmatic statement of Sagan, ‘the universe is all there is and all there ever will be’—a statement of pure faith; not science).

But PN is not empirical science; it is a religious philosophy about the nature of reality. Just to make my point that philosophy is not the domain of empirical science, consider the following question, “What is the scientific definition of ‘truth’?” Of course there is none. Or, “What kind of experiment would prove man has no soul?” No such experiment can be conceived. Or, “What is the nature of reality?” Science has no experiment to determine the nature of reality because the nature of reality is a metaphysical question.

Now, revealing his own bias, Darwin suggested that things in nature may appear to be designed but are not designed. He also provided a criterion which he stated would invalidate his theory. Here it is, if paleontology (the discovery and study of fossils) does not find an abundance of transitional forms between kinds of organisms; then that absence of gradualism in the fossil record would clearly falsify what he predicted, invalidating his theory.

In a somewhat sheepish announcement, paleontologists at their international convention announced to the world in the early 1990’s that the gradualism and intermediate forms in the fossil record that Darwin had predicted would be found were simply not there, nor would they ever be found.

In summary, PN’s definition of man as an advanced animal is highly reductionistic. It is reductionistic because PN explains none of man’s daily experience. Its definition of man is like trying to stuff a 175 pound man into a one gallon bucket—he simply won’t fit. PN is religious philosophy posing as science.

The consequences of PN to rationality are devastating—for it means that countless particulars in our human experience are traceable to nothing more than coincidences of nature (it is patently absurd to suggest that everything that is not made of matter is not real).

According to the world view of PN, morality, truth, meaning, value, dignity, virtue, justice, logic, absolute truth, maternal love, and righteousness must have no real objective existence. And, since we cannot find them on the elemental table along with carbon, nitrogen, and silicon—they must be subjective ideas in our heads without genuine existence.

By contrast, God’s Word claims that the categories in our daily experience match the categories God has placed in our minds BECAUSE we are created to live in God’s world—and God’s world operates in a proscribed way because He rules it and because He established its categories, relations, and definitions.

For example, the concept of ownership is tied to justice (under God’s just laws, the strong and wealthy are not allowed to seize the property and the possessions of helpless orphans and widows). God rules His world by wise, good and just laws. Consider how much human misery is the direct result of trampling these laws. Teen prostitution is a tragedy because it is a violation of the laws God has established about sexual purity and marital fidelity which are designed to protect our dignity and true humanity.

When science sheds its lab coat of empirical investigation in order to assume the mantle of religious philosophy; you’re going to get pseudo-science as a consequence. This is a radical departure from the stated role of science as a discipline which is devoted to, *observation*,

identification, description, experimental investigation, and theoretical explanation of natural phenomena (American Heritage Dictionary).

OBJECTION 4. *“You keep appealing to the Bible as the authoritative book of God—what about another book that claims to be sacred; the Koran?”*

When Mohammed shared with his wife that he was receiving ‘supernatural messages’ (approximately 600 years after Christ’s birth); he told her that he didn’t know if they were from God or from demons. By contrast, none of the 40 biblical authors ever doubted that the Holy God of the universe was the One moving them by His Holy Spirit to write holy writ (1 Pet 1:19-21; 2 Pet 1:17-21).

One of the reasons should be obvious—the Bible’s human authors (though separated from one another historically by as many as 1500 years), demonstrated perfect unity and agreement with one another in their writings and they always exhibited fidelity to the divine truths found in the whole of Scripture. This is a powerful internal argument that the Scripture’s claim to divine origin are true—the real Author of the Bible is the Holy Spirit (2 Tim 3:16-17).

Islam has no self-revelation of God; no incarnation of a Mediator; no divine personal relationship with penitents; no atonement; no regeneration; no justification from sin and guilt. As a consequence Allah is a ‘blank’ god and not the self-revealed, knowable God of the Bible. Without theology (that is without the self-revelation of God who ‘wills’ to be known in a personal relationship of covenant love), Islam is more of socio-political movement than it is a religion.

The only resources Islam has at its disposal for the change of individuals are fundamentalism, fanaticism, compliance, conformity, and coercion. Mohammed’s first gains in “conversion” were accomplished by the sword—those who disagreed became the targets of Mohammed’s assassins.

By way of radical contrast, the means of advancing the gospel exhibited and commended by Christ and the Apostles was and truth and love and a willingness to suffer for the sake of Christ.

Among Muslims who have converted to Christ, it is very telling what they share about abandoning Islam to follow Christ. They often remark how the connection to heaven for a Muslim is as fragile as a single hair—by contrast, Christ Jesus, Son of God has won a full and free salvation which gives the believer bold and confident access to God (Eph 2:16-18).

Former Muslims who are now believers in Christ tell of the joy, peace, and security that come from the certainty of salvation in the Lord. Without the blood of Christ to cleanse the defiled heart of man, religionists around the world must come up with their own ‘atonement’ to assuage the guilt of conscience. For Muslims, sadly their pursuit of ‘atonement’ has too often been the blood of their ‘martyrs’. The blood of sinners can redeem no one. Only the blood of the only begotten Son of God can cleanse the conscience down to its deepest crevasses (Heb 9:14; 1 Pet 1:18-19).

OBJECTION 5. *“Mankind, like a virus, has poisoned the earth and its environment, eliminated vast numbers of species—the human race is a plague upon the earth.”*

By describing humanity as an ‘invading virus,’ you are describing the human race as participating in a radical departure from some ideal. Would that ideal happen to be ecological

responsibility, stewardship, and care of the planet with all of its countless life forms?

You are correct to recognize that man has left a record of ecological failure. The first travelers on the Trans-American railroad shot bison from a moving train—all for sport. It was a wanton act to leave those buffalo carcasses on the prairie to rot.

May I suggest that the ecological ideal to which your objection alludes was our Creator's original dominion mandate? God states that He placed the human race over the works of His hands. Man's rebellion against God, recorded in Genesis chapter three, is what has led to a failed stewardship of the environment.

What some describe today as a problem of over-population is often nothing more than a failed stewardship of resources. Greed is a moral issue. It shows up as the 'rape' of the land in massive soil erosion. It has driven men to not care about dumping kilometers of waste into the oceans and toxic chemicals into the aquifers (ground water supplies). The innumerable examples of man's mismanagement of the planet do not negate our created identity. The Scriptures address amply the topic of our failed stewardship. For, who and what God says we are—creatures made in His image, include the fact that we are horribly fallen. Your objection need not lead you to define man in a different manner than God does; for your objection is a testament to the accuracy of God's moral diagnosis of the human race.

The biblical books of Revelation and Isaiah both attribute the destruction of the environment to human immorality. God's judgment will not wait forever, He is coming "to destroy those who destroy the earth" (Rev 11:18) (see also Is 24).

Yes, we should have compassion and proactive aid toward individuals scratching out enough to eat in developing countries. But as a people group struggling to survive, they are not entirely the victims of circumstances.

Their leaders have traditionally been animists (belief in pantheism and control of the environment by territorial spirits). My point being that one's worldview is directly tied to one's standard of living. Those ordering their lives after the superstitions of their elders and shamans for the most part make up the poorest of the world (see the book, *The Bottom Billion*, by Paul Collier—the author shows the connection between worldview and poverty).

It can take a great deal of persuasion to convince animists of the value of erosion control; contour plowing; crop rotation; mulching; pest control, and terracing. Yet these are the farming technologies that have allowed the Western world to feed itself so easily. Africans who practice slash and burn farming are responsible (due to massive erosion) for sending vast amounts of top soil into the Atlantic and Indian Ocean each year. When through backward and primitive farming practices people groups break the sacred trust with the land, adequate food production will be a consequence. Pantheistic worldviews make it all that more difficult for foreign aid workers from the West to find farmers who are willing pupils of successful farming techniques.

India has much of the world's brain power—so why do women still cook over cow dung and die in their 50's of respiratory illnesses? The answer also goes back to worldview. The religious masters and sages of India set an example of personal "enlightenment" by a form of 'spirituality' which endorses transcending and escaping the realities of this world. Thus, if the examples of their religious leaders are followed; there is little incentive to oppose evil; decay; disease; poverty; and injustice—instead it is just 'tune out the challenges of life', and then call that true religion.

OBJECTION 6. *"I would never worship or bend the knee to any god who has the power to relieve the suffering of children; but who stands idly by and does nothing."*

First of all, Darwinism (since it describes life's progress as taking place through the elimination of the unfit) can't supply the ethic or capacity for moral outrage. Evolutionary theory can only commend stoic resignation in the face of natural selection. Natural selection is of course 'non-random death'—it entails the forces of nature culling out and eliminating those creatures which lack viability.

Evolution in action (though it has never been witnessed) is supposedly nothing more than mechanistic determinism. In other words, everything that exists has been determined by nature—supposedly we are nature's creation and servants. Evolutionists would have us believe that we owe our existence to mutation and natural selection (non-random death eliminating the weak and rewarding the strong). The weak, being 'unfit' for survival are a drag on the health and robustness of the gene pool.

Thus, if we are to draw our ethics from a Darwinian explanation of life, we should have no tears when weakened individuals are eliminated—their absence is our collective strength. (No wonder communist leaders have expressed gratitude to Darwin posthumously for giving them a 'scientific' reason to practice their genocidal purges.)

My point is, to be a consistent Darwinist one would need to admit that the capacity for moral outrage at the suffering of the weak is not consistent with evolution's operative principle. Therefore the capacity for moral outrage must be 'borrowed' from somewhere else—namely from Christianity. For, the Bible is God's holy book and it is filled with examples of moral outrage. In fact to have the capacity for moral outrage is a mark of being made in the image of God—His moral mark is upon us! We bristle at injustice because we are created in the image of an infinitely just Creator who will someday address all injustice.

Your offense at children suffering is evidence that God's moral mark is upon you as well. You do not look upon the African savannah and watch predators tear apart baby animals and think—"Hey that's a good model for social relations between humans!"—no, you'd never say that. The reason why is because your core ethics (evidenced by your capacity for moral outrage) don't come from nature; they come from your Creator.

Now here is something that may shock you. There is a very clear reason why you are 1000's of times more sensitive to suffering than to sin. To admit that Scripture speaks truthfully when it traces suffering to human transgression would be a case of self-indemnification for you. For, you would have to admit that a transcendent moral order fills the creation; and you are subject to that transcendent moral order, and to its Author—Almighty God.

To be horrified at suffering, but apathetic about sin (the root cause of suffering) is to give evidence of our own brokenness as a human race. The Word of God bears testimony that sin and suffering bear a direct equivalence to one another. You may say then, "Why have so many who have sinned less than Hitler in this life suffered more than Hitler did in his earthly life?"

That's a legitimate question which Jesus answers in Luke 13:1-5. Jesus states that the key issue in this life is repentance. To refuse to repent is to ultimately face a greater suffering than one ever faced in this life. There is no guarantee that we will be insulated from suffering in this life (Jn 16:33)—but the true believer is assured that God will bring about His perfect good and purpose through the suffering His follower experience (Rom 8:28).

Scripture depicts sin as a greater disaster than suffering. This is God's infallible perspective. But, in order to take His authoritative vantage point and abandon our own; we will have to repent of our sin and take God's side against our personal sin.

To be shocked by suffering, yet apathetic about sin (which is suffering's real cause) is to be willfully blind to reality as defined by God.

Now suppose the God of the universe grants your request to eliminate suffering—how

would that transpire? Here is the problem you immediately face: if God is going to eliminate suffering, He will have to rid the world of sin first (for sin and suffering bear a cause and effect relationship).

The Old Testament prophets frequently told their hearers that the sins of the fathers had piled up and were now visiting the children. As unfair as that sounds, let's consider for a moment that God's appointed instrument of truth and protection to the children is their fathers (Deut 6:1-9). Isn't it absurd to think that if one's earthly father gives himself to idolatry, sexual immorality, and drunkenness, the children will reap no consequences from his ungodly behavior? This paternal rebellion which has wreaked havoc upon countless families is precisely what the O.T. prophets so often rebuked (Dan 9:8).

God rules through an abundance of secondary causes. His appointment of fathers to care physically, morally, and spiritually for their children is His primary provision for mercies to the children. Therefore, in order for us to demonstrate that we care deeply for children, we must also care deeply for the role of fathers who have been entrusted by God for the moral, spiritual, and physical legacy they leave to their children. God is righteous to lay the blame at the feet of the fathers.

Now if God were to invade planet earth in order to eliminate suffering—His mission would have to be to eliminate sin first. God always acts consistently with His holy nature. If He invaded as moral Judge—what guarantees do you have that you would not be swept away as part of the problem? Outside of Christ—you have no guarantee or safety from condemnation.

OBJECTION 7. *“The idea of certainty about truth seems a little suspect to me. I mean how do I really know that this conversation were having is real and not merely my dream and the whole thing just an illusion?”*

That would be an objection appropriate to a Darwinian worldview. And, it reminds me of something Darwin said, “I have horrid doubts about trusting a monkey's mind.” In other words, Darwin saw the potential conflict in putting our trust and reliance in our brains if they were but products of evolutionary chance and mutation.

By contrast, the Christian intellectual embarks upon the entire cognitive endeavor of reason and correlation with the confidence that his Creator knows every fact in the universe, and the meaning of every fact in the universe. Scripture's claim is that God's wisdom is infinite—He is the fixed point of reference for all reality.

By default, the atheist must attribute to his own mind the role reserved for Almighty God alone—the atheist must view himself as the final arbiter of truth, and the final determiner of reality. Naturally this is a formula for both pride and doubt. Consider for a moment that 99.99999 + % of all phenomena in the history of the universe are beyond the individual's powers of observation. Therefore what assurances does the atheist have that a genuine correspondence exists between his mind and the real world? Perhaps he is living in a kind of “matrix” (the movie) and his perceptions are virtual, but not real.

This kind of flight of imagination is of course convenient for the atheist because it is one more piece of mental sophistry employed to distance self from accountability to God. Romans chapter one tells that human rebellion from God is characterized by the intellectual suppression of the knowledge of God. And why do men suppress the truth of God? According to Scripture, it is an attempt to insulate oneself from the reality of the Creator's absolute and rightful claims upon our lives (Rom 1:18-23).

Now back to Darwin's ‘horrid doubts’ for a moment. If our thoughts are no more than

mental mutations designed to get our DNA into the next generation, then they ought NOT to be trusted to give us a true picture of reality since their manic survival agenda colors and skews all they do. In fact, evolution's commitment to determinism (we are pawns/products of nature, determined by nature) is so absolute that human reasoning is reduced to nothing more than selfish genes tricking us. Our selfish genes, we are told, have tricked us into believing that notions such as justice, love, good, evil, morality, logic, and beauty are objective and real.

If our genetic material is what is really 'calling the shots'—never tiring of fooling us into adopting survival strategies—then objectivity goes out the window, and you only think that you are engaging reality in a meaningful way. Well, according to Scripture, this kind of flight of fantasy is absurdity and folly—and is nothing more than an attempt to evade God's authoritative Word and witness.

Now, step into biblical worldview for a moment and witness the basis for rationality. God's knowledge of every fact in the universe and its meaning is the foundation for our method of knowing. We depend upon His self-revelation in order to know anything for certain—it is His glory which is the terminus for all existence, therefore it is His glory which unites all knowledge and every discipline of study.

This has everything to do with the reliability of the human mind to give a trustworthy picture of the world. Our created identity as the image of God involves the responsibility to be accurate, truthful interpreters of the creation and of history (to the glory of God). Therefore, God implanted in man the categories of knowledge which correspond to the real world. He did this because He has given us both the faculties and the responsibility to be 'truthful interpreters' of the created world.

There exists a wonderful correlation between man's mind and the real world. Man as researcher, observer, and interpreter matches the scriptural definition of man as the image of God—this certainly is what we see in our human experience. I worked briefly for Scripps Institute of Oceanography in La Jolla, CA. I was amazed at times at the thousands of hours spent by researchers studying just one species of single-celled animal. According to God's design of our intellects, man is a tireless interpreter of the phenomena God has made.

By contrast, the evolutionist has no actual basis for a reliable direct correspondence between the mind of man and the real world—for, according to evolution, man is but an advanced animal determined by nature and controlled by genes and instincts. Darwinism gives us no real basis for rationality.

Why would an advanced animal have any need of transcending his own experience in order to understand reality holistically? Why would he need to dedicate so much of his time to interpreting his world? Darwinism cannot answer this challenge. Man as the interpreter of phenomena under God fits our human experience. By contrast, the 'uncreated man' of Darwinism has no real need for a sophisticated set of emotions; powers of observation and reason; morality; abilities in research and systemization; and culture making. The evolutionary fable of Darwinism is but a nihilistic tale with no concrete foundation or accounting for human dignity, morality, and meaning.

OBJECTION 8. *“Morality is the result of social conditioning. There is nothing in man that is inherently tuned to morality—there are no moral absolutes in the universe. Without social training in morality, man is just a barbarian.”*

Your position is not supported by the Bible or by human experience. Anthropologists who have penetrated people groups who had never previously had any contact with the West

were amazed to find laws about honesty, property rights, and marital fidelity. In a tribe bordering the Amazon Basin, they found specific punishments to be in place for crimes against established laws.

The penalty for seducing one's neighbor's wife while the man of the house is out hunting is particularly interesting. The man who seduced his neighbor's wife is placed on the roof of a hut—then, the husband who was away hunting (unable to protect his wife from intruders, or lusting neighbors), is permitted to “hunt” the perpetrator with bow and arrow while the guilty party walks around unprotected on the roof of the hut.

Laws forbidding theft, rape, adultery were consistently taught and enforced. Even the marriage ceremony resembles ours in the West. The bride to be was sequestered with her maids for a time of beautification. Her wedding gifts were arranged on a blanket, then she was presented to her groom and vows were taken.

All of this fits the biblical record. Adam was fashioned in such a way that he possessed great intelligence and skill. Laws and human institutions (such as marriage) were given to ancient man by God. The concept that early man was a beetle-browed, knuckle-dragging goon is a layover from the fiction of evolution. The ancients wrote incredible literature; built structures (some of which were classified as wonders of the world); invented mechanisms to assist them in everything from medical care to wine making. We would expect nothing less from the creatures made in the image of God.

Human experience matches the reality that man, since the fall, is locked in history-long combat between good and evil. In a civilized society, those who defy its nation's laws and give in to evil are punished. Crime and punishment is a theme that fills human history. The greatest novels ever written reflect this immutable principle of moral cause and effect—of sowing and reaping.

We put lawbreakers in prison for the very reason that we believe they are moral free agents capable of moral self-reflection. The capacity for moral self-reflection (a detached objective examination of our ethical choices) is what differentiates us from a psychopath. Lawbreakers are apprehended and punished because we believe that the citizens of our country (and the members of the entire human race) are morally responsible to know and obey the laws of the land—moral laws which find their ultimate origin in God (Rom 13:1-7).

As mentioned, the ubiquitous theme in literature is the combat between antagonist and protagonist (between villain and hero). We crave justice—we want to see the oppressed vindicated—to see righteousness triumph—to see the oppressed liberated. This fills our books, dramas, and movie scripts. And, the reason it does is because it so closely reflects reality.

Darwinism has its head in the sand at this juncture, because in evolutionary theory there is no such thing as objective good and evil. There is no universal moral law, therefore the pervasive theme of good and evil locked in combat is but an illusion more easily explained by communist manifesto ideas such as differences in power (and not by right versus wrong).

Darwinism downplays, even excuses evil—denying its objective existence. After all, if all of our behavior is nothing more than our genes fooling us—then the crimes we commit are not something for which we bear ultimate responsibility—our crimes are traceable to our DNA. How can we blame a man since he has been determined by nature to do what he does?

Evolutionary theory removes the basis for moral responsibility—it completely erodes the foundations of personal culpability and jurisprudence. In a Darwinian-controlled court of ‘law’ the defense attorneys could always plead ‘diminished capacity’ on behalf of their defendants, “My client didn't know what he was doing your Honor he was the victim of his selfish genes.”

Scripture exposes this kind of folly by declaring that we are individually accountable to a

system of law that is higher than the law of the land. We are responsible to our Creator—all we do is done under His gaze, God is the personal, absolute Lawgiver before whom we live.

The reality of man as a moral creature actually fills our daily experience. God's Word tells us that all day long our consciences incessantly weigh all of our ethical choices. In that 'weighing' process—the conscience either accuses or defends each one of our ethical actions (Rom 2:12-16). That description of the 'busy conscience' describes our experience perfectly. Darwinism makes the conscience a mere product of social conditioning rather than what it actually is: the faculty of moral self-reflection; the evidence of God's moral mark upon us, and the evidence that God's judgment day cannot be avoided (Rev 20:11-15).

OBJECTION 9. *“What is God's ‘need’ that He should take the trouble to create the universe, then concern Himself with one planet—allowing it to be dominated by war, misery, death, disease, and injustice? I mean what's the point of all this? Why didn't He just make a race of mellow creatures that would love and obey perfectly?”*

First of all, God's authoritative, infallible perspective will appear absurd as long as a person is not reconciled to God (Col 1:19-21). Apart from reconciliation, men prefer darkness and spiritual ignorance (Jn 3:19-21). Fallen man's perspective is characterized by a twisted view of God UNTIL a work of salvation passes across his soul.

Prior to salvation, we peer at God from the polluted 'fish bowl' of our self-absorbed existence. We are oblivious to the fact that sin, like dirty water, is our environment. Like the proverbial goldfish—water, like sin, is our medium—we swim through it; breathe it; live in it. And, like the goldfish who doesn't know he is wet—the sinner doesn't think of himself as a transgressor (Rom 3:19-20). He is unable to transcend his own existential situation to objectively view his lawlessness in the sight of God (Prov 16:2).

Thus our efforts to objectively describe God's motives are colored and skewed by the fact that personal sin permeates our existence. From our fallen vantage point, we tend to see God as a threat, an intrusion, and an irritant. This of course corresponds to God's testimony about us—that none of us is able to reason accurately about eternal metaphysical realities UNTIL we have salvation through Christ. And, no one experiences salvation until they fear God (Prov 1:7).

Now as to your query as to why God would occupy Himself with our small planet with its seemingly endless history of abuses, wars, and miseries—I want to state that the Scriptural perspective (what God claims about himself and humanity) begins with the pervasive goodness of God and the original flawless beauty of His creation.

We must start there, for God alone can take His own measure and know His own mind comprehensively. He alone knows how wonderful He is—and before you sneer, please understand that according to His Word, every imaginable legal pleasure that you enjoy is from the Lord (Acts 14:16-17).

Each legal token of God's goodness, whether fine food, friendship, family, sleep, health, employment, the outdoors, or romantic love—is all traceable to the benevolence of our Creator. He claims that every speck of our happiness is ultimately traceable to Him (James 1:17). That is really where we must begin when investigating God's relation to His creation.

Scripture claims that God created everything *ex nihilo*—in other words, out of nothing. That is the claim of God in Scripture that He did not have preexistent matter to work with when He created the universe (Heb 6:1-3). The ramifications of creation *ex nihilo* are profound.

It means that God is Owner, Ruler, and Upholder of all that He has made. That includes

of course every molecule and cell in your body. And, as your Maker He exercises the rightful place as your Sovereign to tell you what to believe and how to live.

His laws which govern us are just, wise, and good. His goodness is therefore inseparable from His moral government over us. We may accurately say that His laws are the safeguard of our humanness, and of love (Deut 6:24-25; 32:47). For the violation of any of The Ten Commandments is always the violation of love. For example, if I slander you; steal from you; and hate you in my heart;—I am violating the commandment to love you as my neighbor.

Our decisions are intensely meaningful—God has vested humans with the power of choice. Our decisions in life are a function of our ‘free moral agency’—which means that our process of choice is not normally conducted by means of external compulsion. Instead, our choices are the expression of our God-given responsibility—our decisions flow from our moral natures—our decisions express our character—they show who we are on the inside.

Now Scripture claims that our Creator has placed us here to love, obey, worship, serve, and enjoy God. And, our faithfulness to this calling completely conditions how we get along in our earthly relationships. The Bible always traces man’s conflict with other men to rebellion against God as the ultimate cause (James 4:1-4).

Now as to why God concerns Himself with a planet that has gone haywire. Scripture asserts that man as the image of God is vested with the power to make choices that carry profound consequences. In fact the Word of God states that the significance of our choices will follow us into eternity. Whether those choices are for love, truth, and justice—or for lust, selfishness, and error—the significance of those choices will never be lost.

Therefore, the meaning of human history from the divine perspective must be of genuine concern to us—for the meaning of history and purpose for life belong together. Let God speak in His Word to answer your question.

History is a ‘moral tale’—it is a drama which will be consummated by Christ when He returns to judge the world and remove all evil—ultimately restoring the planet and its relations to a state of perfection. History is linear—not the endless ‘circle of life’ advocated in *Lion King*. History is moving toward a predetermined end in which God will ‘settle’ all scores.

Then, history will prove to be the record of the honoring and the dishonoring of God and the public record of what happens to each individual as a result. At the consummation of the ages, God will forever hang error on the gallows; and the righteous will shine like the stars forever—they will have their reward (Dan 12:3).

From our cloudy perspective in the goldfish bowl, we do not see how God will make sense out of our enigmatic existence. We have never known sinlessness, perfect love, and unbroken harmony—for us death and decay are ‘normal’. But, according to Scripture, death and sin are intruders which God intends to ultimately put away forever (1 Cor 15:50-58; Is 25:6-9). Death is not normal—it is a cruel force—it is man’s great enemy. The Bible traces the cause of death to human sin (Rom 5:12; 6:23).

The glorious news of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that God has sent His Son to conquer death, man’s greatest enemy. The empty tomb of Christ is proof that Jesus succeeded in this mission. Christ came to put away death and to vanquish the enemies of man’s eternal soul. This is how God will make sense out of our seemingly endless cycle of despair and corruption.

The gospel is the news that God, from the outside has entered our dilemma through Christ in order to accomplish man’s rescue and recovery. Biblically this is the meaning of history. The seemingly endless cycles of despair, selfishness, and suffering will be brought to an end. At the consummation of history Christ will return to finish what He accomplished in His earthly visit 2000 years ago—He will round up all rebellion—forever confining it. He will

remove the cause of suffering (Rev 21:1-8).

Then, when the kingdom of this world will have become His (Rev 11:15)—He will bring heaven down to earth, and He will dwell with His people. All of this will redound to the glory, reputation, and honor of God. He will share Himself with His people in a face to face relationship. He will fulfill what He had promised from the very beginning—He will have conquered all evil through Christ, the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15).

The promise of this sinless world to come will sound too fantastic unless one has experienced the particular goodness of God in His forgiving love through Jesus Christ. God's forgiveness to His people now is the down payment and warranty of the coming kingdom of God. Pardon for sin is the necessary gift of grace in order to think rationally about God and His purposes.

Because we carry a defiled conscience, we're on the defensive—we take man's side against God—and not God's side against our own sin. While unbelieving, unforgiven, and under the condemnation of God, we will find ourselves using our intellect to forge weapons against the true knowledge of God. Only when we have tasted God's grace in pardon will we gladly devote our faculties of reason and intellect to the knowledge and honor of God (1 Cor 2:15-16).

OBJECTION 10. *“How can you say that God giving us the Son of God is a real sacrifice on His part since God took Him back to heaven only three days after His Son's death?”*

First of all, the Word of God claims that God speaks authoritatively and infallibly through Christ (Heb 1:1-3). And today, even in our most secular universities 80% of students still believe that Jesus Christ is the greatest Person who ever lived.

Christ's ministry of love and truth was validated by the miracles He did (Jn 10:38). His miraculous works were not primarily demonstrations of supernatural power (their source); but demonstrations of love—for His miracles provided deliverance from deforming diseases, death, demons, and hunger. Christ's mission was punctuated by mercy reaching into the lives of sinners. Now lest we take a revisionist view of Christ's life, we must pay attention to the fact that Christ's ministry was filled with discourses which addressed the human condition. No biblical author spoke more frequently about the reality of hell than Jesus Christ (Mark 8:38; 9:48).

Christ spoke authoritatively as the 'Great Physician' of the human condition—He was a master at communicating God's diagnosis of our standing before Him. Jesus used simple words and examples. He likened the sinner to a bad tree with bad fruit (Matt 7:16-19). He told us that we all have a bad record in heaven, and that we need a new heart from Him and a new record in heaven from Him. This is of course humbling news.

Jesus made it clear that apart from receiving a new nature (a new heart) from Him we will continue on our course of self-destruction (Matt 7:13-14). Our natural bent is to engage in self-justification said Jesus (Luke 16:15). We resist God's diagnosis of our condition. Christ drove home the truth that none of us come to the Word of God in an unbiased manner.

According to Christ, “We love darkness and hate the light because our deeds are evil” (Jn 3:19-21). We may posture as unbiased truth-seekers—but actually, said our Lord, man's sin kills his objectivity when it comes to the things of God. The solution must come from outside of us—from the grace of God. We must become “new creatures”(2 Cor 5:17)—only when our hearts have been changed will we handle the Scriptures with reverence and faithfulness.

When unredeemed men sit in judgment upon God's Word, it is delusional from start to finish. No man has ever sat in judgment on God's Word—because God gave His Word to examine us (not the other way around). Our Creator sees into the depths of our being. He sees the most intimate and secret motives of our hearts (Heb 4:12).

Now in this objection about a 'real sacrifice' in the Father offering His Son—you expressed your doubts about the legitimacy of the biblical claim. Might I suggest that you are getting hung up on the meaning of the word "sacrifice." We use the word sacrifice in our experience to mean something that is extremely costly to us. In Scripture, sacrifice commonly means the slaying of a substitute which provides an atonement or covering for sins.

This is how Jesus' death is described in numerous places. I would caution you though to be careful not to trample this holy ground of Christ's sacrifice with your speech. The fact that Christ was resurrected the third day does not reduce the cost of the Father sending Christ. I can see into your premise I believe—it seems that you are suggesting that the Father was only bereaved of Christ during the three days He was entombed.

But there are a couple things to keep in mind if we are to handle the biblical account with reverence. First, Christ, the Creator of angels, became lower than angels in order to accomplish man's redemption (Phil 2:5-11; Heb 2:7ff). Second, the incarnation of Christ, the "God-man" was costly to God. For God would have to see His beloved Son tormented on Calvary's cross. And the Father would witness the alienation of the Son while the Son expired under divine wrath—becoming a curse for sin (Gal 3:13). With all respect I ask you to take care as you speak of Christ's redeeming work—for the Scriptures tell us something remarkable, the Father was "pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief" for our sakes (Is 53:10).

Scripture speaks of God's infinite generosity in not withholding the gift of the Son from the human race (Rom 8:31-32). Let this thought penetrate your understanding—God's commitment to man's redemption extends into all eternity. For in the eternal heavens to come, Christ is forever both God and man. God is in this for the long run. In Christ, divinity and humanity are forever united. Every man, woman, and child who has ever lived will either stand before the risen Christ as their Judge (Acts 17:31), or their Savior (Titus 2:14). God in human form is who will we face after death (Jn 5:19-29).

Hopefully I have brought some clarity to your objection about the costliness to the Father in sending His Son. Now let me explain what the Scriptures declare about Christ's substitutionary sacrifice. Because Christ is sinless, and because He is both God and man, He was able to endure the wrath of eternal hell in 6 hours during His crucifixion. The penalty we could not exhaust during billions of years in eternal hell—He dissipated in those 6 hours. Now this has everything to do with you because if you do not flee to Christ as your sin-bearer—you will have to bear the penalty of your own sin forever in hell (Jn 3:36).

The gift of Christ is measureless, infinite, and invaluable. Scripture states that Christ was bearing the sins of His people, "And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed" (1 Pet 2:24).

Christ's sacrifice provides what we have no hope of providing in ourselves: *forgiveness; pardon; acceptance; safety; belonging; eternal life*. The Word emphasizes that it was our penalty that Christ was suffering, "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit" (1 Pet 3:18).

Those who know themselves to be sinners are bidden by God drop their biases and bow before God's testimony concerning His Son. It is a sad commentary on the human condition that we will believe the barber, the butcher, the newsman; but not the God of the universe. God's

testimony concerning His Son is sealed with the blood of His Son. If we deny God's testimony concerning His Son, the Scriptures state that we make God a liar (1 Jn 5:10-13).

Who Jesus is—is inseparable from what He has said and what He has done. Our 'token' tributes to Him as the most important individual who ever lived are empty unless we bow before Him as the Lord of the cosmos and the Lord of sinners (Ps 2).

CONCLUSION: The atheist scoffs at the idea that the universe and human history exist for the glory of God. But the Bible testifies to the reality that God's glory is the supreme reason for existence (Is 43:7, 21; Rom 11:33-36).

When the atheist reasons about life, he starts with himself rather than with God—therefore he assumes that if there were a god—he must exist for man's interests. Therefore reasoning from this perspective it is an easy step of logic to postulate that this god has failed to fulfill his obligations to man—and therefore his existence is suspect.

Now without the God of Scripture as the foundation and reference point for rationality, the atheist 'normalizes' death, evil, suffering, and injustice; thus destroying facts as he gathers them. For according to God's Word, there is no objective philosophy of history without the biblical interpretive 'grid' of *creation; fall; redemption; restoration*. Without this 'lens' man wanders blindly in the darkness of his speculations (Rom 1:18-20).

God sees this folly—that the skeptic 'covers his own eyes' and claims not to perceive the veritable 'ocean' of light of divine revelation around him (Ps 19). Man in his rebellion prefers absurdity and folly rather than bowing to His Maker. The rightful claims of the Creator stir up the enmity in the sinner's heart—no wonder the Word says, "The fool has said in his heart, there is no God" (Ps 14:1).

God's Word has been preserved by divine care. Its accuracy has also been protected by God working through human agency. Scribes designated a numerical value of each letter of the Hebrew alphabet. When copying a manuscript they would add up the numbers from each line and from each page—guaranteeing a faithful reproduction.

Those skeptics who have suggested that years of copying manuscripts have left us with an inaccurate set of Scriptures are wrong. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls gave us corroboration of the fact that the Old Testament Scriptures we have today are precisely the identical Scriptures used 2100 years ago—before Christ was born.

When I hear scoffers state, "The Bible was written by man—therefore it is not the infallible Word of God"—my common reply is, "Do you believe God has ever authoritatively revealed Himself and His truth to man?" "If not in the Bible; then where—how did you decide that God could not use men to reliably *inscripturate* His infallible Word?" "How did you become convinced that men would falsify God's Word?" "What concrete evidence have you found that Holy Scripture has been falsified by man?" "How did you do your research?" "What is your criterion for truth and knowledge?" "Can you give a *scientific* definition for truth?" "May I accurately conclude that your original premise about an unreliable Bible is because you've found man's nature to be dishonest?" "If so, how is it that you regard yourself to be more honest concerning the truths of God than the biblical authors, many of whom died for the truth?"

“Since Christianity is an incredibly demanding worldview; how would you know or certain that your reason for rejecting Christianity was not fallibility; but actually your unwillingness to follow the Lord Jesus Christ?” “After all, Scripture attributes a person’s rejection of God’s Word to a rebellious heart that rejects God’s authority” (Jn 3:16-21, 36).

“May I show you from the Bible why God created you?” You were created to find truth, love, certainty, life, and fellowship in God. In Christ, God has spoken infallibly about the most important issues imaginable; about life, death, truth, and eternity. Everything hinges upon God’s testimony in Christ (Heb 1:1-3).

Before you state what your criterion is for reliability; consider the men and women who have gone before you who dedicated their lives to the study of *textual criticism*, and to the study of the *historicity* of Holy Scripture. If you have never studied any research on the reliability of the Bible; go to the following website: [Evidence for God](#).

Man’s only hope, in his hopelessness and helplessness is the gospel of Jesus Christ. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16).

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Our instruction from Holy Scripture (NASB):

That we are chosen to proclaim the good news: "But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;" 1 Pet 2:9

That we are responsible to share the Gospel: "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." 2 Cor 5:20

That we are to prepare to share: "but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;" 1 Peter 3:15

That we are to have discourse with the unsaved: "And He (Jesus) said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." Mk 16:15

Our example from Scripture: And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ." Acts 17:2-

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