

**EXPLANATION:** In hopes of turning this into a book with minimal additional work and editing, I am writing it in book form, referencing it as chapters rather than lessons. I am writing it in chunks, with enough for each Sunday (or two), even if I don't have the chapter entirely finished. The first chapter, for example, still have a decent amount of writing to add, but it is written sufficiently (as contained here) for at least one session of teaching thus far. As part of the class, we will still maintain our points for home! So we begin:

Why I Am Not...  
By Mark Lanier

Introduction: A Legal Primer

I live with two feet, one in the world of law and one in the world of faith. I earn my living. I work in courtrooms across America and throughout the western world. The life blood of a just court is truth. Courts exist to ferret out the truths that matter most in life. In courtrooms, disputes get resolved peaceably rather than by force. Decisions are made whether someone should forfeit their freedoms, their property, or even their lives. This is where we determine the truth of which divorcing parent is fitter to rear a child. When operating at their best, courts are civilization's best tool for getting to the core truth about life greatest issues.

My other foot is in the world of faith. As a disclaimer, and by way of introduction the reader should know that I am a religious person. I believe there is a God and that he has revealed himself to humanity. I am a Christian by faith. It is important that I am upfront about that as I write this book.

Both of those feet, the one walking in law and the one walking in faith, belong to me. I move freely between those two worlds, and actually find the worlds merge. This book is a fruit of that merger. As a lawyer, my legal training, both in law school and on the job, has affected the way I think, evaluate options, and make decisions. It intersects with my faith in what I believe and why I believe it. I am first and foremost, a man of evidence. My life's work is built on evidence and arguments. Without it, my law firm doors close. So in my faith walk, I analyze evidence and arguments. It is the way I think.

The goal behind the book is for me to walk through with you the reader the reasons – the rational, thinking reasons—why I am a Christian instead of an atheist, an agnostic, a Buddhist, Hindu, or Mormon. (Yes, many of my Mormon friends, should they read this, will quickly rejoin my previous sentence because they consider Mormonism to be Christianity. On this point we disagree, and I will explain why in the chapter, on "Why I Am Not a Mormon".) I will also consider carefully the Jewish faith, where my conclusions may surprise some.

Law school begins with an orientation. For most of one week, the professors give a warm-up to the incoming class, explaining some of the basics of what lies ahead. 35 years ago, I was one of those students listening to a professor explain that law school would change us.

“It changes the way you think,” he explained. He continued,

“You won’t notice it at first, but there will be signs. One morning over breakfast you will find yourself reading the warranty on the toaster – and enjoying it!”

Law school drives critical thinking and precision of thought. Generally, most students already have a bent toward that direction. The Law School Admission Test (“LSAT”) that every law school applicant must take is basically a logic test. If you can’t score well on the logic test, you don’t even get into law school, much less make it out with a degree.

Law students take many different legal courses, and each instructs the lawyers-to-be how to research carefully, how to think logically, and how to identify errors in thought. Sometimes the teaching does so directly (one of our courses was called “Research and Writing”); other times the new skill set underlies the legal rulings or rules of law you learn. For example, a law school “evidence” class is typically based on The Federal Rules of Evidence. Those rules are the culmination of western thought on how to discern relevant, careful evidence suitable for establishing guilt or innocence with enough confidence that we can take someone’s life or property.

The Rules of Evidence are based on logic. The rules include logical determinations of whether evidence is relevant or irrelevant to an argument. There are rules that inspect and ensure the authenticity of evidence. In addition to the actual rules, students read and learn cases where courts have interpreted those rules. These case decisions become additional laws that guide other courts. For example, these courts have set up guidelines for the logical decision of whether opinion testimony meets academic and logical rigors necessary for consideration.

In a trial, lawyers use those rules to present disputes to juries and other tribunals for “findings of fact.” Lawyers have to become adept also at identifying arguments that do not meet the necessary logical rigors for consideration. This is what frequently makes the television and movies when a lawyer stands up saying something like, “Objection, your honor, assumes facts not in evidence!”

### *Evidence - Types*

In this book, I will be discussing the evidence for and against certain beliefs. There are a lot of people who speak of “evidence” who have a very limited view of it. Evidence in the legal arena is all-encompassing. By that I mean that courts use scientific evidence, which

is very handy in assessing claims about the material world of science, but fairly limited in other areas. Courts use evidence of all types, as long as the evidence is credible in the field in which it is offered. Scientific evidence, for example, can never be used to prove a motive or the knowledge of an individual, yet those are things that clearly exist and have to be proven in certain cases.

These rules of evidence, and the legal system built up with those rules, provide the best tools our society has developed to answer difficult questions about matters past, present, and future. We figure out things as diverse as whether someone ran a red light, whether spouses love each other, and whether there is likely to be a need for surgical intervention years down the road.

Sometimes there is “direct evidence” for the matters being proven. By this we mean there is an eye witness who can testify to the matter based on personal knowledge. This is the person who says,

“Donny Driver ran the red light. I know this because I saw him driving a car through the light at a time where I could also see his light was red.”

Most times, however, we don’t have direct testimony. Most times the testimony is “circumstantial.” That means the circumstances lead us to the conclusion. For example, if Donny Driver hit and killed Plaintiff Peggy, we might need to prove how much Peggy suffered from the collision before dying. Without Peggy to give us direct testimony, we would need to rely on circumstantial testimony. We would offer evidence of how she would have likely suffered, based on the trauma, and for how long she suffered.

Circumstantial evidence is just as reliable as direct evidence. Often it is the only type of evidence available. It makes sense that it can be as valuable if we consider the classic illustration of a murder case. If we have a murder committed where there is an actual eye witness, that witness can testify and the defendant be convicted. The testimony of the eyewitness would be considered direct testimony. The testimony directly addresses whether or not a defendant is guilty.

Circumstantial testimony can also serve to convict a murderer. This is important because very few murders have eyewitnesses. Circumstantial testimony includes things like discovery of a murder weapon, finding fingerprints of the defendant on the murder weapon, motive, opportunity, invalid alibis, etc. Judges routinely instruct juries that they are to consider circumstantial evidence.

I have tried many fraud cases. In fraud cases, one must prove that the defendant intentionally deceived another. I have yet to see a fraud case where there is direct evidence of fraud. Intent is a personal, subjective thought process. There are no eyewitnesses to intent other than the one who is actually deceiving. No one comes right out and says, “Yes,

I misled Mr. So and So on purpose! I wanted him to rely on my misrepresentation to his own detriment!” We prove intent through circumstantial evidence: motive, knowledge, opportunity, etc.

### *Evidence – Credibility*

Courts also recognize that some evidence is more credible than other evidence. This might be because of the kind of evidence, for example, a scientific answer to whether benzene can cause acute myeloid leukemia, but more often it involves many factors including the reliability of a witness. Credibility is very important. It determines how authoritative the evidence is deemed to be.

For example, I recently tried a case over whether or not a type of hip implant was defective. The implant was made of a metal ball rubbing against a metal cup. We believed that the metal debris from the rubbing had destroyed the tissue in my plaintiffs’ hips (there were five plaintiffs in this trial). I put on my case, setting out the evidence from tissue samples, from documents, and from an array of experts, including one of the world’s preeminent orthopedic surgeons who said he never used metal-on-metal hip implants because of concerns over their safety. After I concluded my case, the defendant manufacturer’s lawyers began putting on their case. One of their witnesses was an orthopedic surgeon who swore that metal-on-metal hip implants were fine.

The witness made a good impression at first, but then I started to cross-examine him. I began my cross-examination by pointing out that the witness had actually received royalties from implant manufacturers. In other words, he was getting paid by the companies that made products like the one at issue in the case. This was relevant on whether or not he had an unbiased opinion. The actual transcript of the trial reads,

Q. (by me) “You’re one of these royalty type people. You’ve been paid by my count \$6,870,362.69 in royalties, haven’t you?”

A. “I actually don’t accept that number. I don’t think it’s even been close to that.”

I then began to detail what he was paid. I listed one type of implant called a “Mallory-Head” system where I asserted he’d been paid \$1.4 million dollars for that implant alone. The transcript recorded his response,

A. “I think you’re getting me mixed up with somebody else. I’ve never had royalty in the Mallory-Head system...I think you’re just making things up. I’ll try to keep you on the straight and narrow, but already you have said things that are untrue.”

At this point credibility was in play, both his and mine. If I could prove he had received those royalties, the jury would know he either had a very poor memory, or he was dishonest in his testimony. Either way, his credibility would be shot.

The judge rested us for the day and we started again the next morning. I went straight back to the credibility issue. The record from the next morning reads,

Q. Sir, one of the things you said yesterday that I found disturbing -- it's on page 248 of the record starting at line 12. You said to me: "I think you're just making things up." And you said it with earnestness in your voice. Do you remember that testimony?

A. Yes, I do.

I then began showing check after check labeled "royalty payment," made out to the doctor, mailed to his home address, for the Mallory-Head system, and showing that for years he regularly received royalty payments and that they added up well in excess of the amount I had asserted.

The jury had this doctor's evidence, but his credibility was next to nothing. He wasn't honest, and it was evident. That called into question the entirety of his testimony. Now just because someone is dishonest, it doesn't mean that everything they say is wrong. But it increases caution and suspicion about what they say, especially if it is solely opinion testimony.

So as I weigh evidence, and as a jury weighs evidence in the legal system, nothing is taken at face value. It needs to be weighed. Motives of the source should be examined. Credibility should be assessed.

### *Burden of Proof*

By way of introduction, there is one more important trial concept to be discussed – "the burden of proof." This is a basic concept about which side has the burden or obligation to prove an issue.

I spend most of my professional life as a plaintiff's lawyer. (In litigation, the person bringing the case is called the "plaintiff.") That means that day in and day out, all across the country, I go into courts before judges and juries in an effort to prove that my client has been wronged, that such wrong caused a damage, and that my client is entitled to recover for that damage.

How is that done? I have what the law calls a "burden of proof." I have to prove certain things to allow my client to recover. If I am unable to prove my case, then my client loses. It is that simple.

Now while I am the lawyer for the aggrieved, called the “plaintiff’s lawyer,” there is a lawyer for the party or parties on whom I am placing the blame. These lawyers are called “defense lawyers.” They defend those accused of wrong doing.

If I, as the plaintiff’s lawyer am unable to prove my case, if I am unable to “carry my burden of proof,” then the defense wins. The defense lawyer doesn’t have to do anything at all to win, as long as I haven’t first proven my case.

In court there are special procedures built around this understanding. When presenting evidence and the “case,” the plaintiffs always go first. As the plaintiff’s lawyer, I start and by using witnesses and documents, I present facts that might prove my case. After I “rest,” it is the defense lawyer’s turn. Before the defense lawyer starts, however, that lawyer has the ability to ask the judge to stop the case immediately, right in the middle, as it were. The defense lawyer stands up and asks the judge, “Your honor, the defense asks for a directed verdict.” In other words, “direct that the plaintiff loses because the plaintiff hasn’t carried the burden of proof.” If the plaintiff doesn’t offer sufficient proof, the plaintiff loses. Game over.

Once the plaintiff has offered sufficient proof to allow one, if one chose to believe such evidence, to vote in favor of the plaintiff, then the defense puts on a case refuting the evidence of the plaintiff. Once all the evidence is in, the jury (or judge in certain cases), makes a decision of whether the evidence is sufficient to prove the plaintiff’s case. This is the final decision of who wins, but even here, it is a question of whether the plaintiff has “carried the burden of proof.” Has the plaintiff “proven” her or his case?

Something important happens here. Enforcing the burden of proof means that some things that are true, are still lost in a court of law. For example, if my case centers on Driver Dan running a red light and crashing into Plaintiff Patty, then I have to prove Driver Dan ran the red light. Now Driver Dan might have actually run the red light, but I might not have any proof. Driver Dan might be dead and unable to testify. Plaintiff Patty might be in a coma and unable to testify. There might be no witnesses to testify. So I am left unable to carry the burden of proof, and I lose the case, even though actual historical events were that Driver Dan ran the red light.

Who has the burden of proof is key in any case. If we are to assume that Driver Dan ran the red light *unless Driver Dan can prove otherwise*, then I can win the case with no witnesses. For Driver Dan would not be able to carry his burden of proof. Of course in American courts, such is not the case. Most times, the plaintiff is first required to prove the case, not the defendant, although if the defendant is asserting their own affirmative contention, they may have a burden to prove that contention.

The burden of proof will be important as we go through this book. I have tried to bring

together authentic and credible “witnesses” for the various faiths under consideration. By that I mean that rather than write up why non-Buddhists don’t believe in Buddhism, I have tried to use the Buddhist authors and writings to describe that faith. Similarly, I use the writings of atheists for their reasons for believing in no God, rather than me setting forth my wording of the atheists’ arguments for their faith (many of my atheist friends are already objecting saying, “atheism isn’t faith! It’s reason!” We’ll see to that in the next chapter.)

So with this legal primer in place, with appropriate explanations of methodology and my disclaimer, let us begin, “Why I Am Not...” I invite you to weigh the evidence with me and consider toward my conclusions in the final pages.

As I say each day I go to work, “May it please the court...”

## Chapter 1

### Why I Am Not an Atheist

We must begin this chapter by carefully explaining three terms: “theism,” “atheism” and “agnosticism.” Both “theism” and “atheism” come from the Greek word “*theos*,” which means “god.” In English, we often add “-ism” to the end of a word to indicate a belief or something with which we agree. For example, “capitalism” is a belief in an economic system built around people keeping capital they generate. “Socialism” is a belief in an economic system structured on the social network, or community at large, receiving the benefits generated by the community at large. This same principle works with the Greek “*theos*” or “god.” So “theism” means a belief in the existence of god or gods.

Now the Greeks also had some letters that they would use to attach to the beginning of words, affecting the word’s meaning. We do the same in English. In Greek, if one attaches the letter “a” to the beginning of a word, it means the negative of what would otherwise be said. This is like the English letters “im-” or “un-”. In English, these letters function to turn the “possible” into the “impossible.” It takes people who are “noticeable” and makes them “unnoticeable.”

Using Greek, the letter a- set before “theism” brings us “atheism.” Since “theism” means a belief in a god, “atheism” means a belief there is no god or gods. Atheism is *different* from “agnosticism,” a concept we will deal with in the next chapter. “Agnosticism” comes from the Greek word “*gnosis*,” which denotes “knowing” or “knowledge.” When you attach the Greek “a-” to the beginning of the word, you get “agnosticism,” which means “a belief of uncertainty, in other words, agnosticism is a belief system of uncertainty as in, ‘I don’t know if there’s a god or not.’”<sup>1</sup>

So when someone claims to be an atheist, they are claiming to believe that there is no god. When someone claims to be an agnostic, they are claiming to be uncertain. They do not know whether or not there is a god.

In this chapter I discuss why I am not an atheist. In the next chapter, I discuss why I am not an agnostic.

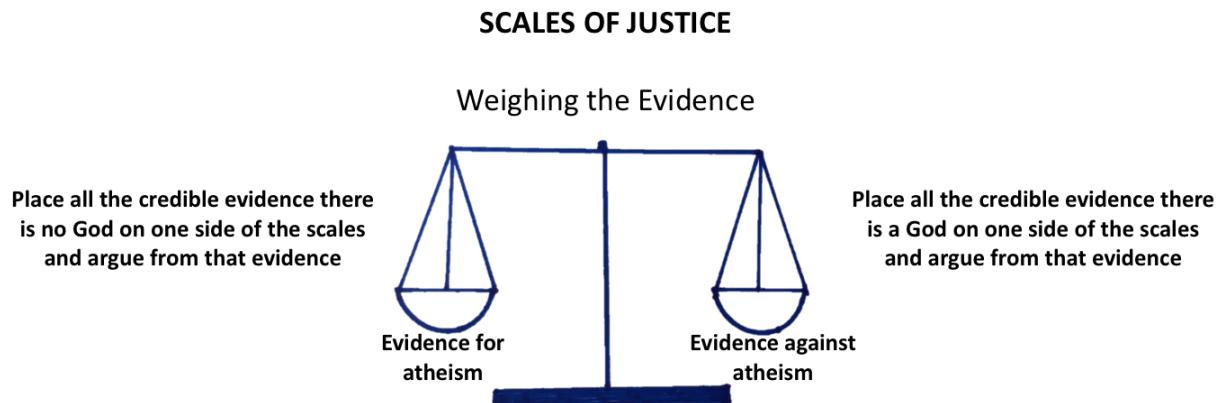
#### *Atheism and the Burden of Proof*

Many courthouses across America have sculptures or pictures of “scales of justice.” These are based on the idea of the burden of proof, but take it a step further. In deciding what is true and real, the decision-maker is to place the evidence into scales. There is the evidence

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<sup>1</sup> These terms, based on an ancient language, are important to understanding modern discussions on this subject. As we will see later in this chapter, some of the supposed brightest misunderstand these terms, making illogical arguments in the process.

for a position and the evidence against the position. Then we put the evidence on one side of the issue on one side of the scales, while we put the contrary evidence on the other side of the scales. In this way, we can weigh the evidence and decide who has proven what.



I have sought to do that for atheism. Assessing the evidence and arguments, measuring the credibility, leaves me fully convinced that I cannot be an atheist.

#### *Evidence for atheism*

The reason I am not an atheist boils down to this weighing of evidence. I put the credible evidence for atheism on one side of the scales and then I put the credible evidence against atheism on the other. When I do so, the scales clearly tilt against atheism.

For evidence in favor of the position there is no God, I went to the most vocal proponents of a movement often termed, “the new atheism.” In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, four voices came forth and were often labeled, “the Four Horsemen of the New Atheism.” They are Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, and the now deceased Christopher Hitchens. Each of these gentlemen wrote best selling books asserting their atheism with an almost evangelical fervor.

I selected their books in an effort to see how the prophets of atheism go about proving their belief God does not exist. I wanted to list their evidence against the existence of God on one side of the scales to compare it to the evidence for the existence of God. I wanted them to carry their burden of proof, and show me why reason dictates there is no God.

I also went to the Internet and tried to find the most substantive websites as well as the more prominent websites arguing that there is no God. The arguments on the Internet were even less impressive than the books, although that might be because they seem more tailored to people who might want to skim the ideas without considering them in depth.

I came away disappointed. No one had much real credible proof there is no God. All they did is harangue against religion and its errors, asserting that faith exists in a region of the mind (which, of course is true for faith that there is no God as well as faith that there is a God), and they did so, using logical fallacies, one right after the other.

I have tried to assess their credibility individually, as well as the credibility of their arguments. Several of them have some impressive credentials, and to an untrained eye, their writings might seem persuasive. I was disillusioned and somewhat frustrated.

A logical fallacy is the rhetorical (or verbal) equivalent of the magician's sleight of hand. It gives an illusion of making sense, but once the trick (or fallacy) is exposed, the deception ends. Logical fallacies are not easy to detect, especially to the untrained eye. They are optical illusions of the mind. They fool you and can be very deadly at persuading you to accept an illogical viewpoint. I read the books of the four horsemen and found them to be textbooks for logical fallacies.

The books do not remotely offer any substantive proof that God doesn't exist. At best, they tear down reasons for believing in God. Those are two vastly different things. Let me explain with the red light example used earlier. If I am in court arguing that Driver Dan ran a red light and hit Plaintiff Patty, and I have a witness, Blind Betty. I put Blind Betty on the stand and she says that she saw Driver Dan run a red light. Then the defense attorney proves that Blind Betty was not wearing her glasses at the time and wasn't able to reliably see the color of the light. Now, the defense attorney may have destroyed my evidence, but that doesn't mean that Driver Dan didn't run the red light. It just means that I haven't proven it. So it is with these preachers of atheism. They are good at attacking certain aspects of religion and belief, but they never offer rational or substantive proof that there is no God.

#### CAN YOU PROVE A NEGATIVE?

*Some might argue, "You can't prove a negative. You can't prove that nothing exists." That itself is a logical fallacy. In the chapter on agnosticism, I will explain this fallacy in greater detail, but suffice it to say here that one can confidently say, "There is no elephant in the driveway" (assuming there isn't one) by marshalling a fair degree of proof. I.e., "Elephants are large. Elephants are visible to the human eye. I am looking at my driveway. If an elephant were there, there is no place it could hide. It would be visible. I do not see anything that could even remotely be considered an elephant. Therefore, there is no elephant in my driveway."*

A primary example is Sam Harris's book, *The End of Faith*. Harris uses many textbook examples of logical fallacies in skewing his concepts of religion, but never offers substantive arguments or proof that God doesn't exist. It is as if the non-existence of God is his default. It is not based on any substantive reason other than his disdain for his

perceptions of religion. Even there, however, his reasoning is a text book exam for identifying logical fallacies.

If we were to put *The End of Faith*, and Harris under the scrutiny of cross examination, the logical fallacies of his magician's slight of hand in attempting to end faith and foster atheism is readily revealed. Consider, for example, his first chapter entitled, "Reason in Exile." This chapter is a key to understanding his atheism. He believes that the reasons for believing a god exists are all fallacious; therefore, he posits, there must be no god.

Of course, I have already demonstrated the logical problem with this reasoning, using Driver Dan and the red light example, but with Harris it's worse than that. His efforts to claim that those who believe in God have sent their reasoning ability into exile. In fact, this title more aptly describes Harris's argumentation. Here are my "legal objections" and the logical fallacies Harris blithely dances across the pages.

#### *Ad Hoc Rescue, Appeal to Emotion, and Relevance*

This fallacy arises when someone so desperately wants to believe or support their position that has no evidence, that when there is a problem with the position, they make up an alternate reason to justify their unsupported position.

The idea that there is no God is not supported by proof of his non-existence, so then as Harris tries to unfold his arguments that are attempts at destroying faith in religious beliefs, Harris just makes up new facts to cover his errors (an *ad hoc rescue*). For example, Harris tries to point to religion as the cause of human atrocity. He gives a chilling story of a religious zealot blowing up a bus.

He makes up details added to increase your pity. This is a typical logical fallacy found in arguments labeled an "appeal to emotion." In courtrooms, the judge would give an instruction to the jury not to let sympathy play a part in their decision and anyone who was so tied to sympathy that they could not fairly follow the judge's instruction would be excused and not allowed to serve on the jury. These appeals to emotion are notorious for confusing a real logical and evidence-based argument.

A trial lawyer's ears perk up to a likely appeal to emotions whenever an opposing advocate brings including details that are irrelevant to the real argument (a "relevance" fallacy). Irrelevant facts in Harris's made-up story include his personalizing of the family that gets blown up.

The couple at his side appears to be shopping for a new refrigerator. The woman has decided on a model, but her husband worries that it will be too expensive. He indicates another one in a brochure that lies open on her lap.<sup>2</sup>

Obviously the refrigerator and brochure have nothing to do with the argument being made. Their function is to make the reader more appalled at the story and more emotional in response. This is not a logical argument; it is an emotional manipulation in the guise of an argument.

#### *Appeal to Instinct, Overgeneralization and Assuming Facts not in Existence*

After giving the story, Harris makes an absurd deduction that has no logical basis. It is a textbook illustration of the logical fallacy often called “appeal to instinct” as well as a fallacy of “overgeneralization.” Harris says, referring to the young man who blew himself up along with the bus,

Why is it so easy, then, so trivially easy—you-could-almost-bet-your-life-on-it easy—to guess the young man’s religion?<sup>3</sup>

Of course this is an appeal not only to instincts, but to prejudices. Students of history will find other examples of people who kill others and themselves in the process without religion as the drawing card. Harris fights against this, however, and makes a factually incorrect error, asserting it as commonplace knowledge:

A glance at history, or at the pages of any newspaper, reveals that ideas which divide one group of human beings from another, only to unite them in slaughter, generally have their roots in religion.<sup>4</sup>

It is notable that all of these logical fallacies are found in the first three substantive pages of chapter 1. Why are they there? It seems that reading this is supposed to leave the reader concerned. “Oh no,” the reader is to think, “religion is a bad thing!”

This stinging start to Harris’s book works subtly to make the reader alarmed that unthinking adherence to religion is destructive, that religious zeal is destructive, and that religious commitment leads to the atrocities of history. He is laying the groundwork to destroy one’s faith by thinking that faith is not a good thing after all.

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<sup>2</sup> Harris, Sam, “The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason” (ibook edition 2004), at p. 16

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, at 17.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, at 18.

The fallacy of this logic is clearly demonstrated by a fair and reasonable assessment of evidence. Here is a better construction of the *whole* truth, without the coloring of his alarmism, fallacious reasoning, and one-sided presentation.

1. Religion can be destructive. History has shown this. It can destroy, deface, detract, hurt society, culture, individual growth and more.
2. Religion can also be constructive. History has shown this as well. It can build, beautify, enrich, and contribute to society, culture, individual growth, and more.

A good illustration of points one and two above is the history of slavery in the United States. People abused religion and religious thinking to support slavery. This was found among some of those who claimed a Christian faith.<sup>5</sup> This is point one. Yet it was also the religious people who led to the abolition of slavery. The principal abolitionist of Britain's slave trade was the devout Christian William Wilberforce who famously wrote in his diary on October 28, 1787,

God Almighty has set before me two great objects, the suppression of the Slave Trade and Reformation of Morals.<sup>6</sup>

The great protestant preacher Charles Spurgeon called slavery, “the foulest blot.”<sup>7</sup> Methodist church founder John Wesley wrote a tract condemning slavery in 1774, taking slave traders to task based upon God and religious belief:

May I speak plainly to you? I must. Love constrains me: Love to *you*, as well as to those you are concerned with. Is there a GOD? you know there is. Is He a just GOD? Then there must be a state of retribution: A state wherein the just GOD will reward every man according to his works. Then what reward will he render to *you*? O think betimes! Before you drop into eternity! Think now, *He shall have judgment without mercy, that shewed no mercy.*<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See, Morrison, Larry R., “The Religious Defense of American Slavery Before 1830,” *The Journal of Religious Thought*, 37 (1980-81), and cites therein.

<sup>6</sup> C. MacFarlane & T. Thompson, *The comprehensive history of England, from the earliest period to the suppression of the Sepoy revolt*, (1876), p. 752.

<sup>7</sup> The Christian Cabinet, Dec. 14, 1859.

<sup>8</sup> Wesley, John, “Thoughts Upon Slavery,” (1774) *The Works of John Wesley*, (Zondervan reproduction of 1872 edition), vol. 11, p. 76.

This is point two. Religion has proven itself valuable.

That religion has worked positively and negatively is nothing new or surprising. Even in the times of the New Testament, the apostle Paul wrote of his concern that evil would masquerade as good.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Jesus spoke of wolves in sheep's clothing.<sup>10</sup> Evil exists. Good exists. You find both within religion and both outside religion. That brings up the next error in Harris's exposition on this point.

### 3. Harris is just plain wrong.

If you were to look up the major killings in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, deemed by most as the bloodiest of all centuries, the debate would rage over who was responsible for the most killed, Adolph Hitler, Joseph Stalin, or Mao Zedung. If any of those strike you as a religious man, then you might dig a little deeper.

Some argue Hitler was religious because of some of his references to religion and God in public speeches.<sup>11</sup> One wonders if these people really believe everything a politician says in public that he believes! If you read his private table conversations written up by his secretary, you see Hitler's mockery of the Christian faith. For example, on the nights of July 11-12, 1941, Hitler said,

The heaviest blow that ever struck humanity was the coming of Christianity.<sup>12</sup>

Later on October 14, 1941, Hitler said,

"The best thing is to let Christianity die a natural death.... Gradually the myths crumble."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:14.

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 7:15.

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., the writings on the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason & Science with an article by Michael Sherlock, "The Atheist Atrocities Fallacy," Oct. 23, 2014. <https://richarddawkins.net/2014/10/the-atheist-atrocities-fallacy-hitter-stalin-pol-pot/>.

Sherlock gets this from a speech Hitler gave in public. Would Sherlock always believe the claims of politicians made in public?

<sup>12</sup> Hitler, Adolph, *Hitler's Table Talk, 1941-1944: His Private Conversations*, translated by Norman Cameron and R.H. Stevens, (Enigma Books Electronic Version 2008), p. 80.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, at 152.

Setting aside Hitler, we can consider Josef Stalin. Stalin is credited with killing a minimum of 20 million people.<sup>14</sup> As with Hitler, there is a deep reach by many with an atheistic worldview to dispel the idea that Stalin became an atheist in his life. The definitive biography of Stalin as of World War 2 was by Yemelyan Yaroslavsky (1878-1943). Yaroslavsky quoted Stalin stating in 1940,

You know, they are fooling us, there is no God...all this talk about God is sheer nonsense.<sup>15</sup>

Yaroslavsky doubtlessly had a good idea of what Stalin meant. Yaroslavsky led the Communist party's League of the Militant Godless. He led the atheistic efforts for a good bit of communist Russia.

Now can we say definitively that Hitler, Stalin, Mao, or other historical figures responsible for the greatest numbers of death did so because they were atheists? Not necessarily, although that argument can certainly be made. But we certainly cannot find justification for Harris and others who claim that religious faith has brought about the atrocities of humanity.

It is possible to continue to take apart the writings of Harris, but these formative pages of his book bring forth typical issues with using him to prove there is no God.

We can examine the writings of the other horsemen and find the same intrinsic flaw. No one can prove their atheism, they simply have faith in that worldview and work to shift the burden of proof. Richard Dawkins hit the best-seller lists, and made substantial money selling his book, *The God Delusion*. Superficially, the book reads like an intellectual force of detailed analysis dispelling the myth of God and proving atheism. Upon close examination, however, Dawkins proof suffers similarly to Harris's.

Dawkins produces an entire chapter that makes one think, “We are finally going to get the proof there is no God!” The chapter is entitled, “Why there is Almost Certainly No God.” The problem is, the chapter doesn’t offer any proof on why there is almost certainly no God. Instead, the chapter works to destroy the views of creationism (that God created the world juxtaposed to the world and life evolving) and intelligent design, instead setting forth classical evolution as an explanation of origins. That is no proof there is no God.

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<sup>14</sup> Brent, Jonathan, “*Inside the Stalin Archives: Discovering the New Russia*, (Atlas & Co. 2008), at 3.

<sup>15</sup> *Landmarks in the Life of Stalin*, (Lawrence and Wishart 1942).

There are countless people who ascribe to the belief that the Bible is not to be read as a science book. I myself have published on this, and the list of those so writing is long. There are incredibly focused and credential bedrock Christian scholars who explain that reading Genesis (the book of the Old Testament with the clearest creation story) in its historical context should *not* be read as a science book.<sup>16</sup> If we recognize that God can exist and have set the knobs for the cosmos to unfold as it has, then evolution, true or not, is not a proof there is no God.

Dawkins also sets out another reason there is “almost certainly no God” in the chapter. His alternate reason is that the universe is so big, and its component parts are so small, a God capable of handling such would be too massive to conceive.

A God capable of continuously monitoring and controlling the individual status of every particle in the universe cannot be simple. His existence is going to need a mammoth explanation in its own right. Worse (from the point of view of simplicity), other corners of God’s giant consciousness are simultaneously preoccupied with the doings and emotions and prayers of every single human being—and whatever intelligent aliens there might be on other planets in this and 100 billion other galaxies.<sup>17</sup>

We can surmise from this that God’s “mind” would have to be a lot bigger than Richard Dawkins’s mind (or yours or mine). Bigger than even a computer!

God may not have a brain made of neurones, or a CPU made of silicon, but if he has the powers attributed to him he must have something far more elaborately and non-randomly constructed than the largest brain or the largest computer we know.<sup>18</sup>

With all due respect to Richard Dawkins, that is not proof there is no God. If the average human brain is a full three pounds of grey matter, we can give Dawkins a brain and a half, and his 4.5 pounds surely cannot be the standard for determining the make up of the mind of God.

This is a classic illustration of the arguing fallacy of a straw man. In a courtroom, one would rise and say, “Objection, calls for facts not in evidence.” In other words, Dawkins

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<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., the writings of John H. Walton, including *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (IVP 2009).

<sup>17</sup> Dawkins, Richard, *The God Delusion*, (First Mariner Books elect. ed. 2008), ch. 2, at 322.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, at 334.

is implying, if not explicitly saying, that God must be considered as a super human with a super brain, or a super computer. Dawkins is making his readers think in those terms. That makes it a bit absurd to believe in God, if we are trying to make him into a larger version of what we are or what we make.

But if God is not a human being, even a super-sized one. If God is not of the human race at all. If God is an entity or essence far beyond what humans are. If God is not made of the substance of this universe, then Dawkins is still left without any proof such a God doesn't exist. Dawkins returns to the world of those who must shift the burden of proof, doing so like Harris, while making light of the religious claims he selects.

If we try to chase down other notable intellectuals who have written for atheism, we will quickly come across the writings of popular astronomer Carl Sagan (1934-1996) and the British philosopher Bertrand Russell (1872-1970). Both are famous for their "proofs" there is no God.

Sagan famously published an essay, "The Dragon in My Garage," as chapter ten in his book, *The Demon-Haunted World – Science as a Candle in the Dark* (1996). People often reference this illustration as one that shows why there can be no proof of God, as well as why it is absurd to think God exists. Sagan used it in the chapter to argue against alien abduction, but the metaphor is larger than aliens. Many use it to argue that it is okay to fully discount something that can never be scientifically proven.

The analogy for proving atheism is a subtle attempt to shift the burden of proof. This metaphor works to say, "I don't have to prove there is no God. If you can't prove there is a God, then it is acceptable to say he doesn't exist." The analogy fails the logic test, however. Here is a synopsis of it:

One says, "A fire-breathing dragon exists in my garage." As the hearer challenges that truth, an excuse is given for each challenge or attempted proof. When the hearer says, "Let me look in your garage," he is told, "The dragon is invisible." When the hearer says, I will spray paint and make him visible," he is told, "No, he is also incorporeal." The hearer wants to try infrared sensors for the fire, but is told the fire isn't hot so won't show up on the sensors. On and on the metaphor goes, and at the end, the reader is left with the analogy of trying to prove that "an invisible, incorporeal, floating dragon who spits heatless fire" doesn't exist. That can't be done.

This is not a valid analogy to use on whether or not atheism is provable or proven. It is a shifting burden of proof that sounds good, because it inherently equates believing in God to believing in a dragon, or even worse, in an "an invisible, incorporeal, floating dragon who spits heatless fire." All because it cannot be proven with scientific technique.

As a lawyer, I would take issue with how Sagan's hearer goes about trying to prove the dragon. If the person was first tied down to what a dragon is, then the proof is much simpler. In other words, get the language precise. If the person will agree to the definition of the Oxford English Dictionary, then a dragon is, "a huge and terrible reptile, usually combining ophidian and crocodilian structure with strong claws, like a beast or bird of prey, and a scaly skin; it is generally represented with wings, and sometimes as breathing out fire." This then becomes testable. It can no longer be an "invisible, incorporeal, floating dragon who spits heatless fire."

If the dragon owner refuses the Oxford dictionary definition, have the person come up with their own. The owner may tell you the dragon is a metaphor for their anxiety in life, in which event, they may be right! Such a dragon does exist! The owner may be referencing a DVD of Game of Thrones episodes with Daenerys Targaryen, mother of dragons, thinking that the dragons on the video count as dragons in the garage. In that event, the owner may indeed have that dragon. Either way, it is testable.

Now, instead of using a dragon, take something truly incorporeal, not something ordinarily corporeal but asserted to be incorporeal because it doesn't exist. Think of the interpretation of Woody Guthrie's classic, *This Train is Bound for Glory*. Guthrie died in 1967, so we don't have him to tell us what the train means. If I want to assert that the train bound for glory is liberation of the poor, then you could rightly ask me, how do you know? What are your reasons for thinking so? Can I just say, well, you can't prove I am wrong, so it must be what I say? Of course not.

Why, then, can someone say, I believe the evidence shows there is no God, but the evidence is a lack of evidence until you prove he exists. God, as most people understand him, is not a corporeal being. Unlike Oxford's (and most everyone else's) definition of a dragon, God is not a creature of nature. We won't anymore prove him by tests that prove creatures of nature than we will prove the interpretation of a song by a corporeal test.

Consider the analogy of measurements. If I want to measure the amount of liquid in my Chick-fil-A medium Diet Dr. Pepper, I could do so in ounces or some metric equivalent like milliliters. But I would be hard pressed to give you the amount of liquid using Fahrenheit or Centigrade numbers. Fahrenheit and Centigrade measure, but they don't measure liquids. They measure temperature.

Trying to prove or disprove the existence of a God who is allegedly outside of nature (or beyond nature, i.e., super to nature/supernatural) by using the tools of nature's science is using the wrong measuring mechanism. People trying to use science to prove or disprove God's existence are making an assumption that is never really explored. The assumption is that science would detect the presence of a supernatural God. Absent God taking a physical form and then proving himself (something many eyewitnesses reported happened

in Jesus), you will not have “direct evidence” of God, but instead “circumstantial evidence.” This will be discussed more fully in the chapter on agnosticism.

Now that doesn’t mean that one must write off the idea of proving God exists or doesn’t exist. It just means that one needs to use the right tools. The tools of nature’s science won’t ever prove the depth of one’s love for another, but that doesn’t mean that love doesn’t exist. The tools of science don’t prove the meaning of a poem, but that doesn’t mean the poem doesn’t have meaning. The tools of science don’t prove what is right and wrong, but right and wrong exist.

Certain people called to prove their atheism find Sagan’s metaphor useful. It isn’t useful so much because they can show it rightly assesses the evidence. It doesn’t. It is useful because they can use Sagan’s metaphor as a way of shifting the burden of proof from those who wish to assert there is no God. When used in that sense, the metaphor becomes a dodge, plain and simple. It becomes tantamount to an admission that there is no proof that God doesn’t exist, under the guise of saying, “the proof he doesn’t exist is that no one can prove he does exist.”

One either needs to offer real proof there is no God, or move to agnosticism, saying, “I genuinely don’t know if there is a God.” Instead, some go to a similar argument based on an idea of Bertrand Russell. Russell was a brilliant thinker and logician. He was also an atheist. Richard Dawkins writes approvingly of Russell’s “parable of the celestial teapot.”<sup>19</sup>

Russell knew that there was great difficulty in proving his atheism, so he was an early one who attempted to shift the burden of proof. Russell wanted to make someone prove the existence of God, rather than him be forced to logically prove there is no God. Russell argued the shifting of the burden based on a tea kettle analogy (Yes, he was British. Had he been a citizen of the USA, he might have chosen a coffee pot. But the analogy would still be the same!)

In the collected papers of Bertrand Russell, we read,

If I were to suggest that between the Earth and Mars there is a china teapot revolving about the sun in an elliptical orbit, nobody would be able to disprove my assertion provided I were careful to add that the teapot is too small to be revealed even by our most powerful telescopes. But if I were to go on to say that, since my assertion cannot be disproved, it is intolerable presumption on the part of human reason to doubt it, I should rightly be thought to be talking nonsense. If, however, the existence of such a teapot

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<sup>19</sup> Dawkins, Richard, *The God Delusion*, (Bantam 2006), ch. 2.

were affirmed in ancient books, taught as the sacred truth every Sunday, and instilled into the minds of children at school, hesitation to believe in its existence would become a mark of eccentricity and entitle the doubter to the attentions of the psychiatrist in an enlightened age or of the Inquisitor in an earlier time.<sup>20</sup>

This analogy would likewise not hold up to a careful cross-examination in a court room.

First, if one were to assert there is a china teapot circling the sun in orbit, a careful cross-examination would reveal whether or not this is likely so. I would ask:

Q. On what basis do you believe this?

Getting an answer would then enable one to carefully define terms, asking exactly what is meant by a china teapot? Assuming one agrees that the china teapot are two carefully fitted pieces made of certain kind of clay that has been molded into a certain shape (with a handle and spout), fired at a certain temperature, then cooled off and placed into service, the next line of questions continues:

Q. On what basis do you believe there is that certain kind of clay?

Q. On what basis do you believe the clay was sculpted?

These questions would continue until the issue of how the china tea kettle got into orbit.

If one should answer those questions sufficiently, adding perhaps that the tea kettle was placed into orbit by a cosmonaut on a space walk with a great sense of humor, then maybe the examination takes a different tack (“Who was the cosmonaut?”) If the answers are inadequate, then the natural follow-up questions might center around, “How did you come by this information?”

Now if we are looking for “scientific proof” of whether or not this tea kettle is in orbit, then perhaps no one will be able to prove it – the one asserting it or the one refuting it. It is silly. It is like measuring my Diet Dr. Pepper with a speedometer rather than ounces. But if we are to use a proper measuring approach, one like in a court of law and its evidence rules, then we can come to a reasonable area of proof. If one wants to disprove the tea kettle, it can be done.

Again, we must remember that we are living in an orderly world, not a Harry Potter world of magic. As an orderly world of nature, we have ways and means of determining what exists in nature. Sometimes we can prove something exists. Sometimes we cannot prove

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<sup>20</sup> *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell, Vol. 11*, (Routledge 1997), p. 547–548.

it, but suspect it. Sometimes we can prove it doesn't exist. Those are claims of certain physical things of nature. Even those claims, however, take on a different form if we change what we are searching for.

For example, if I want to assert that Caesar's invasion of Gaul in 49BC was a real campaign, that it really exists in history, I would not be able to do so by the rules of science. Similarly, if one refuted the existence of that invasion, one could not disprove that. Should one refusing it simply be able to say, "Since you can't prove it, I assume it doesn't exist?" Of course not. Like with the Woodie Guthrie song, or the depth of my love for my wife and children, just because one cannot prove it with scientific certainty, doesn't mean something is not real. In like manner, are we logically to think that the rules of science would detect the presence of a supernatural God? We would not be surprised to find circumstantial evidence of him, and we will probe that in the chapter on agnosticism, but scientific evidence? Of course not.

Within that frame work, the arguments to prove atheism thin out. If we were to try and place them into the scales of evidence, they boil down to a few basic arguments, though in different permutations.

Here are the reasons a lot of Internet sites give as proof there is no God. These aren't really proofs in a logical or classical sense. Books like those of Dawkins and others referenced in this chapter have been carefully written and edited, hopefully with an eye toward making a critical improvement on the table of ideas in publication. The Internet, however, contains basically anything anyone can come up with that they chose to post. Many of these websites that offer "proofs of atheism" are not technically offering proofs of any kind. The writers of these sites would do well to take a basic book in logical arguing and note the process of really proving something. Still we consider these arguments because they become popular, and just because they are on the Internet, are from people lacking certain credentials, it doesn't automatically make them wrong.

### 1. "I don't see him."

This is not a classical "proof" of anything. It assumes way too much. It assumes the person knows what to look for. It assumes it is possible to see God, that he is a visible being in our space, time and dimension. It assumes God wants you to see him visually.

Of course there are lots of things we don't see. That doesn't mean they don't exist. I don't see ultra-violet radiation. I don't see love. I don't see light waves. Heavens, I don't technically see color on an item, I see the reflection of a spectrum of light that an item doesn't absorb. Of course if God is incorporeal, one would not expect to see him.

Additionally, one can fairly ask how well the one asserting "I don't see him" has looked for him. Does one consider that maybe in seeing the order and structure of the cosmos,

one sees God? Perhaps the non-physical God is seen in the people he indwells, should he in fact do so.

This argument is not remotely “proof” there is no such thing as God.

## 2. “I don’t feel him.”

Like the argument of not seeing God, this “proof” assumes too much. First, there is the assumption that God can be sensed or felt. Does the person asserting this proof have a belief in extra-sensory perception (ESP)? Can they sense things like God? How would we know if they were sensing God or it was merely indigestion from a bad burrito? Would they accept it as proof of God if someone else said, “I sense him”? Because plenty of people say that. Not sensing God is not proof of whether he is there or isn’t. Too many assumptions must be proven before the conclusion can be drawn that there is no God.

## 3. “There is no Zeus either.”

Again, this assumes there is no Zeus. Further, the idea that there is no Zeus is a bit more complicated. As the Greeks assumed there was a god named Zeus who lived on Mt. Olympus, very few people probably believe such a god exists. But that doesn’t mean there is no God. The two are not related. In vernacular of argumentation logic, this fallacy could be termed a *non-sequitur*. The two do not follow one from the other.

There is a massive and complicated scholastic understanding of why belief in the Greek/Roman pantheon of gods died out. It involves considerations of the logic of the limitation painted with such gods, the recognition that monotheism made more philosophical sense, the supplanting of polytheism with Christian thought, and more.

To say that Zeus doesn’t exist and therefore there is no God is as logical as saying, “Bugs Bunny doesn’t exist therefore there are no rabbits.” One does not necessitate or invalidate the other.

## 4. “I don’t like the Bible God.”

This is not a proof such a God doesn’t exist. What does it matter? The cynic might even ask, “Do you think he likes you?”

There are a number of people I don’t like, but they still exist. There is a lot of food I don’t like, but it still exists. If someone says, “I don’t like the God of the Old Testament! He is a misogynist, sadistic, murdering, infanticide-promoting God!” Then maybe he is or maybe he isn’t. Regardless, that is not proof he doesn’t exist.

## 5. “The Bible seems wrong and error-ridden.”

This is not proof that there is no God, or even that the God of the Bible doesn't exist. It immediately calls into evidence questions of whether the person making the assertion is a Biblical expert. The Bible is a composite of many writings authored over the span of a millennium or more, written in vastly different cultural times in many different forms ranging from poetry to narrative, from symbolic to direct, and many points in between. It cannot be readily dismissed as "full of errors," and if it is, that still is no proof that God doesn't exist.

#### 6. "Religion has done bad things."

This is an indictment against the practices of people, not a proof there is no God. To try and use this as a proof there is no God would have the logical equivalent that if I could show religion has done good things then there must be a God. As handy as that might be, especially to people who knew the works of Mother Teresa, it simply isn't logical proof. Similarly, if one can show that atheism has "done bad things," would that be regarded as proof there is no atheism?

#### 7. "If God did exist, nothing would be wrong with the world or people."

This one always surprises me. Again, it is based on what someone thinks God should be, and then finds that such a God doesn't exist. This argument doesn't deal with whether or not there might be a God who allows people to make choices. Not all gods would stop people from being people. Is God supposed to be one who stops alcohol from affecting the driver who has had it in excess? Is God supposed to make it a Harry Potter world where the laws of nature bend willy-nilly to ensure that someone who falls doesn't hit the ground? Is God supposed to make humans into machines where they have no free will but simply perform as programmed? Is God to run the world as a well-disciplined kindergarten class?

These are views that do not mean there is no God. They simply mean "I don't think the kind of God I would like exists." That concept does not seem to be well thought out, and it certainly isn't a proof that no God exists. In the second century, a leader named Marcion (c.85-c. 160) believed there were multiple gods, including a god of the Old Testament and a god of the New Testament. Marcion would say that there is a god, but "he is a mean sort of fellow!" Of course it would never do to answer Marcion and say, "I can prove there is no God, because if God existed, there would be nothing wrong with the world." Marcion would say, "Oh, you must be arguing that there is not a good god, not that there is no god!"<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> This argument is also set out by the four horsemen, especially in debates. The reason is not so much to argue that there is no God, but to argue that Christianity and Biblical concepts of God are dangerous, inconsistent or immoral. That is a different thrust of the

There are a few more alleged proofs for atheism that one can find on the Internet, if searching the atheists' websites including:

8. "Try praying and watch it fail."

Of course an appeal to experience is not adequate. I will point you to many who say they have prayed and it worked. By this reasoning, that means God exists, he just doesn't hear everyone's prayers. I would suggest that this is not an adequate proof of "No God."

9. "Think about Near Death Experiences."

Again, this is riddled with people who have used near death experiences as faith inspiring. They have claimed these events have shown them there is a God. Others say it hasn't. Shall we logically conclude God exists, but some don't see him? I think the "proof" here is hard to establish, and this is certainly not proof there is no God.

10. "It's all about the money."

This argument is quickly dispelled as well. That doesn't mean there is no God. There are many for whom it is not all about the money (Mother Teresa again comes to mind), so do they become proof there is a God? There are also atheists who make a large load of money off their books and speaking engagements, arguing there is no God. Does that make their arguments false? This is not a real logical argument. It is an appeal to a prejudice.

11. "God is impossible."

In logical fallacies, this wears the moniker of "circular reasoning." It works both ways. I.e., it can be wrongly used to prove God exists just as much as proving he doesn't. Saying he doesn't exist because he is impossible is akin to saying he does exist because he is possible. Neither provides substantive proof.

12. "Experiment by asking Jesus to appear."

This argument assumes Jesus is a genie in a bottle obligated to come and dance when we ask him to. This is not an argument, but an arrogance. I exist. I get asked to make appearances often. I frequently say no.

That said, many will tell you that they have seen Jesus. They see him in the lives of people he has changed. He is not a physical person on earth anymore, but is present in the hearts

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argument and appropriate of its own book. It has no bearing on whether or not there is a God. It bears on what kind of God might he or she be.

and minds of his followers. If such people make those assertions, one asking “Jesus to appear” cannot be logically making an argument there is no God.

We should note that some of these are fairly silly in their own right. Yet they are trumpeted over and over. Many intellectual atheists like Dawkins and Harris would likely shunt aside a number of these arguments saying, “Don’t ascribe those to me! Those are arguments of atheists who are not so carefully thinking things through.” That is a legitimate answer. In fact, it is much the same answer I give for the arguments of religious people that Dawkins, Hitchens, Harris, and others cite in the counter sense.

I find that the atheists frequently grab beliefs of some Christians or others who are less thoughtful and use those as the “beliefs” that Harris, et al., then destroy. I read what Dawkins, Harris, and others say “religious people” believe, and I quickly recoil and say, “Not me!” I include these lesser arguments trying to prove there is no God both because they are still out in prominent places, and because this shows that on both sides of the debate or proof scales, we must not accept that the painted views of others are accurate and full.

When all is said and done, I cannot find any real argument of substance that proves there is no God. I can find arguments that shift the burden onto those who believe there is a God, premised on the idea that a default position should be “no God.” Of course since this default position cannot be justified, it is really just a position taken with a blind acceptance.

In his book, *The End of Faith*, Sam Harris makes the point that religions are intolerant, and indicative of a problem in believing in God. Each religion will not tolerate the possibility that another religion is right, hence they all have some exclusivity claim. Harris believes this to be a reason for thinking religions are all false. In fact, there is a bit of intellectual hypocrisy going on.

Around 90 percent of the world claim subscription to some religion that has an understanding there is a God. That leaves ten percent not believing in God in any way, shape, form, or fashion. The 90% might argue over what that God is or isn’t, and what he or she should be called. And whether he or she is one or many. But they agree there is something beyond humanity we call God (or gods). It is the atheist who has the intolerant view that all 90% of the world is wrong, that no one in any religion has it right, that only the few atheist elites have figured out the truth, that there is no God.

And this position is taken, without evidence, really with just a shifting of the burden of proof.

## POINTS FOR HOME

1. “*What can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them*” (Rom. 1:19).

A lot of people complain that God does not show himself. It is an interesting idea, but one that may be coming from a fairly small mindset. There are 8 billion of us on a dirt clod in a remote part of a galaxy in fairly deep space. The Bible teaches that there is a God much bigger than all of space, in whose mind this creation was planned, and who holds time in his hands—past, present, and future. And we want God to show himself to us? We can’t even gaze into our own sun from a distance of 90 million miles without going blind! What we can know, however is plain to us. Paul says it, and we can see it. We just have to know what we are looking for and how to find it.

2. “*For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse*” (Rom. 1:20).

Here Paul tells us one way we do see God. God’s invisible non-corporeal attributes are evident in the things that are made around us. We can see cause and effect in this world, and understand our God is a cause-and-effect God. We can see logic and consistency underlying the natural order and know that our God is a logical, consistent, just God. The Creator has left a trail we can follow in the creation. It speaks of him.

3. “*Although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools*” (Rom. 1:21-22).

Our human brain, even of the very brightest in our race, is a collection of grey cells roughly the size of two human fists, firing off electronic signals. Honestly, what do we reasonably think anyone could fathom about a God who is what the Bible claims him to be? We read and watch some of the great minds talk so assertively about how they know there is no God. We read these Internet geniuses explain that if God is real, he would have to come to us like a genie when you rub the bottle. I wonder where humility is in the mind of these people. In their self-proclaimed wisdom, they have become fools.