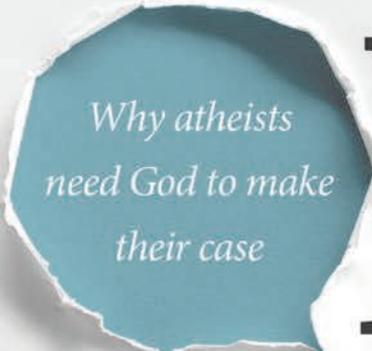


foreword by
RAVI ZACHARIAS

STEALING

from

G  D

*Why atheists
need God to make
their case*

Frank Turek

coauthor of I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist

“As a journalist at the *Chicago Tribune*, I covered some horrific crimes that helped cement me in my atheism. I didn’t realize that I was committing a series of intellectual crimes by stealing from God in order to argue against Him. Frank Turek brilliantly exposes these C.R.I.M.E.S. of atheism in a way that you’ll never forget.”

LEE STROBEL

Bestselling author of *The Case for Christ* and professor at Houston Baptist University

“Let the record state that the days of atheist trash-talking are at an ignoble, bang-less, whimpering end. From the beginning of Frank Turek’s superb book, the New Atheists are on the ropes, praying to their Spaghetti Monsters for the bell to save them. *Stealing from God* sends them to the canvas easily and with panache.”

ERIC METAXAS

New York Times bestselling author of *Bonhoeffer* and *Miracles*

“Frank Turek in his usual inimitable, user-friendly style presents a highly accessible case for the falsity of atheism and the truth of Christianity. This book provides powerful and clear answers to questions of enduring importance for every thinking person.”

DR. JOHN LENNOX

Professor of mathematics at Oxford University

“I am a big fan of *I Don’t Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, but *Stealing from God* is Frank Turek’s best book to date. Meticulously researched and carefully argued, it shows that the atheist who argues that he doesn’t need to rely on God actually needs God to make that very argument. This book is an effective

tool for reaching committed atheists because it demands that the atheists abide by the same standards they impose on others.”

DR. MIKE ADAMS

Professor of criminology at UNCW, columnist at TownHall.com, and author of *Letters to a Young Progressive*

“One of the reasons I love Frank Turek and his work is that he unapologetically takes his case for Christian apologetics directly and aggressively to the New Atheists. *Stealing from God* dismantles the fragile premises of atheists’ ‘articles of faith,’ and, in the process, establishes an unassailable case for the truth of Christianity. This book comes at precisely the right time, when the New Atheists are trying their best to undermine the Christian worldview and purge it from our culture.”

DAVID LIMBAUGH

New York Times bestselling author of *Jesus on Trial*

“Frank Turek has written an original critique of many of the most commonly used arguments for atheism, showing that in each case these arguments depend on facts or concepts that atheism itself has difficulty explaining. He also clearly explains the current scientific evidence and arguments for intelligent design. In so doing, he undermines the main argument of New Atheists such as Richard Dawkins who regard belief in God as ‘delusional’ because they think that Darwin destroyed the design argument. A lively and persuasive book!”

DR. STEPHEN C. MEYER

Author of *Darwin's Doubt* and *Signature in the Cell*

Continued on pages 271–272

STEALING
from
GOD

Why atheists need God to make their case

Frank Turek

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FOREWORD

IN FEBRUARY OF 2012 the renowned atheist Richard Dawkins was on a live radio program in a dialogue/debate with Reverend Giles Fraser, a priest of the Church of England. In his customary diatribe against Christians and the Christian faith, Dawkins quoted from a recent poll that purportedly measured Christianity in Britain. The controversial study from which he drew his “facts” was commissioned by the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science. Among the findings, the study apparently found that nearly two-thirds of individuals surveyed couldn’t name the first book of the New Testament (Matthew). Whatever that was intended to prove, Dawkins drew the conclusion that Christianity was waning in Europe.

Giles Fraser took issue with this indicator, claiming that it was improper for Dawkins to make such huge leaps on that basis. Fraser unequivocally proved his point. He asked Richard Dawkins if he could name the full title of Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*. Since that was his “holy book” and he was the high priest of Darwinism, with a doctorate in biology to boot, the title ought to have been at his fingertips. After Dawkins claimed that

he could recite the title (which happens to be quite long), Fraser said, “Go ahead, Richard.” Dawkins nervously thought out the answer, allowing himself a few moments as he shuffled his words. He began with the familiar first five words and then stumbled and blurted, “Uh. With,” and at last said, “Oh God.” He couldn’t remember the full title.

That last line is incredibly hilarious, coming from the atheist’s own vocabulary. It ought to have made the comedic late-night shows’ lowlights of the day. In some cases it did.

One can put the knife to the side and say that the amazing evidence of God’s sovereignty is revealed in how even those who don’t believe in Him call upon Him to remind them of the source that paved the way to their disavowal of belief in His existence. It is like stepping on a bridge to cross a chasm, all the while believing there is no bridge.

Granted, calling upon God in that tone and manner was at best a Freudian slip of a familiar phrase that was nothing more than just a blip of a sound bite to buy time. But then it doesn’t really stop there, does it? Apart from Dawkins defeating his own point, he needs to ponder his own system of thought. Most recently, he was outraged at an English player “cheating” in a cricket match against the Australians. He castigated the player, calling him a cheat, and hoped England would lose the series because of that dishonesty. Well, needless to say, the opinion box was full, ranging from a reminder to Dawkins to chill out—it was only a game—to those reprimanding him that cheating is not really evil as one merely “dances to his DNA.” (That last phrase was Dawkins’ own term elsewhere, on our morally determined software.) Dawkins was not amused by such put-downs.

From a Freudian slip to a “wish for judgment” upon the cheats, atheists often blunder into the right by borrowing from assumptions

that are not logically deduced from their own worldview. But their opinion is so strong that they straddle the two worlds and make up a bridge because they have reached an unbridgeable chasm, given their starting point. It is to the more serious “borrowing” of this sort that Frank Turek points—and rightly brands it “stealing.”

I have had the privilege of traveling the globe for over forty years, speaking at scores of university open forums. In nearly every setting, I have encountered an atheist who charges Christianity with being illogical, irrational—or worse, a poison to society. And yet, as we talk, time and again the atheist is unable to answer the fundamental questions of life, such as, “Is there a moral framework to life?” To be sure, they try and keep trying. But there is a difference between offering a pragmatic explanation and all the while being unable to anchor it in logical inescapability. That is the demand atheists make of the Christian in origins, but they fail to meet their own tests in meaning and morality. These are serious questions of life and have to be faced by every worldview. Atheists stumble on these obstacles to coherence, and what is more, intuitively borrow from the very worldview they disavow to legitimize their own. The haunting question keeps resurfacing. Are the moral judgments we make reflective of a reality that is not just a preference of values but is in some nature binding upon us?

As Frank Turek’s own debates and thorough research reveal, the atheistic position breeds more rational dissonance than so-called evidence against God. For instance, to atheists, the presence of evil is troubling with a double edge. From where do they even get the category of evil? And second, how do they break its stranglehold? To the Christian theist, good and evil have a point of reference: God, who is the moral lawgiver and who offers us forgiveness, grace, and restoration through His Son, Jesus Christ. But atheists cannot even justify the existence of good and evil without

smuggling in the moral argument for God. To put it simply, when you assert that there is such a thing as evil, you must assume there is such a thing as good. When you say there is such a thing as good, you must assume there is a moral law by which to distinguish between good and evil. There must be an ontic referent by which to determine what is good and what is evil. When you assume a moral law, you must posit a moral lawgiver because the questioner assumes the intrinsic worth of humanity in raising the question of evil, an assumption that is not warranted by naturalism. But this moral lawgiver is precisely who atheists are trying to disprove. Without that moral lawgiver, humanity is an existent entity without an essential worth other than some self-referencing sleight of hand.

This is why it is so important that we understand the need to examine why we believe what we believe. I have known Frank for many years and appreciate his careful study, winsome demeanor in the toughest of settings, and compassion for people. I have read many apologetic books seeking to refute atheism. Frank has done a masterful job in allowing the voices of atheism to speak for themselves—and in turn, showing how their own arguments implode while appealing to a God they supposedly reject. This is a wonderfully readable and balanced book for anyone considering the claims of atheism and Christianity. Frank is to be commended for the hard work and thinking that puts this material within reach across a broad spectrum. The pages ahead will inform and, rightly read, inspire.

Ravi Zacharias, author and speaker

INTRODUCTION

IS IT A WONDERFUL LIFE?

THE SMALL CHAPEL in a Charlotte, North Carolina, funeral home was overflowing just two days before Christmas. Unable to get a seat, I stood in the back with my family as scores of people spilled out into the lobby behind us. Our friend Nancy, fifty-seven, had just lost her battle with pancreatic cancer two nights earlier.

Everyone loved Nancy. She always had a smile—actually a laugh—and never seemed annoyed by anything or anyone.

Her husband, whom everyone called “Coach,” had just lost his lifelong soul mate. He and Nancy were married as teenagers. We all expected him to be too devastated to speak. That is, until we saw him approach the podium.

Oh no, Coach is getting up. I can't believe he's going to say something. How's he going to get through this?

Several people had already eulogized his beloved wife, who lay before him.

“I wasn't planning on saying anything,” Coach announced confidently, as if he were about to give a pep talk to the high school football team he led for over thirty years. “But I just want to thank all of you for coming and supporting my family.”

Coach's family was dwindling. He was about to bury Nancy

with the ashes of his son, Rick, who had died from leukemia some twenty years before. Only his son Jeff remained.

“Let me tell you what happened that last night at the hospital,” he projected in a steady and strong voice.

“The doctors helped control her pain. As I was holding her hand, I said, ‘Nancy, honey, squeeze my hand if you’re in pain. Go ahead, squeeze my hand.’”

“She didn’t squeeze it, but I noticed that her breathing was like this.”

Coach inhaled and then exhaled with a groan.

“I was a little concerned at this painful groaning sound she was making,” he said. “So when the remaining two visitors left, Jeff said he was going to stay to help his mom and me get through the night. I pulled up my chair, and Jeff pulled up his, and that’s when I noticed that her breathing had changed.”

Coach looked up, inhaled, and then exhaled while humming the tune of a hymn.

“I realized that when she exhaled, she was singing a hymn to us! She was waiting for the visitors to leave, so she could sing her boys to sleep! That’s who Nancy was. She was more concerned about us than herself.

“She kept singing with every breath. I held her hand and soon dozed off. Then suddenly, at 1:20 in the morning, I snapped awake because I didn’t hear her anymore. She wasn’t breathing. When I realized she was gone, my heart broke in two. It broke in two! I cried, ‘Jesus, help me! Jesus, help me!’

“Just then an incredible peace came over me. Words can’t even describe it to you. In fact, I feel it now.”

Coach paused and scanned the room. “The reason I’m telling you all of this is because a lot of people think that God is a myth. They think we’re making all of this up,” his voice rising for

emphasis. “Let me tell you something. God is not a myth. God is real! He’s with me right now, and He was with me when Nancy slipped into His arms.”

Coach shook his head side to side. “I’ve been blessed. I’ve been so blessed. I met Nancy when I was fifteen. I knew she was an angel then, and I married her when I was only nineteen. God gave me nine months to tell my angel how much I love her and to comfort her with the gospel. God has been good to me. I’ve been so blessed.

“I beg you . . . I beg you, if you don’t know Jesus Christ and the sacrifice He made for you, please come to know Him today.”

Coach stepped away from the podium. The pastor, who was supposed to preach a sermon, wisely announced, “The sermon has already been preached,” and closed the service with a prayer.

As the procession carried the casket down the aisle, Coach trailed behind, greeting and hugging guests who were amazed at his composure. When he got to me, he grabbed my hand and simply said, “Thank you.” My spontaneous response was, “Wonderful.”

Wonderful? Is “wonderful” an appropriate response to a man about to bury his wife with the ashes of his son?

Only if his beliefs are true.

Are they?

Not according to a vocal group of prominent unbelievers known as the “new atheists.” The new atheists have been led by Oxford zoologist Richard Dawkins, Stanford-trained philosopher Sam Harris, and the late British journalist Christopher Hitchens, among others. After the twin towers fell on 9/11, these new atheists rose to attack religion and belief in God. They attack with several powerful intellectual weapons.

Richard Dawkins wields the sword of science to declare that anyone who believes in God is “deluded.” He writes in his bestseller

The God Delusion, “When one person suffers from a delusion, it is called insanity. When many people suffer from a delusion it is called Religion. If this book works as intended, religious readers who open it will be atheists when they put it down.”¹

According to Dawkins, advances in our understanding of evolution make belief in God obsolete. Darwin got rid of God as an explanation for the apparent design of life, and science will one day get rid of God as an explanation for the apparent creation and design of the universe. Since Dawkins believes natural laws can't be broken, he is incredulous that anyone could believe in miracles. In fact, he's called anyone who believes in creation “ignorant, stupid or insane.”²

But it's not just believers in God who are wicked. According to Dawkins, God Himself is wicked. Dawkins writes, “The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.”³

With that perspective on God, it's no wonder that Dawkins claims that teaching religion to your children is “child abuse.” And if that kind of God really exists, why would you worship Him?

Despite that colorful rant about God being evil, Dawkins maintains in *The God Delusion* that evil doesn't really exist. Neither does good. For if God doesn't exist, then objective moral values don't exist.

That's what Christians and other theists have long maintained by their moral argument for God—no God, no objective moral values. If there is no God, then all behaviors are merely a matter of preference and opinion. Some people like to murder; others don't. Without an unchangeable authoritative standard beyond human

opinion, nothing is objectively right or wrong. Only if God exists is there an authoritative and unchanging standard (God's nature) that establishes what is morally right. An atheistic reality has no such standard, which Dawkins has acknowledged. He wrote, "it is pretty hard to defend absolutist morals on grounds other than religious ones."⁴ Therefore, a consistent atheist must admit that it's not morally wrong to murder millions of people in gas chambers—it's just a matter of opinion.

But thanks to fellow atheist Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins now appears to affirm objective morality while maintaining his atheism. In his book *The Moral Landscape*,⁵ Harris takes the position that objective moral values really do exist, and they can be explained without invoking God. He claims that if we just use our reason, we'll see that "human flourishing" is the standard by which we determine something is good or bad. Anything that helps humans flourish is good. Since reason and science can tell us what helps humans flourish, there is no need for God to ground objective moral values. If Harris is correct, it seems that he has successfully shot down the moral argument for God.

But what about the existence of the soul and consciousness? Many theists insist atheism can't explain them, only God can. But Francis Crick, who helped discover the DNA molecule in 1953, claims that the soul and consciousness can be explained materially without any reference to God. A forerunner of the new atheists, Crick used research in neuroscience to advocate atheistic materialism in his book, *The Astonishing Hypothesis*.

He wrote, "The Astonishing Hypothesis is that 'You,' your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules."⁶

In other words, while you may think that you are a conscious, free, rational creature, that's just an illusion, because you really are no more than a molecular machine. Every thought you have, every decision you make, is the result of chemical and physical processes over which you have no control. God does not exist. You are nothing more than a collection of molecules. Astonishing, but according to Crick, backed by neuroscience.

That hypothesis is even more astonishing when you realize it means that the soaring intellect of the late Christopher Hitchens was merely a collection of molecules. Having debated Hitchens twice, I marveled at his ability to hold the attention of any crowd. With his wit and British accent—which made him seem twenty IQ points smarter—Hitchens could have read from technical manuals and kept people mesmerized.

Instead, he fired his formidable rhetorical and written salvos at religion by highlighting all of the evil done in God's name (which he refused to capitalize). Hitchens slammed religious belief by citing the seemingly immoral commands in the Bible, the biblical restrictions on sexual behavior, and the appalling behavior of religious people, documenting it all in his book *god Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*.⁷

"Poisons"—that's an artful way of saying that religion is evil. In our first debate, I asked Christopher to identify the objective standard by which he judged something to be evil. He kept avoiding a direct answer, so I finally just blurted out, "What *is* evil?" Without missing a beat, he quipped, "Religion!"

The largely atheistic university crowd at Virginia Commonwealth University burst out in laughter, and that was it. I was never able to get him to answer the question. I wasn't asking for an example but a standard.

Although he wouldn't identify his standard, Hitchens believed

that religion and the God of the Bible were both examples of evil. He called the God of the Bible “a cosmic North Korean dictator” obsessed with our sex lives, intruding on our every thought and action, eager to torture us for eternity in hell for not obeying his immoral commands.

“Nothing proves the man-made character of religion as obviously as the sick mind that designed hell,” he wrote. And who was the “sick mind” that introduced this idea of hell to us? According to Hitchens, it was Jesus. So Hitchens wasn’t just down on the God of the Old Testament; he had that “sick mind” known as Jesus in his crosshairs too.

Is it “sick” to condemn people to hell? How does such a belief square with an all-loving, all-good God? And why would an all-good, *all-powerful* God sit by and allow evil, suffering, and pain to continue? If any father failed to rescue his children from excruciating pain and suffering, we would indict him for cruelty. Yet we give our “heavenly Father” a pass.

That’s because we believe without evidence, say the new atheists. God is just a figment of our imaginations. Science, reason, morality, and evil say so.

Since atheists use arguments from science, reason, morality, and evil to support atheism, God must be dead. Right?

No. There’s a fatal problem with all of those atheist arguments against God—they are stolen from God Himself.

Stealing from God: The Intellectual CRIMES of Atheism

What I mean is, atheists are using aspects of reality to argue against God that wouldn’t exist if atheism were true. In other words, when atheists give arguments for their atheistic worldview, they

are stealing from a theistic worldview to make their case. In effect, they are stealing from God in order to argue against Him.

These aspects of reality are so much part of our common sense that many atheists seem to take them for granted. But they simply can't exist if atheism is true. Theism can explain them, but atheism cannot.

Since stealing is a crime (especially stealing from God!), this book will use CRIMES as an acrostic to show the scope of the intellectual crimes atheists are committing. Each letter in CRIMES represents one or more aspects of reality that wouldn't exist if atheism were true. Yet atheists use many of them to argue against God. They are:

- C = Causality
- R = Reason
- I = Information and Intentionality
- M = Morality
- E = Evil
- S = Science

I know it may seem odd to cite reason, evil, and science as aspects of reality stolen from God since atheists trumpet them as evidence *against* God. But I think the ensuing chapters will show why reason, evil, and science wouldn't exist unless God existed.

We'll address these CRIMES in order by chapter. It is my contention that these CRIMES not only help show that theism is true, but that the foundational assumptions of atheism make it impossible to make a sound intellectual case for atheism. If atheism is true, there's no way to know it with any confidence. In fact, if atheism is true, there's no way to know *anything* with any confidence.

Now, I can't unpack the foundational problems with atheism

here in the introduction. But I can say that because of them, *it is more certain that atheism is false than Christianity is true*. As we'll see, the worldview of the new atheists can't explain the most basic truths of reality and the most important aspects of life. That's one reason why prominent atheist philosopher Thomas Nagel, professor at New York University, recently penned, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False*. The book evoked panic throughout the atheistic academic community and blogosphere. And for good reason. If materialism is false, then so is nearly everything the new atheists believe.

But the failure of atheism to explain reality does not necessarily mean that Christian theism is true. Atheism could be false and so could much of Christianity. Maybe Islam or another kind of theism is true. (Nagel is looking for a nontheistic solution.) Therefore, I'll make a four-point defense of Christianity in chapter 7.

But before we embark on that journey, we need to define our terms: What exactly do we mean by "God" and "atheism"? We also need to establish why any of this is worth talking about. Specifically, what is life's most important question? Let's start with what we mean by a theistic God.

Who Is the God You Don't Believe In?

When people say they don't believe in God, I sometimes ask them, "What kind of God don't you believe in?" After they describe their version of God, I often agree with them. "I don't believe in that kind of God either."

The God the new atheists reject is not the actual God of the Bible. They reject a caricature of Him. They think the God of the Bible is some kind of superhero, akin to Zeus or Thor—a limited being inside the universe that theists call on to fill the gaps that

science can't explain. He's also morally arbitrary and can fly off the handle at any moment.

This is the kind of god Richard Dawkins has in mind when he dismisses the God of the Bible. He writes, "I have found it an amusing strategy, when asked whether I am an atheist, to point out that the questioner is also an atheist when considering Zeus, Apollo, Amon Ra, Mithras, Baal, Thor, Wotan, the Golden Calf and the Flying Spaghetti Monster. I just go one god further."⁸

Unfortunately for Dr. Dawkins, this strategy is only amusing because it highlights his ignorance of biblical theism. The God of the Bible is not like Zeus, Apollo, Baal, and the rest, or even what the Bible calls an "angel." God is not a created being among other beings inside the universe. He is Being itself and transcends the entire created order! He is the ultimate and sustaining cause of all created things, including angels, human beings, and the material world we call the universe. This kind of God can be known by all people because God has revealed Himself through two books: the book of nature (which everyone has) and the Bible.

To be fair, many Christians don't have the proper conception of God either. They think God is something like a big angel or just a bigger version of themselves. Perhaps they haven't studied the context of certain Bible passages to discover what the Bible actually means by "God." The God of the Bible has some of the same attributes of Aristotle's "unmoved mover" and many, if not all, of the attributes cited by great philosophers and theologians such as Augustine, Aquinas, and Anselm.

In order to grasp that kind of God, you may need to renew your mind. If you are used to conceiving of God as a big angel or an old man in the sky, then drop the word *God* for a minute and simply think of the God of the Bible as the Source and Sustainer of all things. The Source and Sustainer of all things is:

- **Self-existing:** not caused by another; the foundation of all being
- **Infinite:** unlimited; the completely maximized or actualized Being
- **Simple:** undivided in being; is not made up of parts
- **Immaterial:** spirit; not made of matter
- **Spaceless:** transcends space
- **Timeless:** transcends time; eternal; had no beginning and will have no end
- **Omnipotent:** all powerful; can do whatever is logically possible
- **Omnipresent:** everywhere present
- **Omniscient:** all knowing; knows all actual and possible states of affairs
- **Immutable:** changeless; the anchor and standard by which everything else is measured
- **Holy:** set apart; morally perfect; is perfectly just and loving
- **Personal:** has mind, emotion, and will; makes choices.

These attributes and others are coexistent, infinite, and unified in the Source and Sustainer. If you want to get a sense of what the Source and Sustainer is like, meditate on these attributes while removing all limits from your mind. That's what the Bible means by "God."

Whether or not this Being actually exists is irrelevant to my point right now. My point right now is that when most atheists attack what they think is the God of the Bible, they are actually attacking the equivalent of an Old Testament idol—exactly the kind of invented being that the true God kept warning Israel was not real. Orthodox Christians don't believe in the finite, created god Richard Dawkins doesn't believe in either. Dawkins is knocking

over a straw god, not the self-existing, eternal, immaterial, simple, all-powerful God of the Bible. So ironically, Richard Dawkins, orthodox Christians, and the true God agree on something—idols don't really exist!

While the arguments in *The God Delusion* may cause us to doubt the existence of Zeus, Thor, and the like, they don't get within a thousand miles of the God of the Bible. Neither do the arguments of Dawkins' atheist colleagues. But we'll get to that later.

Now that we have a working idea of what "God" means, what does it mean to be an "atheist?" Is that someone who believes that such a being does not exist? Not according to some atheists.

Don't Atheists Just Lack a Belief in God?

It's been fashionable lately for atheists to claim that they merely "lack a belief in God." So when a theist comes along and says that atheists can't support their worldview, some atheists will say something like, "Oh, we really don't have a worldview. We just lack a belief in God. Since we're not making any positive claims about the world, we don't have any burden of proof to support atheism. We just find the arguments for God to be lacking."

What's lacking are good reasons to believe this new definition.

First, if atheism is merely a lack of belief in God, then atheism is just a claim about the atheist's state of mind, not a claim about God's existence. The "atheist" is simply saying, "I'm not psychologically convinced that God exists." So what? That offers no evidence for or against God. Most people lack a belief in unguided evolution, yet no atheist would say that shows evolution is false.

Second, if atheism is merely a lack of belief in God, then rocks, trees, and outhouses are all "atheists" because they, too, lack a

belief in God. It doesn't take any brains to "lack a belief" in something. A true atheist believes that there is no God.

Third, if atheists merely "lacked a belief in God," they wouldn't be constantly trying to explain the world by offering supposed alternatives to God. As we'll see, atheists write book after book insisting that God is out of a job because of quantum theory, multiple universes, and evolution. While none of those atheistic arguments succeed in proving there is no God, they do prove that atheists don't merely lack a belief in God—they believe in certain theories to explain reality without God.

They believe in those theories because atheism is a worldview with beliefs just as much as theism is a worldview with beliefs. (A "worldview" is a set of beliefs about the big questions in life, such as: What is ultimate reality? Who are we? What's the meaning of life? How should we live? What's our destiny? etc.) To claim that atheism is not a worldview is like saying anarchy is not really a political position. As Bo Jinn observes, "An anarchist might say that he simply 'rejects politics,' but he is still confronted with the inescapable problem of how human society is to organize itself, whether he likes the idea of someone being in charge or not."⁹

Likewise, atheists can say they just "reject God," but they are still confronted with the inescapable problem of how to explain ultimate reality. Just as anarchists affirm the positive belief that anarchy is the best way to organize society, atheists affirm the positive belief that atheistic materialism is the best way to explain ultimate reality. Materialism is the dominant view among atheists today and the view this book is addressing.¹⁰

In other words, atheists don't "lack a belief" in materialism. They are not skeptical of materialism—they think it's true! As Phillip Johnson said, "He who is a skeptic in one set of beliefs is a true believer in another set of beliefs."¹¹ Lacking a belief in God

doesn't automatically establish materialism any more than lacking a belief in atheism automatically establishes Christianity. No atheist would say that a Christian has made a good case because he "lacks a belief" in materialism!

Everyone has the burden of proof to support his or her position.¹² Atheists must make a positive case that only material things exist. That's why instead of debating "Does God exist?" I prefer to debate the question "What better explains reality: atheism or theism?" Then it's obvious that both debaters have the burden of proof to support their position. Atheists can't just identify what they think are deficiencies in theism. They must make a compelling case that everything has been caused by materials and consists only of materials, including

- The beginning of the universe
- The fine-tuning of the universe
- The laws of nature
- The laws of logic
- The laws of mathematics
- Information (genetic code)
- Life
- Mind and consciousness
- Free will
- Objective morality
- Evil.

It's rare to find an atheist attempting to explain more than one or two of these things materially. How could they? How can laws be materials? We'll see some of their attempted explanations later. But the main point is that the new atheists must provide reasons

to support their belief that materialism is true. Simply lacking a belief in God doesn't prove their worldview.

Finally, the "I merely lack a belief in God" definition leads to a contradictory result. As Dr. Richard Howe points out, "This definition of atheism entails the quirky conclusion that atheism is logically compatible with theism."¹³ Here's why: If lacking a belief in God is the definition of "atheism"—and not "there is no God"—then "atheism" is true even if God really exists. How is that reasonable? If not "atheism," what word should we use for the belief that there is no God?

We shouldn't allow atheists to hide behind their lacking definition. A true atheist is someone who believes there is no God. And atheists have the burden of proof to show how materialism is true and reality can be explained without God. As we'll see, when they try to make their case for atheism, they have to steal from God to do so.

But so what? Why is the God question even important?

Life's Most Important Question

I received an e-mail not long ago from a retired United States Marine. So I knew this man was no sissy. But he wasn't writing me as a tough guy—he was writing me as a distraught father.

He said that his daughter was the top Christian student in her high school. She helped lead the youth group at church and won several scholarships from Christian organizations to redeem at the college of her choice. She decided to go to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to win the campus for Christ.

"She was in her first semester," her father wrote. "And I received a call from her after only four weeks. Her words devastated me. She said, 'Dad, I don't believe in God anymore.'"

What? How can that be?

He said, “I got in my car and drove four hours that weekend all the way to Chapel Hill. I sat down with her but got nowhere.”

After only four weeks of listening to her atheistic religion professor (yes, atheists teach “religion” at many universities), she abandoned her long-held Christian beliefs and adopted atheistic beliefs.

An exception? Unfortunately no. The majority of young people—surveys show about 75 percent—leave the church after high school, partially because atheism is religiously promoted in college and the culture. In fact, college professors are five times more likely to be atheists than the general public, and more than half of college professors have unfavorable views of evangelical students.¹⁴

But how can you blame the professors? They are rightfully unimpressed with the inability of most Christian students to defend their beliefs. In other words, it’s not so much that Christian minds are lost at college—it’s that *Christian minds rarely get to college*. They rarely get to college because many parents and churches emphasize emotion and ignore the biblical commands to develop the mind,¹⁵ which means that most kids skip off to college equipped with nothing more than feel-good emotionalism. If bands, pizza, and Pepsi could equip church youth with the intellectual firepower to defend Christianity, we wouldn’t have so many kids fleeing the church.

What you win kids *with*, you win them *to*. If you win them *with* emotion, you win them *to* emotion. Unfortunately, emotions are no match for atheistic college professors who are intent on undermining your beliefs. Facts are necessary. Emotions come and go, but facts never change.

If Christians continue to rely on emotion and ignore evidence,

they will continue to lose their children to secularism. As Ravi Zacharias points out, a tepid Christianity cannot withstand a rabid secularism. And make no mistake—secularism is rabid. The world isn't neutral out there. Today's culture is becoming increasingly anti-Christian. Every day the media and academia pound out an incessant drumbeat against the Christian faith, some to the point of mockery. They depict Christianity as completely unreasonable (even though, as we shall see, it is atheism that is unreasonable).

Despite the fact that Christians founded most of our major universities to advance Christianity (Harvard premised learning on John 17:3!), atheism is just assumed to be true at many of those schools today. The existence of God is not even a topic to be studied or debated. Instead, belief in God is often mocked or dismissed even in “religion” courses.

Yet how we live, and the destiny of my life and your life, ultimately hinges on the question “Does God exist?” If God exists—especially the God of the Bible—then what we believe and how we live matters for all eternity. If no God exists, then nothing ultimately matters and there is no objective game plan for living. That's why “Does God exist?” is literally life's most important question.

(That leads to a troubling observation: How can we consider our education system sound and ourselves educated if we don't seriously investigate life's most important question—the question upon which so many issues in life depend? It doesn't seem like we can.)

So the need to expose the faults in atheism and provide the evidence for Christian theism has never been greater. And since atheism appears to be growing, it's especially important to refute atheistic beliefs directly.

In order for atheists to consider new beliefs, they may have to

begin doubting their own first. I am hopeful that this book will show people why they should doubt the atheistic worldview and why the evidence for Christian theism is quite strong. A key question we will ask is this: *If Christianity were true, would you become a Christian?* I've asked that question to several atheists at college campus events and received some pretty shocking responses (more on that later).

Is Christianity true? Despite losing his wife and son to cancer, Coach thought so. Atheists say that's merely wishful thinking—all good thinking leads to atheism.

Who's right? We're going to look at the evidence from CRIMES to see where all good thinking actually leads. But first, a word about the best way to investigate those CRIMES.

How Will We Investigate Atheist CRIMES?

I need to make one style point and one content point. First, the style point.

We are going to be reviewing several personal interactions and debates that I and other theists have had with atheists. That's not intended to convey the notion that we theists are all smarter than atheists. There are smart people on both sides of this debate. I have great respect for the intellects of atheists such as Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, and the late Christopher Hitchens. I'm sure in many areas they are (or were) far more knowledgeable than I am. (As someone once said, "We are all ignorant, just in different subjects.") When it comes to God, however, I think that their worldview assumptions are flawed and their arguments don't work (as many others have noted). The debates and interactions will also breathe life into what could be difficult subject matter, and they will help us get to the heart of the disagreements between theists and atheists.

Now the content point. We are going to be covering some complex issues in a relatively brief way. Much more could be said than I'll have room to say. I can already hear critics of this book dismissing it because I didn't address such and such a point by an atheist, or because I don't have an advanced degree in each of these areas (does anyone?). However, one doesn't need to be a specialist in every field, nor does one need to evaluate every atheistic theory to see that atheism has fatal flaws. If you've ever built a house, you'll see what I mean.

When we built an addition on our house, I was amazed how many specialists were needed. After the foundation guy, a series of specialty contractors came in. I can't remember the exact order, but we had the framing guy, the roof guy, the brick guy, the siding guy, the window guy, the electrical guy, the plumbing guy, the insulation guy, the heating/AC guy, the drywall guy, the trim guy, the floor guy, the tile guy, the light guy, the fireplace guy, the paint guy, and an inspector.

The inspector didn't need to understand the detailed workmanship of each of those specialists in order to spot a fatal flaw in the foundation. In fact, if there were a fatal flaw in the foundation, it wouldn't matter how good the workmanship was above it—the entire structure would soon collapse.

Atheism is like a house with fatal flaws in its foundation. Most of the atheistic views we'll be addressing are faulty due to some overlooked mistake in logic or due to the fact that those views could only be supported if theism were true. The most common logical mistake we'll see is that atheists violate the law of noncontradiction. They put forth a theory about reality that is supposed to be universal, but then they exempt themselves from it.

Most atheists don't see these mistakes precisely because they are specialists focused on details in the house. They are not trained to

spot more basic flaws as inspectors are. In fact, not being a specialist can help one see faulty assumptions and more general mistakes missed by those too close to the details. As the saying goes, if you want to know what the water is like, don't ask the fish.

So you don't need to be a specialist in every field to spot problems; you just need to be a good inspector of the foundation of every field. And the foundation of every field is philosophy—not the kind of philosophy where you sit around pondering inane questions like “Do I really exist?”—but the kind of philosophy that tries to discover what reality actually is and how it works in light of every aspect of human experience. Does atheism best account for every aspect of human experience—not just material things we can touch but also immaterial truths we perceive, such as logic, love, justice, morality, and consciousness?

If we use the tools of philosophy—including logic and good reasoning skills—I think we'll see that atheism can account for very little of what we experience. Atheistic materialism lacks power and scope to explain reality. We'll also see that the assumptions foundational to atheism are irrevocably flawed. With a flawed foundation, the entire superstructure of atheism comes crashing down. No future scientific discoveries or elaborate theorizing will rescue it. A house built on the sand of illogic is a goner.

The intellectual crimes of atheists begin with their views of the law essential to all science and knowledge: the law of causality. So let's start there.



Causality

Reason

Information & Intentionality

Morality

Evil

Science

CHAPTER I

Causality

NO ONE CREATED SOMETHING
OUT OF NOTHING?

To doubt the law of causality is to doubt virtually everything we know about reality, including our ability to reason and do science. All arguments, all thinking, all science, and all aspects of life depend on the law of causality.

JOHN WAS STANDING at the front of the long question line at the University of Michigan. As a former Christian, now atheist, he was eager to challenge something I said during my *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* presentation. Over four hundred people were waiting.

I had just given three arguments for the existence of God. One of which was the Cosmological argument, which claims that if the universe had a beginning then it must have had a cause. It goes like this:

1. Everything that has a beginning has a cause.
2. The universe had a beginning.
3. Therefore, the universe had a cause.

This argument isn't new. Philosophers in the Middle Ages championed this argument when they realized that today never would have arrived if there were an infinite number of days before today.¹ Since today is here, the universe must have had a beginning. However, until the twentieth century, most *scientists* thought the universe was eternal. It's now uncontroversial among scientists to admit that the universe—space, time, and matter—had a definite beginning, with a “big bang” in the distant past.

I say “uncontroversial” because the *scientific* evidence now is so strong that even most atheists agree that the space-time continuum we call the universe had a beginning. For example, prominent atheist Stephen Hawking observes, “Almost everyone now believes that the universe and time itself had a beginning at the big bang.”² Indeed, at Hawking's seventieth birthday celebration, cosmologist Alexander Vilenkin (who is an agnostic) said, “All the evidence we have says that the universe had a beginning.”³ The point of controversy isn't the beginning, but who or what *caused* the beginning.

That's where John had a problem. He was protesting my suggestion that God was the cause.

But there are good reasons for positing God. If space, time, and matter had a beginning, then the cause must transcend space, time, and matter. In other words, the cause must be spaceless, timeless, and immaterial. This cause also must be enormously powerful to create the universe out of nothing. And it must be a personal agent in order to choose to create, since an impersonal force has no capacity to choose to create anything. Agents create.

Impersonal forces, which we call natural laws, merely govern what is already created, provided agents don't interfere.⁴

For example, gravity as an impersonal force can't decide anything. It blindly does the same thing over and over again. A personal agent, on the other hand, doesn't necessarily do the same thing over and over again. He or she could do something unique, like decide to create something.

So we are left with a spaceless, timeless, immaterial, powerful, personal first cause. That sounds an awful lot like a theistic God.

John wasn't buying it. Yet, instead of offering evidence for a cause other than God, John resorted to *faith*. Echoing atheist Richard Dawkins, John forcefully declared into the microphone, "We have to give science more time! If we give science more time, one day we will find a natural cause for the universe."

"That sounds a lot like faith," I said. "You have faith that science will one day find a cause."

Given our advances in science and technology, John's faith may seem reasonable. After all, hasn't science continually pushed God out of the picture by finding natural causes for so many phenomena previously thought to be the direct result of divine action? Why shouldn't we expect the same for the universe?

While I agreed with John that we should always challenge scientific conclusions and seek to improve our understanding, that doesn't mean the scientific method will be able to find a natural cause for every effect. The universe is the biggest example.

Since nature had a beginning, nature can't be its own cause. The cause must be beyond nature, which is what we mean by the term "supernatural."

John was quick to charge me with committing the "God of the gaps" fallacy. When we can't figure out a natural cause, we plug

God into that gap in knowledge and say that He did it. That's not only wrong, it's "lazy," as many atheists assert.

But that's not what's going on here. I explained that we are not basing our conclusion on a mere "gap" in our knowledge. Those of us who conclude that a theistic God is the cause of the universe are not arguing from what we *don't* know (a gap), but what we *do* know. Since space, time, and matter had a beginning, we know that the cause can't be made of space, time, or matter. In fact, the conclusion that there is a spaceless, timeless, immaterial, powerful, personal first cause flows logically from the evidence itself.

If anyone is committing a fallacy, it is the atheist. Call it the "natural law of the gaps fallacy"—having faith that an undiscovered natural law will one day explain the beginning of the universe.

And that's exactly what John did. He went back to insist that through science we will one day find a natural cause for all of nature.

I said, "John, we will never find a natural cause for all of nature."
 "We will!" he insisted.

"No, John, we can't in principle. If nature had a beginning, then the cause can't be something natural because nature didn't exist. Nature was the effect, so it can't be the cause. The cause must be something beyond nature, or supernatural."

I used this comparison to help communicate the point: "When you say, 'Give me more time and I'll discover a natural cause for the universe,' that's like me saying, 'Give me more time and I'll discover that I gave birth to my own mother! It's impossible in principle, John.'"

Perhaps I did a bad job of explaining it because he still wasn't persuaded. On the other hand, there is a difference between proof and persuasion. One can prove a point, but that doesn't mean that a particular person will be persuaded by it. At least John agreed

that the universe needs a cause. Other atheists are suggesting that it doesn't—that somehow the universe popped into existence out of nothing without a cause.

That was the assertion of an atheist at Texas A&M, where I was again presenting the Cosmological argument. I summed up the argument this way: “Since the universe had a beginning, it must have had a beginner. The evidence leaves us with one of the following two options, either:

1. No one created something out of nothing, which is the atheist's view, or
2. Someone created something out of nothing, which is the theist's view.”

I then asked rhetorically, “Which view is more reasonable?” With that, an atheist blurted out, “Option one is more reasonable—no one created something out of nothing!”

Option one—Is he serious?

Let's look at option two first. Option two says that someone created something out of nothing. Now, that is a miracle. But at least there is a miracle worker—“someone.” Option one is a miracle with no miracle worker. That's clearly absurd.

I said to the audience at A&M that night, “To show you how seriously we believe in the law of causality—that everything that comes to be has a cause—there is no one here tonight who is worried that a hippopotamus has just appeared uncaused, out of nothing, in your dorm room and is currently defecating on your carpet!”

Dr. William Lane Craig asks an excellent question: If atheists are going to claim that things can pop into existence uncaused out of nothing, then why doesn't everything do so? Why don't iPads, Teslas, atheist books, and pizzas pop into existence out of nothing?

If you're hungry for a pizza right now, does it make more sense to order one or just wait and hope? Talk about faith.

Now, where would anyone get this idea that the universe could pop into existence out of nothing without God? From physicist Lawrence Krauss.

Explaining Nothing

If Richard Dawkins is the atheist's rock star of biology, Lawrence Krauss is the atheist's rock star of physics (maybe only second to Stephen Hawking). An engaging speaker, Dr. Krauss is a theoretical physicist and professor at Arizona State University. While admitting that he can't definitely disprove God, Krauss describes himself as "an anti-theist, as my friend Christopher Hitchens was."⁵ He "celebrates" that by his estimation there is no evidence for God. So it's not just that Dr. Krauss doesn't believe in God—he doesn't want there to be a God.⁶

It's fortunate for him then that he's solved an absolutely puzzling question for atheists: If there is no God, why is there something rather than nothing? At least that's what the title of his book implies: *A Universe from Nothing: Why There Is Something Rather than Nothing*. But the devil is in the details.

What are the details? Krauss says the cause of the universe is not God—it is "nothing." He cites happenings at the quantum level to dispense with the need for God. (The quantum level is the world of the extremely small, subatomic in size.)

"One of the things about quantum mechanics is not only *can* nothing become something, nothing *always* becomes something," says Dr. Krauss. "Nothing is unstable. Nothing will always produce something in quantum mechanics."⁷

Now, whenever you hear something that just doesn't sound

right, you ought to ask the person making the claim, “What do you mean by that?” In this case, the precise question to Dr. Krauss would be, “What do you mean by ‘nothing’?”

It turns out that Dr. Krauss’s definition of “nothing” is not the “nothing” from which the universe originated. The initial starting point of the universe was not a quantum vacuum, which Dr. Krauss keeps referring to in his book. The initial starting point of the universe was nonbeing—literally *no thing, zip, zero, nada*.

A quantum vacuum is *something*—it consists of fields of fluctuating energy from which particles appear to pop in and out of existence. Whether these particles are caused or uncaused is unknown. It could be that they are caused but we simply can’t discover or predict how that happens. There are at least ten different plausible models of the quantum level, and no one knows which is correct. What we do know is that, whatever is happening there, it is not creation out of nothing. Moreover, the vacuum isn’t eternal. The vacuum itself had a beginning and therefore needs a cause.

Lest you think I am mad to question the physics of Dr. Krauss, please note that I am more questioning his logic, which is required to do science of any kind. Dr. Krauss is committing the logical fallacy known as equivocation—that is, using the same word in an argument but with two different definitions. The “nothing” in the title of Dr. Krauss’s book is not the “nothing” from which the universe came.

This critical distinction was not lost on fellow atheist Dr. David Albert. A PhD in theoretical physics, Dr. Albert is a professor at Columbia University and author of the book *Quantum Mechanics and Experience*. In his scathing review of Krauss’s book in the *New York Times*, Dr. Albert questions both Krauss’s logic *and* his physics. He pulls no punches and even uses his fist to illustrate.

Correcting Krauss’s central claim that particles emerging from

the quantum vacuum are like creation out of nothing, Dr. Albert writes:

That's just not right. Relativistic-quantum-field-theoretical vacuum states—no less than giraffes or refrigerators or solar systems—are particular arrangements of *elementary physical stuff*. . . . The fact that some arrangements of fields happen to correspond to the existence of particles and some don't is not a whit more mysterious than the fact that some of the possible arrangements of my fingers happen to correspond to the existence of a fist and some don't. And the fact that particles can pop in and out of existence, over time, as those fields rearrange themselves, is not a whit more mysterious than the fact that fists can pop in and out of existence, over time, as my fingers rearrange themselves. And none of these poppings—if you look at them aright—amount to anything even remotely in the neighborhood of a creation from nothing.⁸ (emphasis in the original)

Speaking of fists, Dr. Albert lands the knockout blow to Krauss's entire thesis this way: "But all there is to say about this, as far as I can see, is that Krauss is dead wrong and his religious and philosophical critics are absolutely right." (It's important to note that Dr. Albert and Columbia University are not known for Christian fundamentalism.)

Now Dr. Krauss didn't take all this lying down. He got up off the canvas and fought back by calling Dr. Albert "a moronic philosopher."⁹ It's a mystery why Krauss crafted such an eloquent refutation of Dr. Albert, especially since Krauss admits Dr. Albert's point in advance. In several places in *A Universe from Nothing*, Krauss acknowledges that the "nothing" he is talking about is not

exactly the nothing from which the universe came. Krauss even puts his “nothing” in quotation marks like I just did.

In an interview, Krauss acknowledges that no matter how one defines “nothing,” the laws of physics are not nothing. (Sorry to keep using the word *nothing*, but there’s nothing else to use!) And although he’s clearly annoyed doing so, Dr. Krauss eventually gets around to admitting that his “nothing” is actually something.

“Even if you accept this argument that nothing is not nothing,” he says, “you have to acknowledge that nothing is being used in a philosophical sense. But I don’t really give a damn about what ‘nothing’ means to philosophers; I care about the ‘nothing’ of reality. And if the ‘nothing’ of reality is full of stuff, then I’ll go with that.”¹⁰

This admission raises a question. Since Dr. Krauss admits all this, why the bait-and-switch title: *A Universe from Nothing: Why There Is Something Rather than Nothing?* Why smuggle in the laws of physics and the quantum vacuum and then call it “nothing”? Why disparage philosophers who are only trying to bring the book’s assertions back to reality?

Krauss seems to think that philosophers are not talking about reality, when in fact, that’s exactly what philosophy is—the study of ultimate reality. The problem for Krauss is twofold.

First, reality is not merely physical stuff. Since nature and the laws of physics themselves had a beginning, ultimate reality is beyond nature or *supernatural*. Therefore, despite claiming to explain how the universe came from nothing, Krauss has explained nothing.

The second problem is a far more serious intellectual disease that infects the thinking of Krauss and several other prominent atheists as well. This disease is so severe that it threatens the accuracy of the very science they seek to promote. Krauss, like Dawkins and Hawking,¹¹ is dismissive of philosophy.

Now, having studied a lot of wacky philosophy myself, I

sympathize with them. But the existence of wacky philosophy doesn't discredit the existence of good philosophy any more than the existence of wacky science discredits the existence of good science. While it is true that one can use bad philosophy, it is impossible to use no philosophy.

In fact—and this is the essential point—*Krauss, Dawkins, and the like can't do science without philosophy*. While scientists are usually seeking to understand physical cause and effect, science itself is built on philosophical principles that are not physical themselves—they are beyond the physical (metaphysical). Those principles help the scientist make precise definitions and clear distinctions and then interpret all the relevant data rationally.

What exactly is relevant? What exactly is rational? What exactly is the best interpretation of the data—including what exactly is or isn't "nothing"? Those questions are all answered through the use of philosophy.

We'll unpack this in more detail in the Science chapter. But for now, the main point is that *science is done more in the mind than the lab*. Think about all the philosophical judgments a scientist must make throughout the scientific process of making a hypothesis, gathering data, and then interpreting that data. Nature doesn't develop or evaluate hypotheses. It doesn't gather or interpret data. And data certainly doesn't interpret itself. The mind of the scientist does, and all that requires philosophy. (Perhaps that's why the "Ph" in PhD stands for "philosophy." The originators of advanced degrees knew that philosophy is the foundation of every area of inquiry.)

If you abandon good philosophy, you end up with bad science. And if you disdain all philosophy, as Krauss and company tend to do, then you put yourself in the self-defeating position of holding a philosophy that disdains all philosophy. As Etienne Gilson said,

“Philosophy always buries its undertakers.”¹² Indeed, you can’t get away from philosophy. It’s like logic. To deny it is to use it.

C. S. Lewis famously wrote, “Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered.”¹³ Krauss and his colleagues think they are dispensing with philosophy, when in fact they are actually using bad philosophy. They are modern-day examples of Einstein’s observation that “the man of science is a poor philosopher.”

In the end, despite the lofty promises of his book’s title, Dr. Krauss explains nothing about the ultimate origin of the universe. Nothing can’t create anything because, as Aristotle put it, “nothing is what rocks dream about.” Unless some powerful agent intervenes, the ancient maxim still stands: *out of nothing, nothing comes*.

But there’s still another argument Dr. Krauss provides to dispense with God. Unfortunately for him, if his argument proves successful, Dr. Krauss would wind up dispensing with himself. Let’s take a look.

Aiming at God, Dr. Krauss Hits Himself

Dr. Krauss believes in the law of causality. Well, sort of. If a cause-and-effect relationship seems consistent with atheism—such as biological evolution causing new life forms—then Dr. Krauss is quick to assert that science has found the cause. But if the effect in any way implies theism—such as the beginning of the universe—then suddenly Dr. Krauss gets weak in the knees and starts adding qualifiers.

In discussing the “vexing problem” of the beginning of the universe, Dr. Krauss says, “All things that begin may have a cause, even if the cause is rather obscure and purposeless.”¹⁴

“*May*” have a cause? What happened to simply “all things that

begin *do* have a cause”? Why does he suddenly doubt the law of causality?

If Dr. Krauss casts doubt on the law of causality, then he casts doubt on the very discipline he’s trying to champion—science. At the foundation of science is the law of causality. Although the definition and scope of science is often disputed, what can’t be disputed is that science depends on the law of causality.

Science is, at a minimum, a search for causes. That’s what scientists are trying to do—they’re trying to discover what is (or was) the cause of a particular effect. The entire scientific enterprise depends on the cause-and-effect relationship. If things can come into existence without causes, then how can anyone do science?

Dr. Krauss then goes even further. After doubting the law of causality, he says, “However, what is important to note is that every known physical effect whose cause we understand has a physical cause. There is no reason, therefore, to assume the same will not be true of our universe itself.”

Well, if all physical things must have a physical cause, then the believer in God has a problem. Since God is not a physical thing, God couldn’t have caused the physical universe. So with this little bomb of an assertion, Dr. Krauss has blown up the possibility of God. Case closed.

Not so fast. We’ve already seen that space, time, and matter had a beginning, which means that the cause cannot be physical even though the effect is. Thus, Dr. Krauss is ignoring a counter-example as big as the entire universe!

But there is an even more fatal implication to his claim. If Krauss’s assertion about all causes being physical is correct, then he’s actually blown himself up along with reason and science. How so? Stick with me. This will take a little bit of explaining.

Any good inspector asks lots of questions. Among the questions

we need to ask Dr. Krauss are these: Are you a merely physical being? In other words, are you nothing but a collection of molecules, or are there also immaterial aspects to Lawrence Krauss? This question is particularly important, Dr. Krauss, with regard to what you believe about the relationship between your mind and your brain. Why? Because you produced a physical book in which you assert that all physical things have physical causes. But is your mind, which produced the book, merely physical?

No matter how Dr. Krauss answers this question, his position will be defeated. If he says, “No, my mind is not merely physical—there’s an immaterial aspect to it,” then he denies his own assertion that all physical things must have physical causes because his own physical book was produced by his nonphysical mind.

If he says, “Yes, my mind is my brain, so my physical brain alone caused the book,” then we wouldn’t have any reason to believe that anything in his book is true! This conclusion is unavoidable due to the nature of materialism.

Materialists like Dr. Krauss have no other choice than to assert that our thoughts are determined completely by physical reactions in the brain. For a materialist, the laws of physics determine everything we think and do. If that’s the case—if we are mere meat machines without free will—then we have no justification to believe anything we think, including any thought that atheism is true. As meat machines completely determined by the laws of physics, we cannot reason; we can only react.

“We are no different than a can of Coke fizzing,” as Doug Wilson put it in his debate with Christopher Hitchens. How can a fizzing can of Coke reason or do science? It can’t. So with his assertion that all causality is physical, Krauss destroys himself along with our ability to reason and do science!

This is one of many ways in which atheism contradicts all

common sense. You are freely reading this book right now and freely thinking about what you are reading. You are not merely a molecular computer who has no control over what you are doing or what you are thinking. And if you were, there would be no way in principle you could discover that, because any intellectual process you'd use to discover that would itself be completely determined by the laws of physics. To know you're just a robot, you'd have to be more than a robot.

Whew! I know that analyzing these atheist claims is like trying to gargle peanut butter. That's because we're exposing self-defeating statements, which requires us to slow down, inspect, and reflect a bit. But once you train yourself to do this, you'll actually save yourself a lot of time on your drive to truth by avoiding these intellectual cul-de-sacs.

The secret is to take a moment to see if a stated claim or theory meets its own standard. When you do, you'll see the central problem that emerges repeatedly: *Atheists often exempt themselves from their own claims and theories.* What we've just been through is a good example: If everyone is a molecular machine, then why do atheists act as if they can freely and reasonably arrive at atheistic conclusions?

We'll see that this self-defeating problem haunts atheists at every turn. See if you can spot a self-defeating problem with this next atheist objection.

Does Causality Apply Outside of Space and Time?

During a recent radio debate I had with an atheist, he said we shouldn't claim that the big bang was caused. Since there was no space or time prior to the creation, the law of causality doesn't apply.

While there is some overlap, this objection is a bit different than Dr. Krauss's objection. When Krauss says that every physical

thing requires a physical cause, he is talking about what Aristotle called “material” causality—namely, what the cause is made of physically. But this objection deals with what Aristotle called “efficient” causality. An efficient cause is what most people think of when they think of a cause. It is the primary source of the effect: an author writes a book, a spider builds a web, a quarterback throws a pass. They are efficient causes.

Atheists who make this claim are saying that there is no efficient cause of the universe because it didn’t take place in space or time. Let’s look at that argument in a syllogism:

1. The law of causality only applies to physical things in space-time.
2. The creation of the universe did not occur in space-time. (It was the creation *of* space-time.)
3. Therefore the law of causality does not apply to the creation of the universe.

This argument doesn’t work because the first premise is false. In order to see why, let’s put our inspector hat back on.

Notice that there is no physical relationship between the premises (1. and 2.) and the conclusion (3.) of the argument above (or any argument). Also notice that the premises are not objects in space-time. Yet, there is a causal relationship between the premises and the conclusion. In other words, true premises result in valid conclusions.

If the above argument were sound, then no argument could be sound. How so? If the law of causality only applied to physical things, then no argument would work because premises and conclusions are not physical things. For any argument to work—including arguments against God—the law of causality must apply

to the immaterial realm because the components of arguments are immaterial.

In other words, logic itself wouldn't work if the first premise were true! But since logic works, the law of causality applies metaphysically, not just physically. In fact, to deny causality beyond space and time would be to deny logic, which would be self-defeating and would negate our ability to argue anything.

You can also see why it is self-defeating to deny the law of causality by simply asking anyone who doubts it, "What *caused* you to come to that conclusion?" Or more precisely, "What reasons do you have for your position?"

If an atheist wants to say that the creation of space-time and matter didn't need a cause—that is an effect which is an exception to the law of causality—then he has to support his claim with evidence. But any attempt to get such evidence creates a big problem. If the person cites scientific experiments or observations as the source for his evidence, then point out that experiments and observations presuppose cause and effect. You couldn't make those observations or draw any conclusions without the law of causality.¹⁵ Likewise, any process of reasoning he uses would also use the very law of causality he would be denying. In other words, it's self-defeating rationally and scientifically to conclude that effects do not need causes. That's because *any denial of the law of causality uses the law of causality*. Again, the atheist attempts to exempt himself from his own theory.

Why Are There Laws at All?

Have you ever asked yourself, why are there laws at all? Why is there a law of causality? Why is reality governed by cause and effect? Why are the laws of nature so uniform, precise, and predictable?

Why do mathematics so accurately describe reality? Why is the universe so orderly?

These are questions that atheists and agnostics rarely dare to ask. And when they do, they are met with scorn.

Dr. Paul Davies, who is an agnostic on the question of God, is a respected cosmologist at the University of Arizona. Yet many of his scientific colleagues were practically accusing him of scientific blasphemy after Dr. Davies asked questions like those in his *New York Times* opinion piece titled “Taking Science on Faith.”¹⁶

Davies wrote, “All science proceeds on the assumption that nature is ordered in a rational and intelligible way. You couldn’t be a scientist if you thought the universe was a meaningless jumble of odds and ends haphazardly juxtaposed.” Davies observed that scientists take the orderly laws of physics on “faith” and that those laws “all are expressed as tidy mathematical relationships.”

He then asked the questions he’s not supposed to ask: “But where do these laws come from? And why do they have the form that they do?”

All that led to the charges of blasphemy. Immediately following his column, Davies said that his e-mail was “overflowing with vitriol.” Why?

His atheistic and agnostic colleagues didn’t like the fact that Davies equated science and religion in any way. But his critics misunderstood him. Davies was not saying that the methods or effectiveness of science and religion are the same. He was only saying that both science and monotheism rest on unexplained starting points that he insists are taken on faith. For monotheism, the starting point is an unexplained God. For science, the starting point is the unexplained laws of nature.

“Over the years I have often asked my physicist colleagues why the laws of physics are what they are,” Davies wrote. “The answers

vary from ‘That’s not a scientific question’ to ‘Nobody knows.’ The favorite reply is, ‘There is no reason they are what they are—they just are.’”

What about the multiverse as an explanation? That’s the popular speculation among atheists that many universes exist, and we just happen to be in the one that got these specific laws of physics by chance.

Davies doesn’t buy it. He calls it a “dodge.” As Davies points out, even if other universes do exist, “There has to be a physical mechanism to make all those universes and bestow bylaws on them. This process will require its own laws, or meta-laws. Where do they come from? The problem has simply been shifted up a level from the laws of the universe to the meta-laws of the multiverse.” Moreover, as we’ll see in the next chapter, even if the multiverse exists, it needs a cause.¹⁷

Davies thinks it’s “anti-rational” and makes “a mockery of science” to say that this ordered and rational universe exists as a brute fact “reasonlessly.” He wrote, “Can the mighty edifice of physical order we perceive in the world about us ultimately be rooted in reasonless absurdity? If so, then nature is a fiendishly clever bit of trickery: meaninglessness and absurdity somehow masquerading as ingenious order and rationality.”

Exactly. How is it that a highly ordered and rational universe came from complete disorder and irrationality? Both atheists and theists have to answer that question.

They have to answer these questions too: Why can we use our minds to discover truth about the material universe and even immaterial reality, like morality, logic, and mathematics? Why can we do science? Why can we build a sophisticated piece of equipment, like the Mars rover, and precisely put it on a planet over fifty million miles away?

We can do all of those things for at least two reasons: first, because the universe has those orderly laws of nature and it operates by predictable and persistent cause and effect; and second, because we are rational agents who can freely choose to use our minds to discover those orderly laws and cause-and-effect relationships. In fact, the mind appears to be designed specifically to understand the universe and to interact with it.

But that still leaves unexplained why those orderly natural laws exist in the first place. Discovering the laws of nature is not the same as explaining why they exist or why they don't seem to change. All physical things change. Why don't the nonphysical laws of nature change? And why can our minds understand them? In short, what best explains this orderly universe and our orderly minds?

At the end of his *New York Times* column, Davies said that he's on a quest to find the explanation for nature's rationality and order *inside* of nature. But that seems like a quest to nowhere. Since nature had a beginning, how could nature explain itself? That's not giving an explanation at all. In fact, it's giving exactly the kind of nonexplanation that Davies was complaining about earlier in the column—just asserting that natural laws and rationality are brute facts.

We have only two choices for this order and rationality: Either they arose from a preexisting supernatural intelligence or they did not. Even Lawrence Krauss recognizes this. He writes, "There are two possibilities. Either God, or some divine being who is not bound by the rules [of physics], who lives outside of them, determines them—either by whim or with malice aforethought—or they arise by some less supernatural mechanism."¹⁸

Well, which of those two possibilities is the most likely? Since nature had a beginning and can't explain itself, it seems much more

reasonable to posit that the same cause that created the universe is also the source of its order and rationality. After all, experience tells us that laws always come from lawgivers.

In chapter 3 we'll investigate philosophical reasons why a supernatural intelligence seems necessary to explain the goal-directedness inherent in nature and its laws. For now, let's look at scientific evidence that points to a supernatural intelligence: cosmic fine-tuning.

Divine Design?

The initial conditions of the big bang and other characteristics of the universe appear to be extremely fine-tuned for the existence of the universe itself and the life within it. Even atheists admit the universe appears fine-tuned. Stephen Hawking estimates that if the expansion rate of the universe was different by one part in a hundred thousand million million one second after the big bang, the universe would have either collapsed back on itself or never developed galaxies.¹⁹ That initial expansion rate was simply put in at the beginning of the universe. No cosmic evolutionary process can account for it.

Many other aspects of physical reality are also incomprehensibly fine-tuned for the existence of a life-bearing universe. For example, if the gravitational force were different by one part in 10^{40} , our sun would not exist and neither would we. How precise is one in 10^{40} ? It's one part in 1 followed by 40 zeros. That's one inch over a scale as wide as the entire known universe.²⁰

To get your mind around this degree of precision, imagine a tape measure stretched across the entire known universe. If the gravitational force were represented by a particular mark on that tape measure, we wouldn't exist if the force were set any more than

an inch away from where it actually is. Again, that's across a scale as wide as the entire universe. And there are more than a dozen of these precise values. Any slight variation in any one of them would preclude not only the existence of life but the existence of basic chemistry.

There are actually only three possibilities for the apparent fine-tuning of the universe: chance, physical necessity (the properties of the universe had to be this way), or design. I don't have enough faith to believe that the extreme degrees of precision we see happened by some unknown, unintelligent means that scientists call "chance." The probabilities are too small. The universe could have had different physical conditions, so physical necessity is out. The most reasonable conclusion is that the fine-tuning is due to a Designer.²¹

We already have good evidence to believe that there is a spaceless, timeless, immaterial, personal, and powerful Cause that created the universe. Fine-tuning shows that this Being is also supremely intelligent. He not only created the universe—He set up just the right conditions and laws for our existence.

As expected, Richard Dawkins hates this conclusion. In one of his debates with John Lennox (whom you'll meet here in a minute), Dawkins was asked, "How do you explain the origin of the laws of physics?"

He responded by saying, "I do not know the origin of the laws of physics. What I do know is that whatever they are, it certainly doesn't help to suggest that they were designed by a conscious intelligence because that simply makes a bigger question than what you've solved."²²

What's the bigger question? It's "Who made God?" There's the atheist trump card. No matter how much the evidence points toward theism, you can't say, "God did it" because then the atheist counters with, "Oh yeah! Well, who made God?"

Is this a problem for theists? No, it actually boomerangs back to be a problem for *atheists*.

Who Made God? Costco?

Former Fed Chief Alan Greenspan wasn't known for scintillating or lucid speeches. He once said, "I guess I should warn you, if I turn out to be particularly clear, you've probably misunderstood what I've said."

God's relationship to the law of causality is like that. It's often misunderstood. Contrary to what many atheists seem to believe, the law of causality does *not* say that everything has a cause. The law of causality says that *everything that has a beginning has a cause*, or every effect has a cause.

But not everything can be an effect. In order for there to be motion or change at all, there has to be something that isn't an effect but an eternal, uncaused first cause—an "unmoved mover." We can't go on an infinite regress of causes. When we trace the causal chain back into history, it must end at a self-existent, uncaused first cause.

So when atheists ask, "Who made God?" they misunderstand the law of causality and the nature of God. They are thinking the God of the Bible is a created, Zeus-like idol we saw in the introduction. But they have it wrong. If God exists, He *is* the self-existent, uncaused first cause. Since God created time, He is timeless or eternal. If you're timeless, do you have a beginning? Of course not. Therefore, one reason God had no cause is because He had no beginning.²³

It's not just Internet infidels raging away in their pajamas who don't get this. Tenured atheist and anti-theist professors don't get it either. Lawrence Krauss asks, "Who made God?" as if God is

some kind of created being. And as we have seen, so does Richard Dawkins, the most famous atheist in the world.

In fact, Dr. Dawkins posed this very question in one of his debates with Dr. John Lennox. If you haven't heard of Dr. Lennox, you need to get to know him. John Lennox is a mathematics professor at Oxford University, and a prominent Christian. For some reason, Richard Dawkins agreed to debate Dr. Lennox several times recently. I don't know why. Dawkins has refused to debate most Christians over the years, so why he picked John Lennox—the last guy any atheist should want to debate—is a mystery. Not only is John Lennox smart and credentialed, he rivals C. S. Lewis with his crystal-clear explanations and insightful analogies. Couple those qualities with your favorite uncle's witty quips and a face that always seems to be smiling, and you have a jovial Irishman who is impossible to dislike. And he's the same pleasant man in person that you see on the debate stage. (Of course, Dawkins is a brilliant and credentialed writer himself, but he can come across onstage as a bit of a sourpuss. That's why one reviewer remarked that watching John Lennox debate Richard Dawkins was like watching Santa Claus debate the Devil!)

At about twenty-five minutes into their "Has Science Buried God?" debate at the Oxford Museum of Natural History (under imposing dinosaur skeletons), Lennox asserted that our ability to rationally understand the universe through reason and science is best explained by a transcendent intelligence. He called that transcendent intelligence the "Logos" (or the Word) as described in the opening lines of John's gospel.

Let's pick up their conversation with Dr. Dawkins' response:
Dawkins: "But you haven't explained where the Logos came from in the first place."

Lennox: “Well of course not, because the Logos didn’t come from anywhere.”

Dawkins: “Well then, in what sense is it an explanation?”

Lennox: “Because when you ask who created the Logos, that says you’re thinking of a created God. The whole point about the God revealed in the Bible is that He was not created—He is eternal. He is the eternal Logos. And I ask myself, as an inference to the best explanation, which makes more sense: that there’s an eternal Logos and that the universe, its laws, the capacity for mathematical description and so on, are derivative—including the human mind—from the Logos? That makes very much more sense to me as a scientist than if it’s the other way around, [especially] when there is no explanation for the existence of the universe. Do you just believe the universe is a brute fact?”

Dawkins: “The universe is an easier brute fact to accept than a conscious creator.”

Lennox: “Well, who made it?”

Dawkins: “It’s you who insists on asking that question.”

Lennox: “No, no, you asked me who made the creator. The universe created you, Richard. Who made it then?”

Dawkins: “A God is a complicated entity, which requires a much more sophisticated and difficult explanation than a universe, which is, according to modern physics, a very simple entity. It’s a very simple beginning; it’s not a negligible beginning, but it’s a very simple beginning. That has *got* to be easier to explain than something as complicated as a God.”

Lennox: “I think you may have missed my question. I’m drawing a parallel. But I’m getting the message [from you]

that it's ridiculous for me to believe in a God who created the universe and me because they have to ask who created God. All I'm doing is turning that question around and saying the universe, you admit, created you because there's nothing else. Well then, who created it?"

Dawkins: "I understand you perfectly. Both of us are faced with the problem of saying how did things start."

Lennox: "Yes."²⁴

Notice both men admit that the atheist and the theist must explain how things got started. So neither is immune to the other saying, "Oh yeah, well, who made that?"

But asking, "who made that?" makes no sense when you've arrived at an eternal uncaused first cause. The evidence shows God. And despite what Richard Dawkins says, that should not be hard to believe.

First, contrary to what Dr. Dawkins says, God is not a "complicated" being made of parts requiring assembly as if He were some kind of a household machine you bought on a whim at Costco. Dawkins is thinking of an idol again. The true God has no parts. His essence is simple, yet powerful spirit. That's what the beginning of space, time, and matter implies, and it's also what the Bible teaches.²⁵ Besides, a timeless being doesn't need a cause because timeless entities don't have beginnings.

Second, since Dawkins asserts that causes must be more complicated than their effects, why is he an advocate of macroevolution, which asserts exactly the opposite? Macroevolutionary theory asserts that simple causes give rise to more complex effects. If the simple can't give rise to the complex, then Dawkins shouldn't be an evolutionist!

Third, no scientific conclusion could ever be drawn if the

scientist always had to have a cause of the cause in order to proceed. You can't go on an infinite regress of causes. And even if you could, you certainly can know the immediate cause of something even if you don't know the entire series of causes behind it.

For example, if an archaeologist finds an inscription on a buried marble monument, he logically posits that an intelligent human being inscribed it there. But suppose Richard Dawkins comes along and says, "Now your explanation just won't do unless you can tell me *who caused the human who made that inscription!*"

You might reply, "Richard, 'who made the human?' is an interesting question, but that shouldn't prevent us from concluding that a human made the inscription. Besides, even if I could tell you who made the human who made the inscription, you could then ask me who made the human who made the human who made the inscription. If you keep asking who caused the cause long enough, you won't like where your quest leads—right to the foot of an uncaused first cause who has the same attributes of the biblical God."

Finally, why do atheists find it so hard to believe in an eternal God? For centuries atheists had no problem believing in an eternal universe. Why do they suddenly now have a problem believing in an eternal God?

Both Dawkins and Lennox admit that atheists and theists have the problem of explaining how everything got started. Whatever got it started is eternal. That's either the universe or something beyond the universe. Since all the evidence shows the universe had a beginning, the theists are the ones following the evidence where it leads. The atheists simply have blind faith that some other explanation will be found.

Conclusion: Doubting the Law of Causality?

This created and fine-tuned universe, along with the orderly cause-and-effect nature of reality, are best explained by an intelligent Being with attributes remarkably congruent to the God of the Bible. There's more evidence for this conclusion in the following chapters. But that evidence and conclusion are only sound if all effects have causes. If the law of causality doesn't hold—if effects can arise without causes—then how can atheists or theists have confidence in any of their theories about the past?

As we have seen, atheists use the law of causality in their supposed arguments against God, but then attack it the minute an argument points to God. The beginning of the universe is the biggest example. Unfortunately for them, since all our experience tells us that whatever comes to be has a cause, there's no reason to believe that the universe is an exception to that seemingly universal law. Even the great skeptic David Hume maintained, "I never asserted such an absurd proposition as that anything might arise without a cause."²⁶ At the very least, it's certainly far more reasonable to believe the universe needs a cause than it doesn't. In fact, both Dr. Dawkins and Dr. Krauss admit that a respectable case could be made for a deistic God (that's a God who created the universe and set up the laws of nature, but does not intervene in the world through miracles).²⁷

That's a huge admission! There's a massive leap from atheism to deism, but just a short step from deism to theism. So why not follow the evidence all the way to theism? We'll see why not when we get to the morality chapter. Dr. Krauss and his colleagues will tell us themselves.

In the meantime, I can't emphasize enough just how deadly a pill the atheists are swallowing when they cast doubt on the law

of causality. The law of causality is not only verified in all human experience—human experience is only possible because of the law of causality. You wouldn't be able to understand logic or get any information from your senses without cause and effect! And if you think you have evidence to doubt the law of causality, you would be using the law of causality to acquire that evidence.

To doubt the law of causality is to doubt virtually everything we know about reality, including our ability to reason and do science. *All arguments, all thinking, all science, and all aspects of life depend on the law of causality.*

Ironically, when atheists attack the law of causality, they impugn the law most central to the success of reason and science—the two fields they claim to champion! Why consider atheists “reasonable” when they ostensibly use reason and science to attack the very principle that makes reason and science possible?

From students like John in Michigan to professors like Lawrence Krauss and Richard Dawkins, atheists seem unwilling to follow the evidence back to where it leads. So contrary to the image they attempt to project to the public, *they* seem to be the unreasonable ones, not religious theists. In the next chapter, we'll go a little deeper into reason to see just how unreasonable they are.