

— PART 3 —

**Why Won't They Believe?**

**Three Reasons Why People Reject the God of the Bible:**

**(1) Intellectual.**

- A misunderstanding of what Christianity is.
- A misunderstanding of the rational and factual foundations of the Christian faith.
- The dark side of Christian history – i.e., Crusades, witch-burnings, slavery, Christian imperialism, etc.

**(2) Emotional** – due to bad experiences with...

- Hypocritical Christians;
- Bad parents who claimed to be Christians;
- Hypocritical authority figures who claimed to be Christians, etc.

**(3) Volitional.**

- This is the condition of the vast majority of people.
- The problem is usually a matter of the heart, not the intellect.
- Arguments for the existence of God can help people in the first category, and possibly those in the second category to see the truth beyond their own subjective needs and experience.
  - However, they are usually ineffectual with people in the third category because their problem with belief in God is not intellectual but volitional.
  - Blaise Pascal: “People almost invariably arrive at their beliefs not on the basis of proof but on the basis of what they find attractive.”
- In some cases, intellectual laziness may be the biggest hindrance to faith.
  - Isaac Asimov: “Emotionally I am an atheist. I don’t have the evidence to prove that God doesn’t exist, but I so strongly suspect he doesn’t that I don’t want to waste my time.”
  - Steven Weinberg: “Most scientists I know don’t care enough about religion even to call themselves atheists.”
- In most cases, people simply don’t want to believe.
  - Blaise Pascal: God has revealed evidence of himself that is sufficiently clear to those with open hearts and minds, but which is sufficiently vague so as not to force those whose hearts and minds are closed.
  - Os Guinness: “We should never view unbelief as flatly theoretical, loftily neutral or merely as a worldview that people just happen to have. However suave and cool its attitudes, and however rational its arguments many sometimes appear to be, unbelief is different in its heart. Deep down, the unbelieving heart is active, willful, deliberate, egoistic, devious, scheming and unrelenting in its open refusal, its deliberate rebellion and its total resistance to God and the full truth of his reality – and it can never be countered by purely intellectual arguments that ignore the power of the dark secret in his heart. The heart of apologetics is the apologetics of the heart.”

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- ▶ Friedrich Nietzsche: “If one were to prove this God of the Christians to us, we should be even less able to believe in him.... It is our *preference* that decides against Christianity, not arguments.”
- ▶ NYU philosopher Thomas Nagel: “I want atheism to be true.... I don’t want there to be a God; I don’t want the universe to be like that.”
- ▶ Robert Ingersoll in “Why I Am an Agnostic”: “When I became convinced that the Universe is natural – that all the ghosts and gods are myths, there entered into my brain, into my soul, into every drop of my blood, the sense, the feeling, the joy of freedom. The walls of my prison crumbled and fell.... I was no longer a servant, a serf or a slave. There was for me no master in all the wide world – not even in infinite space. I was free – free to think, to express my thoughts – free to live to my own ideal – free to live for myself and those I loved.... free from devils, ghosts, and gods.”
- ▶ Mary Poplin: “I still remember the exhilaration of thinking I was living my life in ultimate freedom; I reveled in being called a ‘free spirit’ .... The paradox was that when I thought I was most free, responsible and reasonable, I was least. I was a slave to my own desires and to the spirits that drove them.”
- ▶ Sir Julian Huxley: “The sense of spiritual relief which comes from rejecting the idea of God as a supernatural being is enormous.”
- ▶ Aldous Huxley: The reason that he and most of his colleagues were eager to accept the theory of evolution is that the idea of God interfered with their sexual “freedom”.
- Czeslaw Milosz in “The Discreet Charm of Nihilism”:
  - ▶ Atheism provides an escape from the guilt associated with one’s sins and the fear associated with eternal divine punishment. “A true opium of the people is a belief in nothingness after death – the huge solace of thinking that for our betrayals, greed, cowardice, murders, we are not going to be judged.”
- Dinesh D’Souza in *What’s So Great About Christianity*:
  - ▶ “If God does not exist, the seven deadly sins are not terrors to be overcome but temptations to be enjoyed.... Atheism is not primarily an intellectual revolt, it is a moral revolt. Atheists don’t find God invisible so much as objectionable.... The atheist seeks to get rid of moral judgment by getting rid of the judge.”
- In the end, it’s all about the will:
  - ▶ The Moody Blues, “Nights in White Satin” (1967):  
*Some try to tell me / Thoughts they cannot defend*  
*Just what you want to be / You will be in the end.*
  - ▶ Paul Simon, “The Boxer” (1969):  
*A man hears what he wants to hear / and disregards the rest.”*
- The confirmation of Scripture.
  - ▶ Psalm 14:1; 53:1 – “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good.”
  - ▶ Romans 1-2: Mankind’s souls are sick, and their destiny is spiritual death.

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## The Summa...

### The Best Explanation for Reality.

- A cumulative case approach.
  - The principle of abduction: inference to the best explanation.
  - A case based on philosophy, biblical theology, science, anthropology, archaeology, history, and psychology.
- The search for God cannot be a sterile intellectual pursuit.
  - No arguments can “prove” the existence of God.
  - No amount of evidence will ever convince the skeptic whose heart is hardened and whose mind is closed to the reality of God.
- Augustine: Faith must precede understanding.
  - We are not omniscient, and mystery is part of the reality of life.
- The realities of our sin nature.
- A theistic worldview provides the best explanation for...
  - The universe’s origin;
  - Earth’s fitness for life;
  - The incredible design the human body;
  - The phenomenon of consciousness;
  - The existence of objective moral values; and
  - The innate value and purpose of human life.
- What about the “God of the Gaps” theory?
  - The more we learn, the more we realize how phenomenally complex the world is.
  - Antony Flew: If we follow the facts and reason honestly, it inevitably leads to God.
  - George Coyne: “Nothing we learn about the universe threatens our faith. It enriches it.”
- Lee Strobel’s conversion testimony in *The Case for a Creator*.
  - “I was once full of confidence that Darwinism justified my atheism.... But then I began to ask questions I had never posed before, to pursue the clues of science and history wherever they led.... I opened myself to the full range of possibilities. And frankly, I wasn’t prepared for what would happen.  
“The facts of science systematically eroded the foundation of Darwinism.... The intellectual basis for my skepticism was collapsing....  
“But I had vowed to follow the facts regardless of the cost.... I was forced to conclude that Darwinism would require a blind leap of faith... [and] that both the universe and the life it contains are the products of an intelligent designer.”
- Gen. 1:1 – “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”
  - Robert Jastrow: The skeptics’ “bad dream.”
- The ultimate conclusion:
  - Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration.

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## Practical Apologetics: Responding to Skeptics

### 1. “There Is Insufficient Evidence for Belief in God. Therefore, the Burden of Proof Is on Those Who Believe.”

- Skeptics should be required to defend what they believe.
- (1) The atheist and agnostic positions are not neutral/objective positions.
  - Neither of these positions is supported by scientific facts or reason.
- (2) If the burden of proof is always on the one who believes any idea, then the principle also applies to the beliefs of atheists and agnostics.
- (3) Both atheists and agnostics argue that we shouldn’t believe in God because there is no scientific proof for God’s existence.
  - But there is no scientific method for proving that only the scientific method proves truth.
- All worldviews and belief systems require faith.
- The question is: What is the supporting evidence for what we believe?

### 2. “God Should Have Provided More Evidence (or Proof) of His Existence.”

- Sigmund Freud: If there is in fact a God, he has a lot of explaining to do.
- Subsidiary complaints:
  - “God should reveal himself more obviously if he expects us to believe in him.”
  - “Why doesn’t God perform miracles today like he supposedly did in the past?”
- Atheists hold to a purely naturalistic understanding of the universe.
- Science is not the only means by which we access reality.
  - The issue of immaterial realities.
- Examples of direct divine intervention in history.
  - Ron Rhodes: “Miracles occurred most frequently during periods of God’s self-revelation to humankind. The miracles that occurred... were irrefutable signs from God designed to authenticate his revealed Word (the Old and New Testaments).”
- Miracles tapered off near the end of the apostolic age.
  - EX: Paul could not heal Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25-30), Timothy (1 Tim. 5:23), or even himself (2 Cor. 12:7-9).

[NOTE: Miracles still happen, but they are not normative – which is why we recognize them as miracles when they happen.]
- God continues to communicate to us today through...
  - (1) Scripture;
  - (2) The internal guidance of the Holy Spirit.
  - (3) Interactions with other Christians; and
  - (4) Regular encounters with Truth and Reality.
- Apparently, God, in his infinite wisdom and love for humanity, considers his self-disclosure to mankind to be sufficient so that no one has an excuse for unbelief.
  - Romans 1:18-20.
  - Jesus’s parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:27-31).

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3. “If God Created the Universe, Who Created God?”

- John Stuart Mill:
    - “My father taught me that the question ‘Who made me?’ cannot be answered, since it immediately suggests the further question, ‘Who made God?’”
  - Bertrand Russell, “Why I Am Not a Christian” (1927):
    - “If everything must have a cause, then God must have a cause.”
- [Logically...]
- The belief that the universe came into existence uncaused out of nothing is metaphysical nonsense – it defies logic.
    - Being cannot come from nonbeing – a basic metaphysical truth.
    - The chance of something coming from absolute nothingness is absolutely zero.
- [First Proposition:]
- Theists do not claim that whatever exists must have a cause, only that whatever *begins* to exist must have a cause.
    - Only finite things need a cause.
    - By definition, the eternal, infinite and self-existent God does not need a cause.
    - If God were caused, he would not (by definition) be God.
    - Not all reality is physical – e.g., laws of mathematics, laws of logic, feelings of love and hate, moral truths, etc.
  - Those who believe the universe is self-existent contradict their own premise when they argue that God cannot be self-existent.
- [Second Proposition:]
- “Who made God?” is a “category fallacy.”
    - It eliminates any possibility of God being the explanatory cause of the universe.
    - It assumes that everything must be contingent (or dependent), and that there can be no such thing as a self-existent and uncaused Reality such as God.
    - By definition, God is in a different category than things that are created.
    - James Sire: “God as a perfect and necessary being is self-explanatory. The regress ends; no further explanation is required.”
- [Parting Thought:]
- Roy Abraham Varghese: *Something* has always existed.
    - The question is: Is it God or the universe?

4. “Is There Anything That God Can’t Do?”

- A meaningless question that essentially asks: “Is there something that is more than infinite?”
- Category mistakes and logical impossibilities.
- God’s omnipotence does not mean that God can do what is irrational – only that he has the power to do anything that is actually rational.

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## 5. “If God Is Eternal, When Did He Create the World?”

- God did not create the world *in* time – he created time itself.
- There was no time “before” time – only the eternal present.
- The question, “When did God create the world?” attempts to put God into time rather than acknowledging that God exists outside of time and space.

## 6. The Christian Doctrine of the Trinity is Illogical.

- The doctrine of the Trinity is derived from the New Testament as distilled in the **Nicene Creed**.
  - The one eternal and infinite God exists as three distinct and co-equal persons.
  - I.e., God is one in essence and three in personhood.
- The (original) Nicene Creed:
  - “We believe in one God, the almighty Father, maker of all things visible and invisible;
  - “And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, Light from Light... begotten not made, **of one being** [substance or essence: *homoousios*] with the Father, through whom all things came into existence....
  - “And in the Holy Spirit....
- The skeptics’ argument:
  - The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God; but
  - The Father is not the Son, the Father is not the Holy Spirit, and the Son is not the Holy Spirit;
  - Therefore, each person of the Godhead is simultaneously God and not God – which violates the law of non-contradiction.
- In fact, the doctrine of the Trinity is a mystery, but it is *not* irrational or illogical.
- The **law of non-contradiction**:
  - Two contradictory statements cannot both be true at the same time and in the same respect (A cannot equal A and also equal non-A).
- Trinitarianism distinguishes between God’s *essence* (nature or being) and God’s *subsistence* (or personhood).
  - Members of the Trinity all share the one divine nature, and are therefore the one God.
  - The relational (personal) distinctions in the Godhead do not detract from each individual person’s possession of the divine nature.
  - Therefore, the three persons are distinct from one another, but they remain fully God.
  - The way in which God is one (i.e., in essence or being), he is not three.
  - The way in which God is three (i.e., in subsistence or personhood), he is not one.
- Augustine’s *On the Trinity* highlighted the practical significance of the doctrine.
  - Only a God who has plurality within unity can be an eternally relational being.
  - Likewise, only a God who has plurality within unity can be both loving and knowing.
  - Therefore, because human beings are created in the image of a relational triune God, concepts such as love, family, and community take on meaning and value.

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