

# CHRISTIANITY FOR PEOPLE WHO AREN'T CHRISTIANS

UNCOMMON ANSWERS  
TO COMMON QUESTIONS

**JAMES EMERY WHITE**



**BakerBooks**

*a division of Baker Publishing Group*  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

© 2019 by James Emery White

Published by Baker Books  
a division of Baker Publishing Group  
PO Box 6287, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6287  
www.bakerbooks.com

Printed in the United States of America

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: White, James Emery, 1961– author.

Title: Christianity for people who aren't Christians : uncommon answers to common questions / James Emery White.

Description: Grand Rapids : Baker Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2019. | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2019003829 | ISBN 9780801094590 (pbk.)

Subjects: LCSH: Apologetics. | Christianity—Essence, genius, nature.

Classification: LCC BT1103 .W475 2019 | DDC 239—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2019003829>

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19 20 21 22 23 24 25 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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# 1

## THE GOD WHO IS THERE ... OR NOT

If God did not exist it would be necessary to invent him.

*Voltaire, Epître a l'Auteru du Livre des Trois Imposteurs*

If you don't care about the interplay between science and matters of faith, or if you already believe in God, feel free to skip this chapter. If the interplay between science and faith *is* important to you, and you're not at all sure whether you believe in God, then let's begin.

On August 7, 1961, a twenty-six-year-old Russian cosmonaut became the second Soviet to fire off into space, orbit the earth, and return safely. When he returned, he let it be known that while in space, he looked around for this God people talked about and couldn't see him.

While some do see things that way, there aren't too many card-carrying atheists in the world. Recent polls show that 80 percent

of all Americans believe in the existence of God. If you throw in those who may shy away from the word “God,” but who would say they believe in a “higher power,” the percentage increases to nearly 90 percent. But when it comes to the God of the *Bible*, the percentages drop dramatically.<sup>1</sup> Let’s just say that there are an understandably healthy number of agnostics out there, and you might put yourself among them. An agnostic doesn’t necessarily reject God himself as much as the possibility of *knowing* whether God exists. Rather than say, “I *don’t* know if there is a God,” they say, “I *cannot* know if there is a God.” Or, even beyond that, which God.

So let’s start with whether a God even exists. The Christian faith very much believes in a God who is there and—as the famed Christian thinker Francis Schaeffer added—has not been silent. But why would a thinking person believe such a thing? Can the existence of God be proven? Obviously, you cannot put God into a test tube for examination. You cannot prove that God exists, at least by normal scientific methods, because the scientific method depends upon repetition. There are certain things that cannot be contained or repeated in order to be scientifically proven. If something cannot be examined beyond our five senses, then you cannot use science to either prove or disprove it. However, just because you can’t repeat something doesn’t mean it isn’t real. No one has ever seen love, but we all know it is real. No one has ever smelled freedom, but it exists. And, of course, God—by almost any definition—would be very hard to examine by human measures. So instead of a chemical reaction in a test tube that would somehow reveal God’s existence, those who are wanting Christians to explain their belief should instead look for evidence that would support whether it is *reasonable* to believe in the existence of God: signs, if you will, of his existence. Christians believe that such evidence exists in abundance, beginning with something as simple as cause and effect.

## Cause and Effect

Most of us have ventured out on a clear night to look up and stare at the stars. During moments like those, it is natural to reflect not only on the vastness of the universe, but to wonder how it came into being.

Only recently has the idea that the world was created by a personal God been dismissed by some as intellectually absurd. The late-coming idea is that there was no creative event at all. The late astronomer Carl Sagan opened up his bestselling book *Cosmos* by saying, “The cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be.”<sup>2</sup> But the most recent findings of science are turning us back to—if not a God—the reality of a creation event. For example, the second law of thermodynamics states that the universe is running out of usable energy. And if it is running *out* of energy, then it cannot be eternal and must have at one time been given an initial “start” of energy. Something does not wind down unless it has been wound *up*.

These ideas related to the second law of thermodynamics have been supported through the leading hypothesis for the beginning



Picture of the mountains and stars at Fiordland National Park, New Zealand

of the universe, which is the Big Bang theory. The idea of the Big Bang was first put forward by Dr. Edwin Hubble, the man we named the Hubble Space Telescope after. His theory was that at one time all matter was packed into a dense mass at temperatures of many trillions of degrees. Then around 13.8 billion years ago, there was a huge explosion. From that explosion, all of the matter that today forms our planets and stars was born and the universe as we know it was created.

Hubble's idea was confirmed through what has been called the discovery of the past century. On April 24, 1992, the Cosmic Background Explorer satellite, better known as COBE, gave stunning confirmation of the hot Big Bang creation event after investigating the cosmic microwave background radiation of the universe. In many ways, it really was the birth of modern cosmology. And, for many people, the birth of a belief in God.

It is known that something cannot come from nothing. We also know that the universe isn't eternal. Yet, according to the Big Bang theory, something *did* come from nothing. The problem is that you can't just say everything began with the Big Bang and act as if somehow you've explained the origins of the universe, because that still doesn't explain where the matter that exploded came from. In lay terms, where did the stuff that got *banged* come from and who *banged* it? Something (or Someone), somehow, brought that first matter miraculously into existence in such a way that it exploded into the universe. This "something" had to exist outside of space and time, because space and time didn't exist before the Big Bang. Anyone in the scientific community would agree that this could not have happened according to the current laws of physics. Which means we're talking about something *outside* of the laws of physics. Something outside of all natural phenomena.

There's a category for this. If something is outside of natural phenomena, it's called *supernatural*, and that puts us in God territory. This really is worth wrestling with. If the universe could not have come into being by itself from nothing (because it is a

scientific impossibility that absolute nothingness could produce anything), and if the universe isn't eternal and there really was a creation event through the Big Bang, the questions I raised earlier still remain: Where did the matter that exploded come from and who caused the explosion?

George Smoot, head of the COBE satellite team, who, along with John Mather, won the Nobel Prize in Physics in 2006 for their work on the project, noted that when the COBE satellite measured the ripples in the microwave background radiation that gave confirmation of the Big Bang theory it was “like looking at God.”<sup>3</sup> Dr. Robert Jastrow, professor of astronomy at both Columbia University and Dartmouth College, director of the Mount Wilson Institute and manager of the Mount Wilson Observatory, and director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies for twenty years, made the following comment in regard to the COBE findings: “Now we see how the astronomical evidence leads to a biblical view of the origin of the world.”<sup>4</sup> Jastrow went further, saying, “For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.”<sup>5</sup>

I know, if you've tracked with me so far, this now begs the question, “Who, then, made God?” We ask this because we live in space and time, and nothing in our understanding of space and time can exist independent of some type of beginning. So if God began our universe, who “began” God? The Christian response is to challenge the presupposition of the question—namely, that God is confined to our understandings of space and time. The Bible points to God as the *Creator* of space and time, independent of their constraints. God is eternal, without beginning or end, and he is not limited to our understandings of beginning or ending.

Now, some may say, “Well, physics just hasn't found the answer to the idea of ‘something from nothing’ yet. You can't just jump to

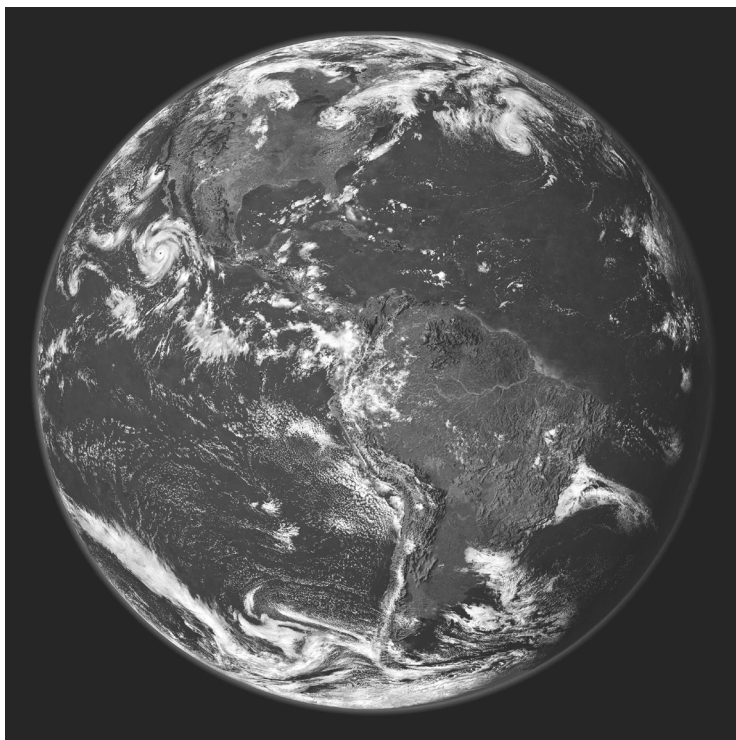


God.” Perhaps . . . but as Alan Guth, one of the leading physicists of our day at MIT, has written, even if you could come up with a theory that would account for the creation of something from nothing through the laws of physics, you’d still have to account for the *origin* of the laws of physics.

But that’s not all there is to think about when it comes to the origins of the universe. Astrophysicists will tell you that what should have happened with the Big Bang was the creation of equal parts matter and antimatter. But that isn’t what happened. Particles of matter barely outnumbered particles of antimatter by a rate of about a billion-and-one to a billion. Without that billion-and-one to a billion imbalance between matter and antimatter, all mass in the universe would have self-annihilated, leaving a cosmos made of photons and nothing else. No planets. No stars. Nothing. Which again is what should have happened. Equal parts of matter and antimatter should have been created during the formation of the universe. The universe as we know it should not have come out of the Big Bang. But it did. Something, somehow, stepped in to counter all we know about science and created an imbalance in favor of matter. And no one knows how or why. It was as if there was . . . an intervention.<sup>6</sup>

## **Design and Order**

When it comes to the existence of God, there is more than cause and effect to consider. There are also the issues surrounding design and order. The book of Genesis is the first book of the Bible and contains most of the “origins material.” In Genesis we read that at the end of whatever creative process God used to create the universe—and, specifically, our world and all living things within it—there was a single declaration: “It was very good.” Meaning, it was good because it was good for the crown of creation: human life. What we’re learning from science is how deep and wide that “good” goes, given that everything about the universe, the Milky



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A picture of Earth from NASA

Way, our solar system, and our planet, are perfect for the existence of human life. In other words, what came out of the Big Bang was not chaos, but life-giving, life-sustaining *order*. So much order that it appears to be intricately designed.

How is this accounted for? This is such an obvious question that it has been with us from the most ancient of days, first raised by the Greek philosopher Plato.<sup>7</sup> Here's the thinking: All designs imply a designer. If you find a watch, you understandably assume there is a watchmaker; if you see a building you assume an architect designed it; if you view a painting, you know there was a painter. The greater the complexity of the design and order of something, the more a designer begs to be considered. I once heard it put this

way: It's one thing to see a logjam and wonder if there was a beaver behind it; it's another to see Hoover Dam and question whether there was intentionality and purpose behind its creation.

At the time I'm writing this, the Lockheed Martin F-22 Raptor is arguably the top fighter jet in the world.<sup>8</sup> It is super stealthy and virtually invisible to radar. It's an extremely advanced twin-engine aircraft with amazing maneuverability. It can even do something almost unthinkable—a vertical takeoff. Now, imagine you came upon an F-22 in the middle of the desert. You *could* reason that it came together by chance; that the metal was flung together by way of a chaotic sandstorm; that the instruments and panels and wings and advanced technology were all brought together by a freak accident of nature. But it is highly unlikely that this would be your *first* thought. If you came upon an F-22 in the desert, your initial thought would likely be that someone made it and landed it there.

There is staggering design and order to the universe. So much design and order that it seems too much for mere chance. So staggering that it compels many people to consider a “Great Designer” of the universe.

But it goes deeper than that. The anthropic principle, from the Greek word *anthropos* that means “man” or “human,” is the idea that our world is uniquely suited to human beings and carbon-based life, the only form of life known to science. But that's putting it mildly. It's *freakishly* suited for human life. There are so many dynamics that if changed only slightly, would make it impossible for us to exist. You can't help but marvel how all of them came together in one planet, in one solar system, in one galaxy, in one universe.

For example, Earth is in what is called a “Goldilocks Zone” around the sun. Remember the Goldilocks story? A little girl, lost in the woods, finds a house where three bears live. She tries some porridge they had left out. One bowl is too hot, one is too cold, but one is just right. That's why scientists call where we live the Goldilocks Zone—the only part of the solar system that's just

right for human life. It's not too far and not too close to the home star in order to sustain life. If we were any closer to the sun, all of the oceans would have evaporated. If we were any farther away, they would have frozen.

Then there's the speed of our planet. Our speed enables us to maintain a stable orbit around the sun while never getting too close or too far away. The precision to maintain the right distance at all times while in orbit calls for a very specific speed. So much so that if you were to increase Earth's orbital speed by no more than the square root of two—just 1.4 times its current speed—we would achieve escape velocity. We would fly right out of the solar system if we moved just 1.4 times faster.<sup>9</sup>

And consider how the planet Jupiter, with its mighty gravitational field, redirects the vast majority of comets that would wreak havoc on the inner solar system and, specifically, on Earth. It's as though a mighty shield has been strategically positioned in just the right place to protect our planet.<sup>10</sup> There's also Earth's oxygen-rich atmosphere that not only allows life, but the existence of ozone in the upper atmosphere serving as a shield to protect Earth's surface from most of the sun's molecule-hostile ultraviolet photons.<sup>11</sup> These are just samples of all that has come together on Earth to make life possible.

Even when scientists discover other Earth-like planets, it only adds to the wonder of Earth. "Earth-like" means a planet may have two or three of the twenty-plus elements needed to mimic what we find on Earth. And every Earth-like planet we find falls dramatically short of everything that came together on the planet Earth. For example, when scientists discovered Kepler-22b, just 600 light-years away, it was in the Goldilocks Zone of its solar system. Like Earth, it circled a star similar to the sun at approximately the same distance away from the sun and with a year of 290 days. Yet, it was 2.4 times wider than Earth and covered with water, making it more like the planet Neptune. Size and soil are just two of the twenty-plus elements needed to be like Earth in terms of

being suitable for life. Kepler-22b, like every other Earth-like planet we've found, is far from being Earth. Our galaxy contains more than a hundred billion stars. The known universe harbors some hundred billion galaxies. The latest, best estimates suggest there may be as many as 40 billion Earth-like planets in the Milky Way alone. Yet still, in all that vastness, among all those planets, only one can sustain life. And the odds of finding another one are so remote it staggers the imagination, because the odds of everything coming together the way it did on Earth are considered virtually impossible.

But one planet—*supernaturally*—did come together.

In a National Public Radio interview, Owen Gingerich, professor of astronomy and the history of science at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics in Cambridge, noted that “there are so many wonderful details which, if they were changed only slightly, would make it impossible for us to be here, that one just has to feel, somehow, that there is a design in the universe and, therefore, a designer to have worked it out so magnificently.”<sup>12</sup> As theoretical physicist Paul Davies of Cambridge has observed, “We are meant to be here.”<sup>13</sup> This is such a compelling reality that it causes even the most ardent of atheists to pause. Physicist Stephen Hawking once told a reporter that “the odds against a universe like ours emerging out of something like the Big Bang are enormous. . . . I think clearly there are religious implications.”<sup>14</sup> Going even further, Hawking conceded,

It would be very difficult to explain why the universe should have begun in just this way, except as the act of a God who intended to create beings like us.<sup>15</sup>

### **About God and Evolution**

It was the summer of 1925. The place was the small mountain town of Dayton, Tennessee. The issue at hand was a legal confrontation

that made headlines around the world. On one side was William Jennings Bryan and on the other was Clarence Darrow. Their confrontation was not over a crime or misdemeanor; it was not over a legal suit involving a will or a trust. It didn't even involve special prosecutors or a grand jury. In fact, the courts had never encountered a case quite like this one.

The subject was the very origin of human life.

It is known in history books as the "Scopes Trial." A young biology teacher by the name of John T. Scopes was charged with violating a law on the Tennessee books stating you could not teach evolution. As a result, the trial posed defenders of evolutionary theory against those who wanted public schools to teach what was considered to be a biblical view of the origin of the world's inhabitants. William Jennings Bryan represented the state and, by default, those who believed in the biblical view of the creation of human beings. Clarence Darrow represented those who embraced the evolutionary theory.

It really was the clash of two worlds. Bryan was the good-old-boy religious Southerner. Darrow, in favor of evolution, was the outspoken religious agnostic from the North, polished and intellectual, supplied to defend Scopes by the ACLU. Many people do not know that the result of the trial found the teacher guilty, but not before Darrow (the evolutionist) had made a fool of Bryan (the creationist). Bryan allowed himself to be cross-examined by Darrow, arguably the greatest trial lawyer of his day, on the precise accuracy of the Bible. In the course of that examination, Darrow forced Bryan to admit that he couldn't answer even the most basic questions about what the Bible puts forward as truth. Not because there weren't answers, but because Bryan wasn't the sharpest biblical scholar around. So the verdict as it stands in history is intriguing: Bryan won the battle, but he lost the war. While he technically won the case, the conflict stamped the entire debate with an unmistakable image. Evolution vs. creationism came to be seen as the city vs. the country; places like New York



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The three main parties of the Scopes Trial—William Jennings Bryan (left), John T. Scopes (center), Clarence Darrow (right)

and Chicago vs. backwoods Dayton, Tennessee; science vs. ignorance; the modern world of the twentieth century vs. the American religious fundamentalism of the nineteenth century. That image has remained firmly in place for nearly a century and so have the lines of debate. Evolution has become the accepted scientific theory of how human beings and all of life developed and came into being. Whether through evolution or not, the biblical idea of a God creating is seen as a view that is antiscientific and out of touch with the real world.<sup>16</sup>

But is that the caricature we should have in mind? A divide between smart and dumb, sophisticated and backward, science and the Bible . . . or even between evolution and creationism? Or is there something more to be considered? Namely, that the real divide is between a *naturalistic* view of the universe (seeing nature as all that there is) and a *theistic* view of the universe (remaining very much open to the existence and activity of God). In other words, a view of the world that sees nothing but the temporal, the material, the natural, over and against a view that is open-minded toward the eternal, the spiritual, yes, even the supernatural. To be sure, those who are Christians believe that God created human beings. If you are a Christian, you are, by necessity, a creationist. You believe that we were wonderfully and carefully designed,

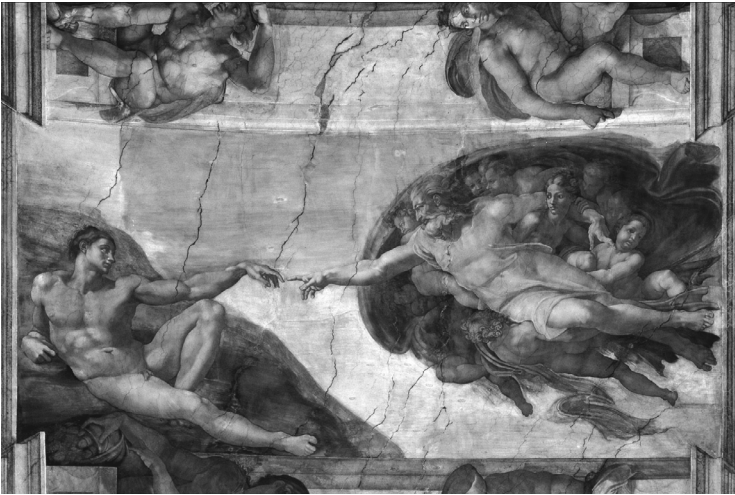
and that the entire creative process was miraculously and supernaturally generated and guided by God. So do we now have an insurmountable impasse?

I'm reminded of the joke about a little boy who goes to his dad and asks, "Dad, where did human beings come from?" His father says, "Well, we descended from apes." The little boy then goes to his mother and asks, "Mom, where did human beings come from?" She says, "We were created by God in God's image." The boy says, "But Dad said we descended from apes." "Well," she answers, "I was talking about my side of the family."<sup>17</sup>

But back to the impasse. First, the Bible doesn't say *how* God created, only *that* he created. And it talks about the creation of human beings in a very literary, poetic way using phrases like "from the dust of the earth" and receiving "the breath of life." That doesn't exactly sound like it is trying to be a biology text, does it? Evolution is one of the leading theories in science for the "how" we were created. You may be surprised to hear me say I think this is fine for those who are open to God. You may also be surprised to learn that according to a new study released in February 2019 by the Pew Research Center, this is where most Christians land. The majority of Christians today (as in 58 percent of white evangelical Protestants and 66 percent of black Protestants) "agree that human evolution is real—and that God had a hand in it." Pew acknowledged that perhaps in the past they had been asking the question regarding evolution wrong, meaning not phrasing it in a way to allow both the embrace of evolution along with a role for God.<sup>18</sup> If God used evolution as part of his creative process, so be it. That doesn't mean there wasn't an original Adam and Eve who God breathed an actual soul into at the end of the process to mark the beginning of the human race as we know it, much less a God guiding the entire process. But does the theory of evolution itself point toward a God or away from one?

Let's begin by thinking about the timeline. While the age of the universe is around 13.8 billion years, the age of Earth is about 4.5





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Michelangelo's fresco *The Creation of Adam* from the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, 1512

billion years. But life didn't exist 4.5 billion years ago. It couldn't. That was a geologically violent time; there was constant bombardment from meteorites. Earth itself had to cool and its surface solidify to a crust. Life on Earth, the latest thinking goes, began about 3.8 billion years ago, in the form of single-celled prokaryotic cells, such as bacteria. Multicellular life didn't come into play until more than a billion years later. It's only in the last 570 million years that the kind of life forms we are familiar with even began to evolve, starting with arthropods, followed by fish 530 million years ago, then land plants 470 million years ago, and then forests 385 million years ago. Mammals didn't evolve until just 200 million years ago, and our own species, *Homo sapiens*, only 200,000 years ago (according to theorists). So humans have been around for a mere 0.004 percent of the earth's history.<sup>19</sup> That's the evolutionary time frame, but also the evolutionary problem.

The whole idea behind naturalistic evolution is that it's a product of time plus chance. But there just hasn't been enough time for Earth to cool and life to be produced naturalistically by chance. Sir

Fred Hoyle, former Plumian Professor of Astronomy and Experimental Philosophy at Cambridge University, determined that if you computed the time required to get all 200,000 amino acids for one human cell to come together by chance, it would be about 293.5 times the estimated age of Earth.<sup>20</sup> Even further, Hoyle, along with his colleague Chandra Wickramasinghe, calculated the odds for all of the functional proteins necessary for a one-cell animal to form in one place by random events. They came up with a figure of one chance in 10 to the 40,000th power—that's the number 1 with 40,000 zeros after it. Since there are only about 10 to the 80th power atoms in the entire universe, Hoyle and Wickramasinghe concluded that this was “an outrageously small probability that could not be faced even if the whole universe consisted of organic soup.”<sup>21</sup> For the current proposed evolutionary timeline to work, it would be like having the working dynamics of the latest iPhone along with the entire corporate campus of Apple that produced it to be instantly created—by chance—through a single explosion in a computer geek's garage. If you are going to embrace the theory of evolution, you also need to (seemingly) embrace some kind of outside guiding, enhancing force that sped it along and directed it strategically in the time frame of the age of Earth.

Now, even if you assume there was enough time, or perhaps you want to buy into the theory that mutations and evolutionary leaps can fill all of the time-gaps, you still have the problem of the *initial* complexity of life. (I hope this isn't all too much science. But for some of you, it is precisely science that matters, so on we go.) Darwin himself noted, “If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed, which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down.”<sup>22</sup>

Biochemist Michael Behe speaks of Darwin's self-challenge in terms of a mousetrap. The common mousetrap includes a platform, hammer, catch, spring, and holding bar. Each component is required for the mousetrap to function as a mousetrap. You cannot

start with a wooden base and catch a few mice, add a bar and catch a few more, and functionally evolve—step by Darwinian step—into the most effective mousetrap, one that has a base, hammer, spring, catch, and holding bar. There must be a minimum number of interacting parts that are assembled to allow the catching of mice before the trap can begin developing into more advanced levels of mice-catching. This is what it means to be *irreducibly complex*: to be a system that consists of several interacting parts that must be in place in order to function as that system. Darwinian evolution depends upon there being a minimal function in place from which the more advanced functions could evolve. But as an irreducibly complex system, our mousetrap could *not* have been produced by continuously improving an initial function of mouse-trapping by slight, successive modifications of the mouse-trapping process. Take away any of the five parts, and no mice would be caught!<sup>23</sup> The conclusion is that the mousetrap was somehow made as an intact system. It could not have just evolved into that system. It had to have been designed *as a system* for that purpose.

Yet this is the relatively new and astonishing conclusion of molecular biology: the basic forms of life are *not* simple, but irreducibly complex molecular machines that *cannot* be explained by natural selection working on variation. Think about something like the human eye. According to evolutionary theory, it would have started with a simple, light-sensitive spot, and then evolved to what we see with today. The problem is that when science finally got to the point where we were able to study life at the molecular level, we found it wasn't simple. We found it was irreducibly complex. Which means something, or Someone, had to create those first complex systems from which all of life evolved. Something, or Someone, had to create that first light-sensitive spot. It couldn't have come into existence by itself. You might be able to start simple and get to complex—which is what evolutionary theory maintains—but you can't start complex.<sup>24</sup> Behe, a biochemist, concludes that the result of recent research into life at the molecular level is a loud, piercing

cry of intelligent design.<sup>25</sup> There is simply no other explanation for the incredible complexity of the world.

The problem goes deeper than having to explain the complexity that existed at the beginning of the evolutionary process. You also have to consider how the evolutionary process created ever-increasing diversity—in other words, the idea of macroevolution, which is one species evolving into a totally different species. This is very different than microevolution, which is just changes or adaptations within a species. Microevolution is like a dog breeder breeding a dog that sheds less hair. It's still a dog. They can't breed a dog that flies. But that's what naturalistic evolutionary theory—meaning evolution without outside intervention—maintains happened. That microevolution somehow led to macroevolution. That single-cell bacteria led to multicell bacteria, and multicell bacteria led to spiders, and spiders somehow led to fish, and fish somehow led to plants, and plants led to mammals, and it all eventually led to us. How one species creates a completely different species is, at best, vague.

Beyond the lack of time for evolution to have done its work without outside help, beyond tracing the origin of life back to its roots and finding its starting point was so complex that it couldn't have evolved naturally (step by Darwinian step) to get there, *there's the beginning of life itself*. Just like you can't say, "In the beginning, the Big Bang created the heavens and the earth" and consider the questions surrounding the actual origin of the universe solved, you can't say, "Life exists because 3.8 billion years ago it began evolving from single-celled prokaryotic cells." Just like Big Bang theorists have to wrestle with where the stuff that got banged came from and who made it bang, evolutionary theorists have to ask how those first bacteria came to life. It's a profound question: How did life come from non-life? You can say that within chemically rich liquid oceans organic molecules transitioned to self-replicating life, but that's like saying your SUV can become Optimus Prime after it goes through a car wash. It doesn't just happen. Gerd Müller, a highly regarded Austrian evolutionary

theorist, gave one of the most honest presentations on this I've heard. As far as I know, he's not a theist much less a Christian. He doesn't argue for God's hand behind the origin of life. But in a lecture as an evolutionary theorist, he confessed that not only does Darwin's theory fail to explain how life originated or explain how complexity developed, it hardly even asks the questions.<sup>26</sup> Yet those are *the* questions.

So what is the leading theory of how this is all solved outside of a God working in and through the process of evolution? This might surprise you, but one of the leading ideas is called *panspermia*—the idea that the first life, along with the beginning complexity, was seeded here from another planet, such as Mars. But that doesn't solve anything. If all the scientific challenges surrounding life beginning on its own on Earth can be solved by saying life began somewhere else and got here on the back of a meteorite, well then how did that life start *there*? So the real decision is not between creationism and evolution, but between theism and naturalism. You can be a theistic evolutionist or a naturalistic evolutionist. It seems to me that the evidence causes being a naturalistic evolutionist the greater leap of faith.

## The Humanness of Humans

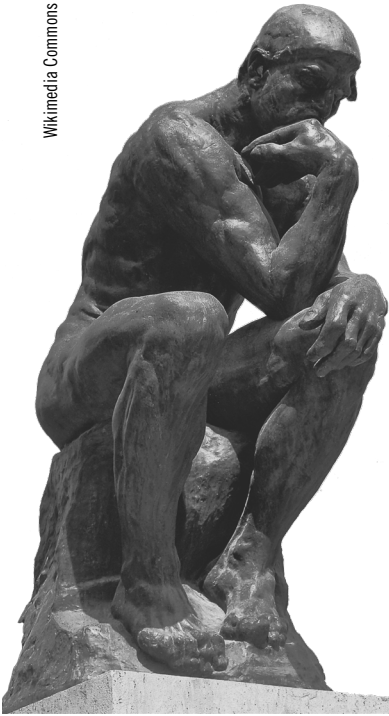
The last thing I'll put forward that Christians have considered on their way to belief in the existence of God is the "humanness" of humans. Where does human personality come from? It's difficult for many to believe that the human personality—the soul, if you will—evolved naturalistically out of a pool of primordial slime. Legs and arms and lungs, maybe—but what is inside of us? That which makes you, *you*? Consciousness itself? When the philosopher René Descartes attempted to boil down his one and only true starting point for reflection, he came up with his famed phrase *Cogito, ergo sum*. I think, therefore, I am.

But where does that “thinking” come from? How are we able to think, reflect, feel, and reason? There is a voice inside of my head, a personality, a living spirit that I know exists and that is tangible and real when I think to myself. What is that, and where did it come from?

Humans really are different from every other living creature. People who say there’s really not much difference between human beings and chimps, because humans are just slightly remodeled chimpanzee-like apes sharing about 99.4 percent of their DNA, lose me. As John Ortberg once noted, “If you really believe that yourself, or if you wonder if that’s really true, just ask yourself if you would have a chimpanzee babysit one of your children. Would you date one? Would you hold one morally accountable for its behavior?”<sup>27</sup>

The nature of human identity is not about DNA. There’s something else going on, and that includes our spirituality. We are, all of us, deeply spiritual beings regardless of our individual beliefs. One of the most interesting manifestations throughout all civilizations is the deep spiritual hunger of men and women. Anthropologists have discovered that human beings are incurably spiritual and conscious of the idea of God. This was described by Blaise Pascal, the great seventeenth-century philosopher and mathematician, as the “God-shaped hole” in every human being. If there isn’t a God, and we evolved naturalistically, that would not make sense.

In reflecting on this, C. S. Lewis noted that drives supposedly come about due to the realities of our world. For example, we have an appetite for food, and there is food to satisfy that need. We have this drive to know God, an authentic spiritual hunger, but there is no God? That doesn’t make sense. If it were true, we shouldn’t have the drive. Why would creatures who evolved by chance as a result of naturalistic causes alone desire and hunger after a Creator God? Some have suggested that the answer to this is not God at all, but a so-called “God gene” that has been hard-wired into our genetic constitutions. But why would a gene like that have ever evolved?



*The Thinker* by Rodin, located at the Musée Rodin in Paris

Some take another tack and say the reason we're so spiritually hungry is simply our desire, our hope for a God. This was the belief of Sigmund Freud, the father of the psychoanalytic school of psychology.<sup>28</sup> The dilemma is that it doesn't explain the universal desire for God throughout time and across civilization. At some point, particularly in our modern context, you would think that the wish, desire, or need for God would simply end. Yet it only grows, which makes no evolutionary sense if there is no God.

Coupled with this is our inner sense of morality. According to a major study by Oxford University, everyone everywhere shares seven universal moral rules. In fact, all societies are held together

by these seven rules. The huge study of sixty different cultures around the world found that all communities operate under these seven basic moral codes. "It was the largest and most comprehensive and widespread survey of morals ever conducted, and aimed to find out whether different societies had different versions of morality."

The study found they did not. Here is what we all share in common—across continents, religions, and politics—and value as important:

1. Help your family.
2. Help your group.
3. Return favors.

4. Be brave.
5. Defer to superiors.
6. Divide resources fairly.
7. Respect the property of others.

The study also found that inherent within this code was caring for frail relatives, passing on property to offspring, going to war if needed to protect the group, and respecting elders.<sup>29</sup>

Intuitively, each of us appeals to some sense of right and wrong in our dealings with ourselves, with others, and with the world. If we have to get up from our seat for a moment in a crowded venue and someone sits in our place, we naturally say, “Hey, that’s my seat! I was there first!” When we do that, we are appealing to some behavioral standard that the other person is supposed to know and accept. And there is a surprising consensus from civilization to civilization, culture to culture, as to what is right and what is wrong. When you take the time to study the moral teaching of the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Hindus, Chinese, Greeks, and Romans, it is amazing how similar they are to each other morally. For example, selfishness is never admired and loyalty is always praised. Men may have differed as to whether you should have one wife or fourteen, but they have always agreed that you must not simply have any woman you like.<sup>30</sup> As C. S. Lewis once observed: “My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of *just* and *unjust*? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line.”<sup>31</sup> Somehow it seems we have an innate sense of right and wrong. Or, as Darwin once replied when asked whether man was in any way unique from other life forms, “Man is the only animal that blushes.”<sup>32</sup> Where does this come from independent of an outside source?

National Public Radio did a story on the most challenging questions facing science based on an article in *The Guardian*, one of the biggest news publications in the UK.<sup>33</sup> And what were those



questions plaguing scientific minds? The very ones we've detailed in this chapter. For example, "How did life come about?" Translation: "How did life come from non-life? How did something *dead* become *alive*? If everything was once dead, how did life appear?"

There are no scientific answers.

Another question: "What makes us human?" From the NPR story: "We have three times more neurons than a gorilla, but our DNAs are almost identical. Many animals have a rudimentary language, can use tools and recognize themselves in mirrors. So, what is it that differentiates us from them?"

Then the question, "What is consciousness?" Meaning: "How is it that the brain generates the self of self, the unique experience that we have of being . . . unique? Can the brain be reverse-engineered to be modeled by machines? Or is this a losing proposition? And why is there a consciousness at all?"

Again, no scientific answers.

But there are theological ones. In the beginning, there was a God who created and, through that creation, sent out a compelling message about his existence: that he does, indeed, exist.

Such considerations are turning more than Christian heads, as was the case for atheist Antony Flew shortly before his death. Flew was the famed Oxford philosophy professor who wrote the quintessential articles in favor of atheism for college philosophy textbooks the world over. But before his death, he renounced his atheism. Why? Cause and effect, design and order, the challenges to a purely naturalistic view of evolution, and the humanness of humans. He's not alone. Some of the greatest names in science will tell you that they have not only become believers in God but card-carrying Christians. Not *despite* science, but *because* of it. People like Francis Collins, who led the Human Genome Project that produced the first reference sequence of the human DNA instruction book, and who became the director of the National Institutes of Health. He looked at everything science has discovered about the beginnings of the universe and the beginnings of life, and

determined it was “God’s elegant plan for creating humankind,” all complementary to his faith in Christ.<sup>34</sup>

### **The “Hiddenness” of God**

Of course, after such a lengthy conversation about things that point to God it would be reasonable to ask why God isn’t more direct with his existence. The short answer is because whatever relationship he may have with you, he wants it to be real—not forced or coerced. Imagine God making himself known to you in the most unmistakable of ways (and, to be sure, he could). Would your belief in him be anything other than something imposed upon you? C. S. Lewis weighed in on this in an even more telling manner:

God will invade. But I wonder whether people who ask God to interfere openly and directly in our world quite realise what it will be like when He does. When that happens, it is the end of the world. When the author walks on to the stage the play is over. . . . For this time it will be God without disguise; something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side. There is no use saying you choose to lie down when it has become impossible to stand up. That will not be the time for choosing; it will be the time when we discover which side we really have chosen, whether we realised it before or not.<sup>35</sup>

And the longer answer to those who ask, “Why doesn’t God make himself known? Why doesn’t he reveal himself more clearly?” is that Christians believe he has.

But we’ll get to Jesus in a bit.

### **It’s Your Choice**

In the 1850s, the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche proclaimed “God is dead.” During the 1960s, someone took Nietzsche’s

famous slogan and wrote it in spray paint on a billboard near Union Seminary in New York: “God is dead—Nietzsche.” Then someone else, undoubtedly a seminary student, took a can of spray paint and wrote: “Nietzsche is dead—God.” The debate is hardly academic. More consequence for thought and action flow from the question “Does God exist?” than almost any other question you can raise. The only question that can match its significance is built on it: “If God exists, what is he like?”

The Christian answer might surprise you.